

MR. D'S NOTES ON MARK



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The Gospel of Mark

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This will be a lengthy introduction due to the need of some background material that will set the stage for our study in the book of Mark.

MARK, A BEGINNING

Gen. 19:1 In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they [into] the wilderness of Sinai. 2 For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come [to] the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount. 3 And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; 4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and [how] I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. 5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth [is] mine: 6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These [are] the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. 7 And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. 8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

We all understand that the Lord leads all believers via the Holy Spirit, but just how the Holy Spirit leads different people has always been of interest to me.

Example: When we returned to Salem, OR we had a couple we knew from our previous life here over for an evening. In the process of talking with Jim I mentioned that I had written my theology. His near immediate response was well we have to get Stan Derickson on the Web! We need to get your theology out there in cyberspace so people can use it. In my mind I was saying, "Ya, right!" I put the thought out of my mind.

A few weeks later my son began bugging me about getting email. I didn't have any idea what email was. Finally I started messing around with the Internet. At first I joined a couple of bulletin boards in Salem. The first message I posted was that I had a systematic theology on floppy disk if anyone was interested. The very next day I was contacted by a man in south Salem

wanting the theology. I mailed him a copy and forgot about the incident. About a week later the man called and was thrilled with what he was reading and wanted to know if he could share it with friends.

I told the man it was fine and I began to realize the possibilities of the Internet. I began seeking information about how I could get on the net with the theology and in a few years the Lord has brought visitors from over 100 different countries to the website. Many people have downloaded the information and have passed it on to other believers.

The work has also been included in two commercial CDROM collections of Christian books and several Internet sites are using the work as part of their Bible institute curriculum.

Now finally I will get to my point. How did God use the Holy Spirit to move me to get involved with this ministry, by the simple statement of a friend about me being on the web. A simple comment in passing turned into a much larger reality for God.

I don't equate my ministry on the web with the gospel of Mark, but I have wondered just what prompted Mark to sit down with the limited writing tools he had at his disposal to record his thoughts of the Lord. What in Mark's life did the Holy Spirit use to bring him to write the gospel?

Think I will ask him one day :-)

This introduction is designed to prepare us for a study of the book of Mark.

Let me give you a quick overview of things up to the time of Mark.

Adam and Eve were created and told to multiply and care for the garden. We all know the story - they took care of things didn't they?

Abraham was chosen to create a people for God. God told him to accept Him and that He would be his God - result was the nation of Israel.

Israel ended up in Egypt in bondage, and Moses was called to bring them out into the land that God was going to give them.

After conquering the land the children of Israel became rather self-satisfied and wanted to be just like everyone else in the world - everyone around them had a king so they wanted a king. Saul was installed as the first king, followed by David, Solomon and a line of good/bad kings that brought Israel into idolatry in a big way. The book of Ezekiel tells us that in his time the idols were in the temple of God in Jerusalem.

God's disgust led to the defeat and exile of much of Israel and the time of the prophets. The prophets were constantly calling Israel to repent, to return to God, to leave their sin. They also spoke often of the coming King and His glorious kingdom with its new temple. Even after many

of the people returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple there was a looking forward to this King and His temple described in Ezekiel.

They entered into the period between the Testaments and still no king. All through the time between the testaments they still awaited their King, their promised kingdom and all that was to come with it.

During this time many things were going on politically. Finally civil war broke out in the area of Israel and Rome entered to make the peace. Pompey set up some puppets to rule the area and as the New Testament opens we have King Herod over the Jews.

The Jews are under Roman rule, with no future in sight. They still have no king, they have not seen the promised restoration, and they haven't seen the glorious kingdom of the prophets, OH WOE IS ME - WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

The situation in the corner coffee shop finds the Jews wanting their freedom from Roman rule, they want to rule themselves, they want their king, they want His temple, and they want the peace all the prophets had spoken of. (Ezek. 39.25-29; Isa. 52; Zech. 8; Ezek. 40-42; Zech. 14; Isa. 2 and many others).

WOW! WE SURE WISH ALL THIS WOULD COME TO PASS - WE NEED OUR KING TO FREE US FROM ALL OUR WOES!

ENTER stage right Jesus of Nazareth. Mk 1.14-15 "14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."

What is the gospel? Good news. What kingdom is spoken of here? Some would have us believe that it is some spiritual kingdom within us, others suggest that it is simply God's rule over all mankind from far off heaven. In the context of the Bible it can only mean the literal kingdom of the King Jesus Christ on earth - that which the prophets spoke of.

What is the kingdom of God in light of the Jewish background, in light of the Jewish situation, and in light of the Jewish belief? THE KINGDOM OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROMISED!

Christ came offering the kingdom of the Old Testament to the Jews - only problem is that they rejected Him as King and as a result rejected His kingdom.

Let us backtrack for a moment or two. Why was man created? Some would suggest that we were created for fellowship with God - God was lonely and in need of company. Humm - God needing anything is kind of foreign to His character and needing man is even more foreign to His character.

Isa 43.7 mentions "I have created him for my glory; I have formed him; yea I have made him." Adam and Eve were created to glorify God, not themselves!

Thus one might wonder, what was God's main overall program concerning man? Was man created so that God could provide salvation for him? No, man was created to be a subject in God's kingdom. Adam needed no salvation at creation, only after the fall was salvation involved.

Ps 29.3-10: " The voice of the LORD [is] upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the LORD [is] upon many waters. 4 The voice of the LORD [is] powerful; the voice of the LORD [is] full of majesty. 5 The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. 6 He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. 7 The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire. 8 The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. 9 The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of [his] glory. 10 The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever."

Ps 10.16: "The LORD [is] King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land." He is King!

I Chron. 29.11-12: " Thine, O LORD, [is] the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all [that is] in the heaven and in the earth [is thine]; thine [is] the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. 12 Both riches and honour [come] of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand [is] power and might; and in thine hand [it is] to make great, and to give strength unto all."

God is King over His kingdom whether we like it or not - He is King over all that is! Satan in his pride, ignorance and audacity decided to oppose God's kingdom (Isa 14.12-14) but even he had no chance of usurping the mighty King.

God has always ruled over man in one way or another. He was over Adam, over Noah, over Abraham, over Moses, over Joshua as He is over us now, as He will be over us in eternity future. He is King over His Kingdom. Salvation is a side product of man's sin, not God's overall program.

Mark wrote around 62-68 AD according to many but others feel that it is one of the earliest books written - the first gospel. He was writing to the Roman audience and depicts Christ as the obedient servant. Since he depicts a servant there is no need to spend time on the lineage - no servant at the time was into his/her roots most likely. He must have had the clear leading of the Spirit else why would he have set down to write. At any rate he was writing to encourage Roman Christians to know their Lord and how He served all He met while on earth. The political situation was not good either in this period

The word Mark uses often is "straightway" The term is used nineteen times in Mark - more than the other three gospels combined.

The verse that sums up his line of thought in the book is 10.45 "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

He arranged his material chronologically for his reader and is most practical in his outlook and teaching. Some of the harmonies (books that place the gospels side by side in chronological order) use Mark as their outline.

He writes amid the events following the burning of Rome which was blamed on the Christians (according to many historians)

Mark would have been ministering in the last of Nero's reign and the beginning of Vespasian's. The destruction of Jerusalem was in 70 A.D. so you can see that it was a time of turmoil to say the least.

John Mark was the nephew of Barnabas Col. 4:10; Son of Mary Acts 12:12; and spiritual son to Peter I Pe 5:13.

Gill mentions the following in his introduction to the gospel: "This is the title of the book, the subject of which is the Gospel; a joyful account of the ministry, miracles, actions, and sufferings of Christ: the writer of it was not one of the twelve apostles, but an evangelist; the same with John Mark, or John, whose surname was Mark: John was his Hebrew name, and Mark his Gentile name, #Ac 12:12,25, and was Barnabas's sister's son, #Col 4:10, his mother's name was Mary, #Ac 12:12. The Apostle Peter calls him his son, #1Pe 5:13, if he is the same; and he is thought to have wrote his Gospel from him {a}, and by his order, and which was afterwards examined and approved by him {b} it is said to have been wrote originally in Latin, or in the Roman tongue: so say the Arabic and Persic versions at the beginning of it, and the Syriac version says the same at the end: but of this there is no evidence, any more, nor so much, as of Matthew's writing his Gospel in Hebrew. The old Latin copy of this, is a version from the Greek; it is most likely that it was originally written in Greek, as the rest of the New Testament. {a} Papias apud Euseb. Hist. l. 3. c. 39. Tertull. adv. Marcion. l. 4. c. 5. {b} Hieron. Catalog. Script. Eccles. p. 91. sect. 18. "

There seems to have been a shift in thinking on the date of the book since I was in college. The normal thought years ago was that Mark was one of the earlier books if not the first book written. The thinking was that since it is of a simple style and in chronological order that it was meant as a report of what Mark had seen and heard of the Lord.

Let's look at the text.

KJV: Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; [ASV, NKJV are the same. Darby: Mark 1:1 Beginning of the glad tidings of Jesus Christ, Son of God; Youngs: Mark 1:1 A beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, Son of God. NIV: The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of god.]

"The beginning" "The" doesn't really belong - this phrase may have been a title to introduce the section on the Baptist or to the entire book itself. (From the NetBible: "The most likely option is that the statement as a whole is an allusion to Genesis 1:1 and that Mark is saying that with the "good news" of the coming of Christ, God is commencing a 'new beginning.'")

This is of interest to me in that John also goes back to a beginning in his opening statement, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God."

Luke gets in his lick for beginning as well. "1 Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, 2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; 3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, 4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed."

Matthew, if you will remember, also goes back to the beginning in the "generation" or geneology of Christ.

Why the tie to the beginning by the gospel writer? They realized the close relationship between the Old Testament and what they had been living through. They knew that the good news was based in the Old Testament.

The beginning is a term which is normally translated beginning, but can denote the leader or magistrate of an area. It can also relate to the corner of a sail - that which is first might do well. The root of the word means something of value. This may be a double meaning in Marks mind - it is the beginning, of something of great value - knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Gospel means good tidings. The Net Bible mentions, "By the time Mark wrote, the word gospel had become a technical term referring to the preaching about Jesus Christ and God's saving power accomplished through him for all who believe (cf. Rom. 1:16)."

Jesus means "Jehovah is salvation" and is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Joshua.

Christ is the Greek term Christos and means anointed.

God = theos [Some manuscripts do not include "Son of God"]

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God

In short Mark has laid out the most important truth he knew - information about the Savior of his miserable soul, Jesus Christ.

It is good news, it is news about the man Jesus, the anointed of the Lord.

AUTHORSHIP:

It is usually accepted that Mark is the author and few dispute this. His name means little hammer or hammer depending on where the name came from. (Pulpit Commentary states "supposed to be derived from the Latin "marcus," a hammer; not "marcellus," a little hammer")

He is listed in Col 4:10 as "Marcus, sisters' son to Barnabas," (Barnabas's nephew). Some feel that he was one of the 70, but others think not. Peter calls him his son (I Peter 5:13) thus most likely, according to some, Peter had been the one to lead him to the Lord. However, there is indication that he was a follower of the Lord before the crucifixion.

In Mark 14.49ff we see as Jesus is being arrested, "I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled. 50 And they all forsook him, and fled. 51 And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about [his] naked [body]; and the young men laid hold on him: 52 And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked." Some commentators feel the "young man" is not identified by Mark due to the fact that he was writing about himself. Who else would have taken note of such a one in this situation of arrest and everyone fleeing?

Matthew covers the same incident simply by saying "Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled." The other two gospels make no mention of this occurrence thus indicating what has been stated.

Jerome mentions that the people of Rome asked Mark to write the account and then when finished Peter gave his blessing to the work. Whether this is true or not we do not know, but Jerome may have had documentation that we do not have.

The following information will give you some further indication of the author and his background. It is from Bible.org on the Internet. If you would like to study further this is only a portion of the information found there.

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1. John-Mark is mentioned elsewhere in the biblical material:
 - a. He was a Jewish Christian whose mother, Mary, owned a home in Jerusalem where the early church met (Acts 12:12)
 - b. He was a cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10)
 - c. He was added to Paul and Barnabas' party when they visited Jerusalem for the famine relief (Acts 12:25)
 - d. He went with Barnabas and Saul (Paul) on the first missionary journey, but turned back to Jerusalem when they went inland to Asia at Perga in Pamphylia (Acts 13:5,13)
 - e. On the second missionary journey Barnabas wanted to take John-Mark along, but Paul

refused because of his earlier defection, so Barnabas took Mark to Cyprus where he probably encouraged him (Acts 15:36-41)

f. Paul was later reconciled with Mark:

1) Mark was with Paul during his imprisonment in Rome and served as his delegate in Asia Minor (Philemon 24; Col. 4:10)

2) Paul instructed Timothy to send Mark to Rome to be with him during his final imprisonment because he was useful to him for service (2 Tim. 4:11)

g. When 1 Peter was written, Mark was with Peter in Rome and regarded as Peter's spiritual son (1 Peter 5:13)

2. It is unlikely that the early church would have assigned the authorship of a Gospel to a person of secondary, and even "questionable" history as John Mark since he was neither an apostle, nor a person of prominence in the early church.

Malick also presents a long list of Church fathers that held to the authorship of Mark.

RECIPIENTS: Again it is generally accepted that Mark was aiming his work at the Gentile folks and by assumption we might suggest specifically the Gentiles in Rome where the book seems to have been written. I doubt that he had a wider audience in mind other than those he was specifically writing to. This is much like Paul's epistles which were read in their own time by only a few churches.

Malick suggests this as well. "The church fathers (see above under "Author") affirm that Mark's Gospel was written in Rome for Gentile, Roman Christians."

Some think that Luke may have gathered some of his information from Mark. This would have required an early writing of Mark.

DATE: 60 A.D. or earlier. Constable states 64-67 based on a comment in an extra-Biblical writing called the Anti-Marcionite Prologue which indicates Mark wrote after Peter and Paul were both dead. Again evidence from the Word would be nice rather than tradition. In the same section he mentions other information that indicates that Mark wrote just prior to Peter's death.

If other Gospel writers used Mark as a resource it would have had to have been early, but again, we have little information on that either.

Constable rejects the priority of Mark and opts for the priority of Matthew which would require his later dates for Mark.

LOCATION OF WRITING: Rome or at least Italy is suggested by tradition. The book seems

aimed toward Gentiles so this would be quite appropriate.

PURPOSE: To present Christ as the perfect servant to the Gentile readers.

Some suggest that Peter may have had a lot to do with the writing or at least had made his mind known that he was in favor of the book being written. It is not evident that this was the case, but may have been. It is further suggested that Mark gleaned the information that he set down from Peter. Again evidence would be good. For Mark to have gained all his information from Peter would assume that Mark had no knowledge of the Lord nor His ministry. Again we do not have evidence for that either.

KEY VERSE:

The book is basic and down to the nitty gritty of Christ's character, though Christ is seen as telling people not to publicize who He is to others. It is a quick overview of the Lord's life in three main areas of His public ministry.

The book seems to cover three distinct areas of the Lord's public life.

The ministry around Galilee (Chapters 1 - 8)

The Journey to Jerusalem (Chapters 8 -10)

The ministry around Jerusalem (Chapters 11-16)

There is a simplicity to the book in construction and grammar according to the commentators. His content leans toward the actions/miracles of the Lord rather than His words.

There is a study that I did years ago relating to the creatures of Ezekiel and Revelation. You might find it of interest. It also relates to the flags displayed by the tribes immediately around the tabernacle in the wilderness. I find the similarities striking between the Old Testament and the New.

GOSPEL	RECIPIENT	CHRIST	SYMBOL
Matthew	Jews	King	Lion
Mark	Romans	Servant	Ox
Luke	Greeks	Perfect man	Man
John	Hebrew Christians	Son of God	Eagle

The above listing is what I have read of and heard of for years, however the Pulpit Commentary takes a different order, but does relate the four to the Ezekiel and Revelation passages but misses the connection with the standards of the tribes. (The Pulpit Commentary states: "THE four living creatures mentioned in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:10), and which reappear in a modified form in the Apocalypse of St. John (John 4:7) [author note, this should be Revelation 4:7], are interpreted

by very many Christian writers to signify the fourfold Gospel, the four faces representing the four evangelists. The face of a man is supposed to denote St. Matthew, who describes the actions of our Lord more especially as to his human nature. The face of an eagle is understood to indicate St. John, who soars at once into the highest heavens, and commences his Gospel with that magnificent declaration, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Then the face of an ox symbolizes St. Luke, who commences his narrative with the priesthood of Zacharias. While, lastly, the face of a lion represents St. Mark, because he opens his Gospel with the trumpet voice, like the roaring of a lion, the loud call of the Baptist to repentance. These four carried the chariot of the gospel throughout the world, and subdued the nations to the obedience of Christ, the mighty Conqueror.")

The idea of Matthew relating to the King or lion is based on the strong emphasis upon the kingdom offered and later the kingdom postponed. Relating the others as seen by the Pulpit Commentary seem a little pressed. It seems to be that different people have different ideas and interpretations, though the Pulpit Commentary's take on this is the first time I personally have seen this arrangement/interpretation.

Both A.T. Robertson and B.W. Johnson in their harmonies show Matthew and Mark to run basically sequentially and parallel. The switch in Christ's ministry from Kingdom to non kingdom found in Matthew 13.10 relates to Mark 4.10. Since Mark is writing to the Gentiles, the kingdom/non kingdom shift is not seen. He is picturing Christ as one that you need to deal with on a personal basis. It is a practical down to earth look at the Lord and probably the fact that He is a Savior of all people, from Caesar to servant class.

APPLICATION:

1. Let us consider further the purpose of Mark writing his book. Assuming it was for Roman Gentiles in Rome, what was the purpose? Was it to Roman Christians? Probably not, for anyone wanting to know what Mark knew could ask him. Indeed they could have set up seminars for him to go into great detail of his knowledge of Christ.

It would seem more probable that Mark wanted to write something that would touch lost Gentiles with the Good News of Christ. It would seem more appropriate to look at the book as a work aimed at presenting Christ in such a way that a lost person could see who He was and what He did for them.

Something to consider as you study the book. The Life Application Bible opens their study of Mark with the following: "When you experience the excitement of a big event, you naturally want to tell someone. Telling the story can bring back that original thrill as you relive the experience. Reading Mark's first words, you can sense his excitement. Picture yourself in the crowd as Jesus heals and teaches. Imagine yourself as one of the disciples. Respond to his words of love and encouragement. And remember that Jesus came for us who live today as well as for those who lived 2,000 years ago."

2. Luke seems to portray an excitement about his Lord and Savior. He wants others to know of

his experience with the Lord, both spiritual, and physically while Christ was on earth. Just how excited are you about the Lord that died on the cross for you? Are you excited about telling others about Him? Have you written a book about what you have seen in your life via Christ?

It might be good if some of us were to sit down and write such accounts. The account might not make it to the best seller list, but someone in your family might pick it up and read it and meet your Lord through your words.

Often in families there is little left of the spiritual nature of the parent. This is sad, especially after the parent has died and an offspring meets the Lord - they then wonder if mom and dad knew the Lord. All too often this is the case.

Take time to make some notes and give some personal testimony. Stick it in a file somewhere, someone will find it and who knows how great a witness you might be, or how comforting your words will be to one of your children.

We are not a communicative society in America. We often allow our parents go to the grave without knowing them as a person, as an individual or as someone to be honored and respected. We are too busy with life to worry about such details.

Ten years after my parents were gone I started wondering about them and their life. I knew little about them, their friends, and their hopes and dreams that went unfulfilled.

Please take time to begin writing some things down for your kids and grandkids. Nope, they won't care about it now so don't bother giving it to them, just put it away where they will find it and enjoy the fact that you have left them a great legacy when it is most meaningful to them.

No, you will not be a Mark and you will not be read worldwide, but you will be appreciated by those that matter to you.

There is a real sense also that many pastors should be writing. I have encouraged more than one to begin writing their studies down, but have not seen any response. Many pastors spend hours and hours working over their messages, yet they do not share them further than their own congregation.

Their research could be of great value to others if they would only set it down in a decent readable form and put it on the Internet.

What a resource if dozens of men would put their research on the web for others to look through for ideas and to save them time in doing their own research.

It is suspected that many do not because they either do not want to "share" with others, or possibly that they might one day get paid for their work.

The thought of being paid for what God reveals to you from the Word always seemed rather

strange personally. If God gave you the education, if God revealed things from study, and if God is already supporting you through your church, why would one want further pay for God's work? But then this thinking is not natural to our society.

I have seen Bible Software companies that started out as freebie companies turn ultimately to the "charge for" side of business. This is their choice, however these companies once spoke of the other side of the coin as their belief and principle of operation. Not sure what changed their position.

All of my material has always been free and always will be in my own mind. Recently a publisher requested a copy of my theology for consideration, but one of their points was that if they were to publish the theology it would have to be removed from the Internet. Not going to happen.

Imagine if the apostles had all as individuals decided that they were going to keep their writing private until they could get it published. Not a realistic thought, but what if?

The Charismatic movement is full of people claiming their writing and their music is directly revealed from God. Not that I believe that claim, but what if it were - how could you take something that was revealed from God and sell it to others. Rather like the Bible publishers that want to get the Good News out to the lost, but only if they can get \$39.95 per copy.

Where have our values come from in this day Christian? Why must we commercialize the Good news of the Gospel? Why are we selling Christ to the lost? This may be one reason why they aren't buying our message!

MARK CHAPTER ONE

As we begin please take a moment and get into your mind just what the baptism of Christ was like, what the meaning of it was etc. Some questions to answer: What was the purpose of Christ's baptism? What was seen by the people? What was the sign and who/what was the sign for? What did God say at the time?

I might tell you that there are some that feel the dove descending was only descriptive of the UFO that descended over the area. The UFO was quiet and smooth as a dove. The 40 days in the wilderness was just the Gospel writer's way of accounting for the disappearance of the Lord from the earth for a time while he was on the UFO. Just thought we ought to start you out in your thinking on the right foot.

As the study progresses you will see the real baptism of Christ as it is actually recorded in the Word.

1:1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;

We see a simple start for the book, and a simple declaration that the author is going to start telling the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Not only is this book about the man Jesus, the Messiah, but the Son of the living God. Not only is it a book about the unique God-man, but it is about the Good News that the Son of God revealed to all of mankind.

The term translated "beginning" has the thought of something that commences something, or can relate to the cornerstone laid by which all other stones are laid. This is the CORNERSTONE account of the Good News of Christ.

2 As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. 3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

The term translated "written" is the term we gain our term "graphic" from. It is the written character. The tense used here is the perfect indicative which would indicate sometime past the writing took place and that the writing will continue into the future to a point of culmination. The indicative is a statement of fact - it is a sure thing.

The term "prophets" would refer back to the Old Testament prophets since the New Testament Prophets prophesied due to gifts of the Spirit which had not been given at the time of the beginning of the Lord's ministry, nor do we have any indication that any of those prophets wrote down any of their proclamations.

"Behold" is a verb in the imperative - do it - behold it - this is important. Pay attention to this information. Some preachers need to use this term before they start their message, maybe the

people would pay more attention to his thoughts.

"Messenger" is the word "angleos" which is normally translated angel. It is the same term translated angel in Rev. 3.1 where John mentions the angel of the church at Sardis. Since verse six of Mark one identifies this messenger to be John the Baptist, we know it is not in this context referring to an angel. We might further remember that John was born of a woman, again proving that he was not an angel.

We see two terms translated "before" in this verse. The first is the Greek word "pro" or before, but the second word is another Greek word that has the thought of before one in your presence or one going before that you can observe. This certainly pictures the Baptist and the Lord. They knew well what each other were doing, and John was preparing the way for Christ. (They were related by blood, in that Mary and Elizabeth, John the Baptist's mother were cousins according to Luke 1:36 "And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.") Whether they knew each other as relatives or even fellow ministers is not clear. We will see in this section that John states he did not know the Lord - by sight at least.

Just how did he prepare the way might be a great subject to delve into. We will not try to do that now, but suffice it to say now that whatever the Lord Jesus came to do, John was to smooth the way for that work - he was to assist by making the way easier.

Galatians declares the same truth in another manner. 4.4 "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." In "the fulness of the time was come" we find that the Lord came at just the right moment in history, at the precise time that God decreed it. Many historians have said that there would not have been a better time for Christ to come.

Politics was right for free travel, there was a common language across the land, the roads that the Romans built were the best in the world and allowed the Gospel to spread adequately. Everything in history was set - some might say the stage was set by God to accept His Son into history. In Mark we see that there was one there to precede the Son of God in ministry to make the way straight. Matthew 3.3 also mentions this fact as well as naming the prophet in question. "For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." As you study one gospel you will need to look at the other three gospels as well for they shed light upon one another.

The prophecy is found in Isaiah 40.3 "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: 5 And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see [it] together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken [it]." It is also recorded in Malachi 3.1.

Life Application Bible makes a good point as to why Mark mentions the forerunner John. "Why

does the Gospel of Mark begin with the story of John the Baptist and not mention the story of Jesus' birth? Important Roman officials of this day were always preceded by an announcer or herald. When the herald arrived in town, the people knew that someone of prominence would soon arrive. Because Mark's audience was primarily Roman Christians, he began his book with John the Baptist, whose mission it was to announce the coming of Jesus, the most important man who ever lived. Roman Christians would have been less interested in Jesus' birth than in this messenger who prepared the way."

4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

In this passage we want to look at two items, John baptizing in the wilderness and his baptism.

IN THE WILDERNESS: Vine mentions of this word "desolate, deserted, lonely" while another mentions "desert." Not a real pleasant place to be. It was not the Ritz and it was not where one would go for a time of refreshment. I looked at a satellite map of the area and it looks as barren as Vine describes it.

BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS:

Now, right away we should note that his baptism is not the same as church baptism. Church baptism is never called a baptism of repentance, nor is it linked directly to the remission of sins, but rather is an outward sign of inward regeneration. We have already, as church age believers repented of our sins and found forgiveness of our sins, and THEN we seek baptism as a sign of what God has done in our lives.

Acts mentions John's baptism several times. Once in relation to a time line of Christ's life in Acts 1.21 "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection."

Again in 10.36 where it mentions John's preaching: "The word which [God] sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) 37 That word, [I say], ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; 38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him." Here we see that there seems to be a finish to the baptism of John, "after the baptism which John preached" seems to be a break between John's ministry and the Lord's ministry.

In Acts 13.24ff we see that John ministered to the "people of Israel." This is of great note. He preached to the Jews, not to the Gentiles, nor to the church. "When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. 25 And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not [he]. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of [his] feet I am not worthy to loose."

The text also mentions "John fulfilled his course" indicating that there was a finish to what he was sent to do.

Acts 19.1ff is key. It again shows a difference between John's baptism and the baptism of the early church. They immediately knew there was a difference, and were properly baptized when they heard from Paul. "And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, 2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. 3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. 4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. 5 When they heard [this], they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

We are not given a 25 minute sermon on the difference between John's baptism and the baptism of the church, but it is clear that the difference exists.

For the most part, John was preaching to the Jewish folks that were looking for a king and kingdom. He was assisting them in preparation for that kingdom, though they soon rejected it because they did not like the teaching of the King. Christian baptism is an outward sign of an inward change of life that is due to belief and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit.

There is a large controversy about the "remission of sins" as well, but we won't deal with it here. Those that believe that baptism is required to be saved, camp on this phraseology both in Acts and Mark the last chapter. It will suffice to say that even the Jewish Historian Josephus did not believe in the idea that baptism was not an integrated part of salvation.

"Now some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and was a very just punishment for what he did against John called the Baptist [the dipper]. For Herod had him killed, although he was a good man and had urged the Jews to exert themselves to virtue, both as to justice toward one another and reverence towards God, and having done so join together in washing. For immersion in water, it was clear to him, could not be used for the forgiveness of sins, but as a sanctification of the body, and only if the soul was already thoroughly purified by right actions." (Antiquities 18.5.2 116-119 copied from <http://members.aol.com/fljosephus/JohnTBaptist.htm#Baptism> 3-18-07)

5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

This text has appeared in many of my studies to explain the word "all" adequately. "All the land of Judea" is the phrase that Mark uses, but we know that "all" of Judea did not go out to John. Many went even multitudes went to be baptized but not "all" as in every single person in Judea.

It is rather like my speaking generically of "the church" being lost in worldliness. Do I mean that every last church on the planet is lost in worldliness? No. It is only a figure of speech to indicate

a seeming totality, but not every single one.

It would seem that these folks were attempting to get right with God to the best of their ability. Yes, some were probably just following the crowd while others were making an outward show for the benefit of others, but many if not most were attempting to set things right before their God.

Long and hard have been the discussions of the word translated baptized. Many say that it can relate to pouring or sprinkling, but the thought of the word is to dip, to wash, or to whelm. None of these really picture sprinkling or pouring in my mind.

Did you notice when I read the quote from Josephus that even he believed John was immersing the people? "For immersion in water"

Immersion is the only logical conclusion since he was doing it in a river. If only sprinkling or pouring, he could have done it in Jerusalem where there was clear water and a Men's Warehouse and McDonalds.

Now if you want to talk about washing, when I was a kid my mother worked outside the home so I was expected to wash the lunch dishes when arriving home after school. I would fill the sink and put all the dishes in the water and go watch television for an hour or so. By the time I returned I could just pick them out of the water and rinse them under the faucet. Now as to the silverware, I always did it a little differently because the soaking did not always do the trick. She had a Pyrex coffee maker and I would put it under the faucet, put the silverware in and run the hot water into the coffee pot for several minutes as hot as it would go. Again, after a little television and the silverware was clean.

Wash means wash to me, it means under water and cleaned.

They were confessing their sins. "Sins" is the normal word translated sin in the New Testament. Simply it relates to missing the mark or in this case missing the mark set by God for our spiritual lives.

As to "confessing" we see Romans 14.11 speaks to all bowing to confess Christ in the end. This is the same word. It relates to the agreement on sin or having the same view of your action as the Lord does. Now this is pretty difficult in our own day since there is little in life that is really wrong if "YOU" deem it okay. Sin is a rather obscure idea these days. We may make a mistake but never sin.

When men speak of their infidelity it is a mistake, or maybe even a BIG mistake, but seldom do they have God's view of their sinful act. Indeed seldom do they have their wife's view of the sinfulness of their act. Confession must be the thought of knowing how God feels about the situation and agreeing with Him that it was truly wrong. Philippians 2.11 uses the same term. "And [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father." They will agree with God about Who Christ is.

When you go to your prayer time and seek forgiveness, take a little time to consider your wrongs and see if you can come to God's view of what you have done. That is what confession is really about.

6 And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

Okay, the clothes I can put up with but never the diet! John, how could you set such a disgusting example for us? This diet sounds like the diet my doctor wants me to follow - low fat, low salt and low sugar. I often comment that the doctor has me on a Styrofoam and water diet, but that is rather exaggerating it to me.

Life Application Bible states that John chose this sort of clothing to separate from the religious leaders of the day. I would challenge this line of thought and suggest that he was wearing what he could afford to wear. Many of God's servants dress a little less than the norm due to lack of money to dress as their followers would have them dress.

Taken to task once because I wore a sweater and cowboy boots instead of a suit with my nice shirt and tie, I often attempt to dress as best I can but I do not take the opinions of the religious leaders of how I dress. I wear that which I can afford and do not attempt to make myself something I am not - as many seem to do.

Locust and wild honey! Everyone knows honey is not to be eaten unless it is prepared properly and out of a plastic container! Locust is even worse. Years ago the Midwest was pleased with a super abundance of grasshoppers. They were thick as a cloud at times in the air and as you drove down the highway you could hear the crunching under the wheels. The cars were literally covered with the dead grasshoppers. I can't imagine too many Americans wanting to eat one of those things much less have them for a steady diet.

The authorities relate that the locust blow into Israel on a fairly regular basis and that they are eaten by many. There are many ways to prepare them for eating including roasted, salted, fried in butter, and raw. Our taste in America is much different than many other peoples of the world.

While in the Navy I served as a Shore Patrolman from time to time. When in Hong Kong our area to cover was rather out of the way and in the middle of a market. I could not believe what people were actually willing to pay for to take home and eat. The hamburger at the end of the shift was much appreciated, though I wondered what might have been in it.

A. T. Robertson relates that the people of this area even today collect wild honey and sell it for a living.

I have read that there was a plant that had an edible meat on it that they think might have been what Mark had in mind, though the accounts of yearly migrations of locust make me think the footed finger food might be the more likely.

One might wonder at the attire and diet of John, and one might wonder if it were not the result of his total rejection of the world system of his time, and a total reliance upon the Lord for provision. After all, the Lord promises provision of needs to the birds of the air, but that involves living in nests in trees and eating bugs and worms.

There is one story that must be shared. When teaching we were on a very limited support and many times our budget for food was quite small. We ate what we could afford and enjoyed timely gifts from the Lord. One year we were allowed to glean a potato field and those small red potatoes were so great when fried. Later in the year someone donated cases and cases of eggs to the school. For weeks we had eggs three meals a day. The question was not what do you want for dinner; it was how would you like your eggs.

All of this calls up the point of what do we really need to survive this life. Do we need the cars, the appliances, the houses, the clothes and all that other stuff, or could we do with a considerable amount less? Might we consider John's lifestyle and wonder at our own and even maybe reconsider our own a little while?

Camel's hair and skins: What can be said of this? Not too much. He wore camel skins and skins around his waist. Kind of like a caveman. Hope I did not just make the same mistake GEICO made :-)

7 And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

Imagine the listener when they heard these words from John. He was a powerful, verbal man who was setting the country on its collective ear and yet he declares quite specifically that he is peanuts in comparison to the one that will one day come.

It would be hard to imagine anyone "mightier" than one that could draw crowds of all strata of society; someone more influential than one that was drawing crowds of people from the cities into the wilderness to be dunked in a dirty river.

It may be of note that John knew that he was to die an early death in that he said, "There cometh one mightier than I after me." Note the "after" indicating that he might pass before the mightier one would become prominent.

"Cometh" is in the present tense so he knew Christ was becoming active in His ministry.

I am sure that it has crossed other minds through the ages that these two men must have had some interesting talks with themselves in those times when they found time to think. They knew who they were, they knew their coming lives and how they would play out in history. There must have been a focus of mind that most of us have never been capable of having to continue on toward their end.

There most certainly were critics that questioned who they were and what their true ministry was

to be, yet they did not allow detractors to mislead them from their focus on God's plan for their lives. One must also wonder at just how John knew what that plan was and why he was so focused. Did God reveal it to him directly, or did he just KNOW what he was to do. Of course Christ knew his reason for being on earth, and He most certainly knew His end, but John was not God and could not have known without something special happening in his life to give him that confidence and knowledge of coming ministry. We will see indication soon that God had revealed some information to Him.

8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

This passage is used to prove that there is a second work of grace when the Holy Spirit is poured out in some manner after salvation to bring special whatever upon the believer. This is often called the second blessing, or in the case of Pentecostals the baptism of the Spirit. When it happens the "sign" of course is speaking in tongues as they did on the day of Pentecost. HOWEVER, there is no indication of this teaching in this context or verse. It is a simple statement that Christ would baptize with the Holy Spirit, as in salvation. We are baptized into the body of Christ via the Spirit. To make more of this is to read into the context a lot more than the normal meaning of words allows.

It is a further statement that John knew that what Christ was going to do was far greater than anything he could do, even though he was a most influential man.

This would also give rise to the assumption that John knew the purpose and work of Christ. He knew a lot more about Christ than the average person. Indeed, it would seem that He knew this Christ was God, and that Christ was here to do a work far above what any man could do. To know that Christ could command the Spirit in the act of baptizing men there would have to be a great knowledge of God's plan for that point in time.

9 And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.

Here we have the simple statement that Christ came for baptism. This would make most wonder about the present "cometh" used in the previous text. Was John looking upon the scene around him and did he see Christ coming, or were the two passages removed from one another more than that?

The phrase "And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan." would indicate that this was a different time than the passage relating to Christ coming. The synoptics do not shed any further light on this either.

Only Matthew records the hesitation of John to baptize the Lord. Matthew 3.14 mentions "But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? 15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him."

If our assumption is correct that John knew a lot more than others about the baptism of the Spirit then this passage would only add further weight to our thinking. He states that he needs Christ's baptism rather than Christ needing his. John knew that his baptism was for one purpose, while Christ's baptism was for another purpose.

It is always rather strange to me that those that trace baptism back to the New Testament time go clear back to John the one that had an inferior baptism to the Lord's or believer's baptism. Indeed in Acts the baptism of John was shown to be inferior to church age baptism or believer's baptism. Why would you trace your "spiritual lineage" to an inferior baptism?

Those that believe that the local church is the only church often hold to what is called apostolic succession which goes back to John. Their doctrine is really named incorrectly since John was not an apostle in the sense of the twelve. Indeed if they held to their name they would be more correct - holding to succession back to believer's baptism. They believe that if you are not baptized by one that was baptized by one that was baptized by one that was baptized -- back to John that you have not been properly baptized.

The question should arise, if you trace your authority and purpose back to a man who offered an inferior/different baptism, is your baptism then not inferior also?

10 And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:

Uhhh, LOGIC BREAK. If Christ came "up out of the water," he must have been down in it - IMMERSION seems the LOGICAL conclusion.

Matthew 3.16 "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him"

Luke 3.21 "Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, 22 And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased."

One is hard pressed to understand the pictures that have been produced, and the teaching that have been taught that all around Christ saw this event. They may have, but the text does not tell us that. The text could well read that Christ only saw the events contained in these verses. Is there any other passage that would suggest that others saw the event other than the physical baptism of the Lord?

To answer the question let us read from John 1.19 "And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? 20 And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. 21 And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. 22 Then said they

unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? 23 He said, I [am] the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. 24 And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. 25 And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? 26 John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; 27 He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. 8 These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. 29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. 30 This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. 31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. 32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. 33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. 34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. [Bethabara is not a known location. One places it about 25 miles from Nazareth while most suggest it was east of Jerusalem and "beyond Jordon" - People were mentioned as coming from Jerusalem so most assume this locates the area in the southern part of the Jordon River rather than the northern part.]

It would seem that at least John and Christ saw the events following Christ's baptism but whether the people did or not is up for debate.

We also see further information about what John knew. In verse 32-34 it is revealed that God spoke directly to John at some time about his ministry as well as the coming of one that is mightier. Only by seeing the dove descending was John to know the Christ.

I think we have seen the importance of looking at all four gospels to gain the entire picture.

11 And there came a voice from heaven, [saying], Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Again, there is no indication here whether all heard the voice, or just the Lord and John. We saw from the Gospel of John that the dove was a sign to John the Baptist, thus the dove and voice may well have been uniquely tied together. Matthew mentions that the heavens were opened to "him" indicating John the Baptist. Luke does not indicate that anyone but Christ and John saw or heard this.

It would seem that if all the people saw this that there would have been quite a stir and that one of the synoptic writers would have mentioned it.

II Peter 1.16 mentions the similar situation relating to the Mount of Transfiguration occasion. "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent

glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. 18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." Peter was speaking of an occasion when there was a voice from God declaring Christ, Matthew 17.5 and Mark 9.2.

A point should be declared here. John the Baptist observed such a voice as did some of the disciples. Matthew and Mark declare these disciples to have been Peter, James and John. It would be of interest as to why these four men had a direct declaration from God Himself that Christ was the Son of God. What special need did they have in their coming lives to have this bestowed upon them?

Since John the Baptist was martyred this may have been a real boost to his confidence in facing his coming death. Peter, being the prime mover in the early church faced many trials as well that could have used a confidence booster - not to forget his hesitancy to acknowledge the Lord after the arrest of the Lord.

Just why James and John had this experience we don't know. James was the leader of the church at Jerusalem and John may have needed this for his knowledge in recording his Gospel. The point is what grand knowledge to have had before going into the heavy duties of the Lord. God knew that they would need this for whatever the reason.

We also should give ourselves comfort in knowing that God will prepare us for the tasks He has for us. No matter how bad or how hard, He will prepare us adequately to face all that might come our way. We need not doubt that He has us prepared according to His need.

The term translated "voice" is the word we gain our word "phone" from. It has the idea of sound forth or voice. One of the leaders in one of the churches we have been a part of over the years has a voice that reminds me of the cartoons – you know when someone is towering over another with their mouth opened into a chasm yelling at the other. The listener is bent backward and his hair and clothing are being blown backward due to the force of the voice of the other. This deacon is rather quiet in most of his talking, but when he gets excited he does not control the force of his voice well. The force reminds me of these cartoon characters. His voice is booming, it is largeness itself and to the point of being physically painful to the ear in a small room.

I have to imagine that this would be similar to what God's voice might be like, not that it is meant to terrify, only that there is the force of almighty God behind it.

Mark and Luke state that God said "thou" art, while Matthew mentions "this is" my son. It could be assumed that Matthew was using poetic license to make a special point to the Jewish reader, but he may also just have given this angle without thinking of the specific wording. It might be more to the point to contemplate why God would tell Jesus that He was His son, when they both knew the fact intimately well.

12 And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.

I will not make a lot of the point that the Spirit descended and "immediately the Spirit" was

working in His life. Some make huge effort to prove that Christ did all He did on earth by His own divine power, yet here it is plain that the Spirit was very powerful in His life. "Driveth" is not the term I would have used of a being that was choosing His own options in life.

"Driveth" is normally translated "cast out" which demands a little more than just a minor "leading" of the Spirit, but a real force in His life. The lexicon lists as part of the meaning the thought of "deprive of power" thus again we see something that is of marked import, not just something of insignificance. Christ was driven to the wilderness for God's purpose. Again, if Christ was under His own divine power, do you think the Spirit could "drive" Him or indeed need to drive Him? It seems rather inconsistent to me.

"Wilderness" gives a good definition to the word. Desert is also a possible aspect to the word. One aspect that might be surmised but that is not evident in the word itself is "lonely" which seems to be an additional thought of the word. Not only was Christ in a desolate place, but a lonely place as well.

Matthew 4.1 "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." The term Matthew uses is more in line with the thought of leading and it is in the passive voice which would indicate the action did not involve the Lord. It was the Spirit that was doing the action. This is the case in the Luke text as well. The Lord was being acted upon according to Matthew and Luke, while Mark also pictures the Spirit as the active member of the situation. It would seem that Christ was definitely moved of the Spirit to go into the wilderness.

Luke also uses the term "led" to describe this moment in the Lord's life. 4.1 "and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness" The term he uses has the thought of laying hold of to lead as you would lead an animal.

The synoptics seem to picture Christ as being led or directed quite forcefully into the wilderness. It is of note that there were different words used. From the Spirit's action it seems to be much more forceful, but from Jesus perspective much less forceful. What a perfect picture of God's working in our lives. We see His leading as a part of our life, something that is allowed, yet in God's mind and action it is something that is much more forceful and definite. (Calvinists, do not make too much of this statement, it does not mean that Christ had no choice in the situation and I do not imply such :-)

This is such a beautiful picture of God's working in the background of our lives. We seldom know the intricacies of His working and protecting within our lives. He is constantly involved in our lives background not just spasmodically. Many times in our lives it has been evident in retrospect that He was so totally in our lives. Many times when we have narrowly avoided terrible accidents or problems, it has been evident in looking back over the situation that many little things came together to bring us to the close call rather than the catastrophe that it could have been.

One Christmas we were to drive to another state for the day. When I was finished with work, I climbed into the car and found we had car trouble. The problem added about a half-hour to our

departure time. We finally left our home and started down the freeway. As we entered the interchange area where we needed to go north, we could see a large fire burning. The nearer we came to the fire the more chilled we became. It was a fuel tanker that had overturned on the exit area where we needed to go north.

The terrible thought was plain in our minds - what if the car had not given trouble - might we have been in that disastrous wreck?

13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

Christ was tempted. The word translated "tempted" also has the idea of assay, or test to see what the quality is. The old west was full of assay offices where gold was to be found. The prospector would bring his gold to the assay office to find out what quality the gold was, was it poor or was it of high quality.

Not that anyone needs to be told just how Christ would assay out, He is perfection, He is God, how could the assay come back wanting? On the other hand who would be stupid enough to want to test Christ as to quality? No thinking person would suggest such a thing, but Satan - Satan is another being, he just cannot take God at His word, he must test everything that God does or says, lest God be found wanting in some way.

Now I don't know the motivation of Satan at this point, whether he is really inept enough to wonder who and what Christ is or whether he is doing this out of sheer desperation. He wants to see if he can find some imperfection in the Lord so that he can point his finger at God and make accusation.

Either way, can you put yourself in the Devil's position and feel his pain? I think there must have been a heavy dose of "that sinking feeling."

The term wilderness is the same term as we have already seen - desert, deserted and those other descriptive terms. Christ was alone with this creature that had been against God from his early days. There must have been a side order of fear in Christ to know the past activity of Satan and to know of his hatred for God. To be alone with such a creature must have been a trial in itself on top of the temptations that went along with it.

As with our previous study, the whole story is in the synoptics. Matthew 4.1ff and Luke 4.1ff both give the detail of the temptations and Matthew ends the section with the following comment. "Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him." There was a lot of time between the temptation that Mark mentions and the angels ministering.

This is normal in the gospels, the different writers leaving out portions of the actual account to bring about the account that they wanted to set down for their readers.

Luke mentions in 4.13 "And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season." Often we envision this temptation as the one time event where Christ was the victor and the opponent went off sulking - not so. This was only the first of the temptations that the Lord was to endure over the course of his ministry.

Don't be lulled into complacency. Be watchful for the Devil's approach. You may feel you have dealt with him, but he is always lurking and watching for a chance to clobber you when you are off guard.

Years ago when pastoring a small work, there had been a lot of discussion about our church buying a Jehovah witness hall for a meeting place. I was opposed to it due to the fact that we had no finances for such a venture and second the town was very anti Jehovah Witness. Most people had signs on their front doors warning the Jehovah Witnesses that they were not welcome to knock.

I had talked to a lot of the townsfolk and found that they to a man told me to not get involved with the building if we ever wanted to grow.

The church met to discuss the issue, voted on it and unanimously decided it would be a poor decision. Having set that beast aside I thought smooth sailing was ahead. About two months later as I was relaxing at a potluck, one of the men of the church - one who did not attend the meeting on the building - sat down beside me and suggested that the church reconsider the Jehovah Witness building. He had been talking to those in the know about the cost of the building etc. and thought reconsideration was in order.

The devil hit me when I was relaxing at a potluck - he never rests even if we try to.

The temptation was followed by a time of recuperation. God sent angels to minister to the Lord. The word translated "minister" is the term that we gain deacon from. It relates to serving the needs of another. Christ had needs and God was there to meet them for Him.

There must have been enjoyment in the Lord's mind to know that the Devil was gone for awhile and He could accept the ministrations of the angels. So, when you have had hard trials, open yourself to the ministrations of others. They are there to assist you, and it is good for you to allow them to have this ministry with you.

On the same hand, do not feel guilty about taking some time for you to recoup from hard times. Take time to refresh, to reflect and to thank the Lord for what he has done in your life.

14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

It is almost as though Christ beginning His ministry was dependent on the decline of the Baptist. Matthew 4.12 mentions "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;"

The Matthew text indicates this even further, however it would seem that Christ was in the area that John was in and when John was imprisoned, Christ left that area to go to Galilee which is north of the area attributed to John. Mark also rather indicates that Mark was in Galilee when he records, "Jesus came into Galilee."

Christ leaving upon the imprisonment does not indicate that He was afraid of trouble, but just that He knew His purpose on earth and knew that He had not finished his work. Other places in the Gospels show Christ desirous of not drawing attention to himself (Mark 7.35ff for one) so that He would not be hindered in His work on earth.

15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

Again we see the thought of the right time, the appointed time and it is in the context of "the kingdom of God is at hand." Christ is preaching the kingdom at this point, not a salvation of grace based on the cross. This is terribly important in our understanding of the gospels. Christ preached the coming kingdom for a good portion of His earthly ministry, and only after the Jews had rejected this gospel did He start teaching about the church age.

Care must be taken not to mix the gospel of the kingdom message with Christ's later message aimed at the beginning of the church age. The two are not the same and must not be taught as the same. The kingdom information is for a time when Christ will rule here on earth and is not for the church age. Be careful to note the context and time of the synoptics and the information that they contain.

The term repent is the same idea as the term used in verse four where John the Baptist was preaching repentance. To change one's mind is the thought. To change your mind about the kingdom, about God or whatever you are considering. When you are looking at flat screen televisions and you have decided to purchase one and you check with your wife or checkbook and find that you cannot go through with the purchase, you repent or change your mind.

The nonbeliever that considers the claims of Christ, and decides that Christ was who He said He was, has changed his mind, or repented of his former belief.

This is the key of the kingdom gospel. The Jews were to reconsider their view of God and have a change of mind to prepare for the kingdom. If there was no change of mind, then they were not prepared or ready for the kingdom.

The same is true of church age belief. The lost person must consider the gospel, and change their mind as to the world view and God's view. There must be a change of mind for the person to be ready for regeneration.

Not only is there a difference of gospels, there is a difference in another area which will be seen as we go along. Much has been written about two terms that you will run into in the synoptics; the "kingdom of God" and "the kingdom of heaven." Again, don't be quick to assume they are

the same kingdom. They are not the same, though there are many similarities.

Take time to list all of the occurrences of both terms, then read each passage and observe their individual qualities. Find the similarities and note the differences. You will find that both are quite similar, but that there is definitely a difference. (You can find a listing of both terms in my theology if you are interested in this study.)

16 Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

Matthew further identifies Simon as Simon Peter. We are not told whether Christ knew these two men previously or whether this was just a chance happening of circumstance. In the next verse we are told that he called them to follow Him and they responded by dropping their nets and going with Him.

This would indicate that there was some prior contact, else wise why would men that were dependent on fishing for their living just drop everything and follow Him. There must have been some reason in their minds - some thought of who he was or they would not have followed.

17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.
18 And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.

In my mind this passage displays a basis for the call of God upon a man for ministry. This was not a call to salvation, indeed one might wonder if that had not already happened in these men's lives. This was a call to training, a call to follow Him and a call to learn of Him.

There had to have been some decision in their minds to drop what they were doing and to respond to this call.

The "come ye" was not just an invitation, but it was an imperative, a command, or an order to action. Again, it would seem that there had been interaction before this occasion, otherwise why would two intelligent brothers follow the command of a total stranger.

The term "followed" has the thought of not only coming along behind, but that of doing so as a disciple. These men understood that they were going to be trained as fishers of men. They seemed to understand what was coming in their lives and they accepted this call upon their life.

So men and women today understand that call to minister as a setting aside of present situations and going off to follow one that will train them. One of the men of Moody's day, indeed it may have been Moody himself said something along the lines that God doesn't call prepared men; he prepares the men He calls.

This is important to understand. You may be trained in a certain field, but when God calls you He may have other plans for your life. He might use you in your field of training but from observation of life, He seldom does.

He wants you prepared as He wants you rather than as you are. If you are reading this and God has been prodding you to consider ministry rather than the occupation you are in or might be preparing for, don't worry about dropping your nets and following Him, He certainly knows better than you.

In my early Christian life I was a television repairman. When God started moving me toward ministry I of course checked into missionary aviation and radio. I was a good technician so God must want me fixing radios for Him. Nope, that door was slammed shut when I tried to open it.

I continued to pray and consider, and realized that He had other plans for me. It turns out He used that technician training to support us through school and many non-paying ministries. He knows MUCH better than you what He wants of you. When He calls, just drop your nets and follow. It is a simple formula.

We might add John 1.35-42 to our understanding of the call we have just covered. 35 "Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; 36 And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! 37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. 38 Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? 39 He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. 40 One of the two which heard John [speak], and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. 42 And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone."

Andrew and Peter certainly did know of the Christ before they were called by him to be disciples. Andrew had been following John and knew of the coming Messiah.

19 And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the [son] of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. 20 And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

Two more that were fishing called to be apostles. Humm do we see a pattern here? Four fishermen, is this a Biblical okay to go fishing fellows? Well maybe not since they left their fishing to do service for their God.

Again we don't know what the precursors were to this call, but we might have indication in Acts 1.21 that all of the disciples were at least hearers of John the Baptist if not followers. In the context of picking a replacement for Judas one of the comments made was 21 "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection." It would seem logical to conclude that they all were at the very least knowledgeable of John.

Now we should look at one more line of thought. If this is true and it seems to be, then might part of the smoothing of the way that John was to do, have been the pre-training of the twelve. John's ministry would have brought them to purity of life and started them on their spiritual journey with the Lord even before He had appeared on the scene.

21 And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. 22 And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

In verse 14 we saw Christ walking by the Sea of Galilee and now in verse 21 we are told he went into Capernaum which is situated at the North end of the Sea of Galilee.

He entered the synagogue which would be the normal thing to expect. He was here to fulfill the law so He would naturally do all those things that He was expected to do. Not only did He go, He taught those that would listen. It is not surprising that "they were astonished at his doctrine:" and that "he taught them as one that had authority," which is not surprising either.

Two items: Surprising doctrine and He taught as one with authority. We are not told what doctrine He was teaching but we can assume that it was related to the coming kingdom rather than the Old Testament law. He was on earth to set up His kingdom and He would not have wasted time on other information.

He had all authority since He was God, so it shouldn't surprise us that this was the case. The interesting point is that the people realized His authoritativeness as compared to that of the Scribes. Evidently the Scribes were well known and not to be trusted in doctrine else why would they not appear to have authority.

It might be surmised that the Scribes are as many pastors today, preaching one thing and living another. We are continually hearing of men who have had ongoing adulterous relationships that have spanned years and years, we have men who are addicted to gambling as well as women and are stealing from their church to support their sin.

I frequent Internet forums and often there are discussions of pastors that are addicted to pornography and want to know what to do - STOP IT would be good!

The people are not stupid, even today in our churches the people know when their speakers are "without authority" and they rightly reject what they are hearing.

Pastors and teachers, when you step up to teach others be sure you are on holy ground with God and teach truth with the authority that He has given you. If you have sin in your life, be sure to get right before you dare to teach others how to live a holy life.

I recently read the account of a man who had been having an affair for over twenty years. It started before he divorced his first wife and it continued on till well after he married his second wife. No, I will call that an adulterous relationship - affair sounds so simple and nice, while

adultery is the truth. He continued on with his adultery through two wives and speaking in churches across the country. What a hypocrite and how much authority does he have now that he has been exposed. How do people who sat under his preaching sort out what was truth and what was lie as they consider his ministry to them?

23 And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, 24 Saying, Let [us] alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. 25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. 26 And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.

The term translated synagogue does not relate to the usual thought of the American mind of a synagogue - a building where Jewish people meet. The word is like the word translated "church" - the assembly of people rather than the building that they meet in. The church today is the building in most cases and this is indeed very sad. The Scripture is clear that the church is the assembly, the body, the people, not the bricks and mortar.

However today the church is seldom seen as the people, if it isn't seen as the building it is seen as the organization or hierarchy of the leadership. The organization today must survive as well as the building, but don't sweat the people, they are replaceable in most leaders minds. Many Christian organizations are in save the organization mode rather than minister to the people mode.

It is of note that Mark relates the proper context to the word by the phrase "was in their synagogue" which indicates it was the people's assembly rather than THE assembly.

"Unclean" is usually translated thusly, but is also translated "foul" which is used of foul weather in Matt. 16.3; of a foul spirit in Mark 9.25; and of foul spirits in Rev. 18.2 "And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird."

"Cried out" has the thought of raising a cry from the depths of the throat. Not just a whimper or crying, but a cry of total desperation if not fear. This man was in a terrible situation and the Lord opened His heart to assist him in his plight.

You might notice a difference between vs. 23 and 24 in the number of spirits. One says "an unclean" while the next verse mentions us and we. Verse 23 actually does not give indication of number in the Greek. It simply states that there was a man with unclean spirit. The Luke passage follows Mark almost identically. The man had unclean spirit and the spirit identifies himself as plural. From the outward appearance singular might have been the image. Unless the spirits identified themselves to the outside world, the ravings of one possessed might well seem to be just a single spirit.

On the other hand, Christ deals with a singular spirit. It could be that he was dealing with the one that spoke and communicated with Him, but more likely he was dealing with the Devil

himself and other spirits, but Christ knew that it was the Devil that he must deal with in this situation. In verse twenty-six the emphasis shifts back to a singular which would fit the idea that it was the Devil that was under attack, even if there were other spirits involved.

Just a note of information in verse twenty six the term translated "came out" is the word that "exorcism" comes from.

It is of note that the Mark passage mentions the spirit "tore" the man and cried and then came out. The Luke account however mentions "he came out of him, and hurt him not." (Luke 4.35) The term torn in our language indicates the tearing as in parting of one into two. The tearing of the seat of your pants indicates the fabric is separated, while the Greek term relates to convulse or spasmodic contraction. Jerk might be a better word than torn in our particular time and culture.

The cry was a different word than in verse 23. This word relates to the cry of a raven or to croak. This wasn't the same deep down cry but rather a voice to the finish of the possession. Not altogether quiet, but the raven is quite a different sound.

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.

Luke 4.36 puts it this way: "And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out."

Note that Mark uses the term "doctrine" while Luke uses the term "word" when describing Christ's verbalization with the spirit. Mark uses the term that normally is translated doctrine while Luke uses the term "logos" or "word" to describe it. Since they were quoting observations, it may have been that Mark heard one person's comment while Luke heard another person's comment. The two terms are not that separate, for doctrine is made up of words.

The observers were not just surprised, but they were astonished at this occurrence. They had not seen anything like this.

One might wonder at the possessed man being in the synagogue. Was this a test of the Devil for the Lord? Why would the Devil allow one he is possessing to enter a place of worship, unless to disrupt or test. The introduction of this man would seem to be nothing out of the ordinary. The text just states that this possessed man was part of the group at the synagogue

The term translated "authority" in both accounts is the same word which means authority, yet a possible translation of the term is "liberty of doing as one pleases" giving quite a picture of the Lord. This man Jesus has liberty to do anything He wants to do. No wonder they were amazed and thought he had authority and power. (Luke mentions both authority and power while Mark just mentions the authority.)

Placing myself in a crowd of lost people if I saw someone come in and cast out spirits, I think I would be properly impressed, amazed and be left to wonder at the ability of this person. It is quite understandable in my mind. Add to that the fact that the others most likely knew this man who was possessed, and they now had their acquaintance back in a normal state and they could again interact with him on a normal basis. There must have been a lot of thankfulness in their minds as well, though it is not stated in the text.

Barnes makes the following statement: "He did it in his own name, and by his own authority." I would suggest that you find this in the Scripture text. He did it with authority, but it does not mention whose authority it was. I would suggest sticking to the text, rather than opinion. Barnes suggests the common teaching that Christ as God performed miracles via His own power; however this is up for much discussion.

28 And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.

The Lord was becoming well known from this one miracle. The word translated "fame" is the normal word for ear but is translated fame and rumor also. This would indicate that the word was spreading by word of mouth. Actually that is about the only way that news traveled in that period of time. They had no blackberry, no laptop, no pocket phones, just the old word of mouth which worked quite well without having to carry extra batteries or chargers.

Often in the Gospels you will see that Christ tried to suppress his fame by asking people not to tell anyone about what they had observed. Some feel this was a ploy to get them to go tell everyone, however that seems rather disingenuous of the Lord and I doubt that this would have been an action He would have taken.

I'm sure many in our world would give anything to be able to be involved in one occurrence and draw that sort of acclaim. This casting out of demons was a very unique occurrence otherwise the news would not have traveled as quickly as it did.

29 And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her. 31 And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

We see that Peter had a house and in the next verse we will see that he had a wife. I won't make too much of a deal about the first Pope, owning property and having a wife, but he did according to the Word of God. You cannot argue with that authoritative source.

"Anon" simply means immediately or without intermission. They immediately told Christ of the sick mother.

I do not think that we should make too much of Peter not telling Christ that his mother-in-law was sick and that others had to do the informing. I would not want to imply that Peter had anything against her. Luke uses the term "they" while Matthew does not state who told Christ.

Being the first day or two on the job Peter didn't want to bug the boss with a fever.

Mark does not mention the detail of the healing, but Luke records that Christ "rebuked the fever;" indicating that there was more to it than just a touch as Matthew and Mark mention. The term "rebuked" is the same term used when Christ was dealing with the possessed man in the synagogue and it would indicate that Christ had authority over this fever as well as the demons in the man.

In two miracles we see that Christ had authority over the spirit world as well as natural disease. Rather impressive for His resume I would think. The people certainly should have been taking note of His work and ministry.

The result of this healing was that the woman immediately ministered to the visitors. It might be of note as well that when Christ healed her the woman was completely healed and IMMEDIATELY went to serving others. Now when you hear of modern day miracles be sure to compare them to this result. It was not a partial healing; it was not a long term healing process, but an immediate removal of the fever.

32 And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. 33 And all the city was gathered together at the door. 34 And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.

In reading the synoptics you will note two items. Matthew relates this occurrence to Isaiah 53.4 where it mentions "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." Now Matthew only mentions the first half of the verse. He states, "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases." The last half of the verse had not occurred yet and indeed Matthew would not have grasped the meaning of it at that point in time.

One must wonder if later in Matthew's life if he remembered this passage and related the last half of the verse with what he saw occurring in the Savior's life.

The second item of note is that Christ "suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him." Luke in verse 41 states "And devils also came out from many, crying out, and saying, Thou art the Son of God. And rebuking them, he suffered them not to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.

Imagine Jewish leaders that might have been in the audience hearing demons tell the crowd that this was the Son of God and the Christ. In their minds they had to wonder if this was a fake show of some sort or if this was really the Messiah. (Since the whole town came out it would seem that Jewish leaders would have been present.)

One might ponder how the demons knew who Christ was. Simple answer to that one - they knew Him from the beginning of their existence. He - God - was part of their rebellion - they knew

Him intimately, for they had sought to help Lucifer to usurp God. Indeed He was their creator - of course they knew Him!

Just a note about Harmony of the Gospel works. Be careful in choosing a Harmony since there are some good ones and some that are not so good. Example: The Harmony by Robertson lists this account in Matthew, Mark and Luke, but one Harmony I checked left out the Matthew account. This is obviously the same occurrence since it is specifically Peter's mother-in-law sick with a fever.

There is a very important item that would have been missed by folks using the erroneous Harmony - the fact that Matthew related this to Isaiah 53.4.

I might mention in passing and leave the detail to another study that the Charismatic movement camp on this passage for partial basis for their belief in healing. They often quote the Isaiah passage and tell us that healing is part of the atonement made by Christ on the cross.

Uhhh LOGIC break please. Matthew relates this to the ministry of the Messiah to the Jewish people long before the cross and just one further point - this is not the church, this is Jewish and Millennial in nature.

Care must be taken when looking into the Gospels as there is material for both the millennial kingdom and information for the church age. Christ came to set up the millennium but the Jews rejected Him and His kingdom because it was not what they wanted. They wanted someone to overrun the Roman government and set them free of their heavy hand but Christ was offering them a different pattern of attack which they did not want to hear.

They were confronted with miracle after miracle but still rejected their king.

Even today lost people can see item after item that points to the Lord and yet they continue to reject Christ. Long years ago I worked with an old man in an American Missionary Fellowship church. One day we were talking of this and he shared a story from his life from long before, yet his eyes were still full of tears when recounting about his father on his deathbed. The father had been confronted many times by his son with the Gospel yet the old man continued to reject. Even after one final plea as his father was dieing the son pleaded with his father asking him to trust Christ but the father went to eternity without making that decision. He had seen his son's life of commitment to the Lord yet he rejected everything his son loved.

Just a short note about the healing in verse 34. The Lord healed all that came to Him for healing, he didn't heal some and not others as the healers of today do. All comers were made whole, not just a few of the easy ones to fix. To heal as the Lord healed or as Paul healed you could heal everyone in the hospital, close the doors and stand outside and heal all that came for care.

35 And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. 36 And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. 37 And when they had found him, they said unto him, All [men] seek for thee. 38 And he said

unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.
39 And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

It would seem according to Luke that the crowd was close behind the disciples "...and the multitudes sought after him and came unto him and would have stayed him...."

Both Mark and Luke mention the thought that Christ came to minister to these particular people. Luke uses the term "sent" to describe Christ's compulsion to minister to these.

Matthew adds 4.23 "...preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness. 24 And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them. 25 And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan."

Now before we go too much further let me assure you that I believe that God can perform miraculous things in our day if or when He has a mind to, however I do not believe that the kind of miracles Christ did can occur today. His ministry was to call attention to the fact that He was God and that He was the Messiah come to set up the kingdom. This is why Matthew gives such great emphasis to the miracles here.

There is indication in the book of Acts that Paul did many miraculous things in the early part of his ministry, but it is also clear that he could not do these things in his later ministry. In Acts 19.12 we see that he did not even have to be present for the healing to take place. "So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them." Again in Acts 28.8 we see, "And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. 9 So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed:"

Yet in later life he could not heal his own thorn in the flesh, he could not heal Timothy, and he could not heal Epaphroditus in Philippians 2.25ff "... Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. 26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. 27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow." Nor could he heal Trophimus, II Timothy 4.20b "Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick."

Based on this I have more than once requested charismatic healers to come to Salem and go with me to the Salem Hospital to heal everyone. With the power that Christ showed and the gift of healing that Paul had early in ministry we could shut down the wards, we could empty the surgical units, and empty the many other clinics and offices. There would be no need for further health insurance in our country if the Charismatic movement was right about the gift of healing. The medical profession would go extinct within days; however that is not going to happen

because this sort of healing was for a specific purpose and a specific time - introduction and identification of the Messiah.

Some simple observations about Christ's activities: He rose very early; he went out away from others, into a solitary place and prayed.

There seems to be a commitment to do what He needed to do, there seems to have been a plan as to how He was going to do what He was going to do, and finally He did it.

Oh how committed we are to praying, and oh how organized we are about how we are going to do it, but there often is a failure in the doing. I have found over the years that often are the times that I have committed to praying daily from a list. I specify "from a list" to denote that I often pray during the day, evening, and even at night when I wake up, but those are times of prayer that come to me as I walk through life. But to specify a time, a place and purpose to do so, has often eluded me. There have been times, even long times when this was a part of my life, but often also are the times when chaos ruled and I failed to complete this sort of commitment.

This may be true of many of us, but the point is that amid all the chaos of Christ's life, He made it a point to pray. This should also be our goal in life. Just as a suggestion, if you have this lack of time, commitment or purpose, try different times of the day. Try different places, and you will probably find a situation that works for you. While teaching I found myself in total melt down time wise. There were times when sleep was optional, and others when eating was optional, but during that time I purposed to rise way before everyone else to spend time reading a devotional, reading the word and praying. It was a terribly hard time to keep at it when I could barely stay awake, but during those times I found standing worked well.

Prayer is our communication with our Father and we need it. We need to focus in on a regular specific basis as well as all those other times when our mind is free and we can spend a moment or two with Him in prayer.

We might note that even though Christ was up very early, that He was still at times interrupted.

It was also interesting that all three Gospels mentioned that Christ was doing his ministry inside the synagogues. He was taking the message right to the ones that had need - the spiritual of the nation of Israel.

Pastor might you want to take note. Christ ministered to the spiritual in the meeting place of believers, ought you EVER do less? Churches are full of believers, with a mix of non-believers, so why do so many pastors minister to the minority of those present. The church is for edification, not evangelism. We have sorely lost our purpose and direction today in the American church. We have left the building up of the saints for trying to get lost entertained people saved. If the Spirit of God cannot bring these people to God, how in the world can we ever bring them to Him with films, games, singing, and other tricks of the current trade?

Recently a friend that was trying to get an adult ministry started in his church had arranged for

off campus facilities and offered to do the teaching. The pastoral staff insisted that they did not have the facilities and that he should wait until the pastoral staff was able to get their new 1.5 million dollar facility built. The man asked how long that might be. He was told probably around two years. He replied, oh I understand you are putting off edification for the building of the edifice. They had substituted edificeication for edification.

Priorities are so terribly askew these days in so many churches.

40 And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 41 And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth [his] hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. 42 And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

We see first of all the faith of the man - a belief that he could be clean. Second we see something new in the account of healings and that would be that the Lord moved via compassion, not some Messianic bestowal of a gift or a Messianic power trip but from simple compassion.

I wondered when working through some of the other healing accounts whether Christ was doing these things out of compassion or as just a sign for the people. This brings up another question to ponder. Since he was moving with compassion, had He not been compassionate of nature, would He have healed at all?

The simple answer to this of course is that compassion is part of God's nature so it is a mute point. Add to this the fact that Christ's ministry was set from eternity past, the compassion and the healing were built into the plan. On the simple observation side, knowing Christ's life and manner in the Gospels aside from the healing, would indicate a compassionate man. He was a man of peace and was concerned about the people and concern normally comes from compassion.

Now back to the faith of the man for a moment. He came to Christ knowing that healing was possible, he came knowing it was up to Christ whether it would happen or not and third he came with a worshipful attitude when he kneeled before the Lord.

I thought it interesting that Christ responded specifically and verbally to the request ("I will") as well as physically by healing him. I don't know if that is important or not, but seems rather important in the situation. He could have just done it and walked away, yet he uttered a verbal response to the man's request. Indeed all three gospels that record this occurrence state the "I will" in their account.

Luke gives us a little more information in that Luke states that the man was "full" of leprosy. He was in full blown condition - a very sorry case to be sure, and yet Christ, according to the same three gospels, Christ reached forth and touched the man. That is a lot of compassion one might observe.

The three writers record the man's posture differently. Mark mentions "kneeling" while Matthew

mentions "worshipped him" while Luke records "he fell on his face, and besought him" all different aspects to what they observed. The term besought may be a little strong in the translation. The Greek word means simply something requested or desired.

43 And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; 44 And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. 45 But he went out, and began to publish [it] much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

Some items to consider: The man was healed and told to keep his mouth shut about it yet he went blabbing forth. Not all that hard to understand and it is sure that the Lord understood the man's thankfulness.

Of note is the fact that Christ told him to go and do as Moses commanded. Offerings are not a part of the church age, another indication that the Jewish people were the Lord's focus at this particular time.

Also of note is that Christ wanted it to be "a testimony" unto them - the priests. Christ wanted this man to openly testify of his healing to the Jewish leadership. Another indication that is quite clear that the healing ministry of the Lord was a sign unto Israel.

He could not go into the city, He had to stay out in the wilderness yet they still located Him and came to Him. Now, relate that to the charismatic challenge I have given. If healing were as Christ and Paul practiced, as in Biblical healing, you could not stay in town if you were really the healer that many claim to be.

The charge that Christ gave seems to be something that was quite firm. The Greek word comes from a word meaning "to snort with anger" and one of the definitions in the lexicon is "to sternly charge." Now to my rather sheepish personality that sort of an admonition would leave me a little chilled especially in light of having been completely healed of one of the most dread diseases in the world. I might well have gone away quietly myself.

Luke uses a different word, but it also is a strong word which can be translated "give command" which is a little more than the word that Matthew uses which simply means to say.

All three gospels relate that the man was not only charged to be quiet, but all three also mention that he was to go to the priest as a testimony and to do that which Moses commanded. Lev. 13.49-14.32 is the passage that Christ and the gospel writers most likely had in mind.

Now, it seems that this guy just did not go out telling people, he was out there preaching. This is the normal word for preaching in the New Testament. He was really blabbing it around to anyone that would listen. The man was thrilled with what had been done and wanted all to know of the occurrence.

Might we consider this in our own lives - Christ has done something quite wonderful in our lives, but just how much do we publish the fact? In fact this man went to "spread abroad the matter" which could be translated to spread abroad one's fame. This guy was Christ's best ad man. He was out to make Christ the man of the year on Time magazine's cover of the year. He was out there telling of the wonders of what Christ had done for him.

Again, just how much publishing have you done lately?

Luke adds that Christ had withdrawn to the wilderness for prayer, but Mark relates that they came to him there as well. He was sorely pressed by the people wanting healing and to hear this new message of His. A new message would be anything that was counter to the teaching of the Jews at the time.

Specifically the sequence seems to be that he could not go into the city so was going from place to place in the wilderness as the people followed Him. The Luke passage might indicate that after that He withdrew for prayer. Verse 16 "But he withdrew himself in the deserts, and prayed."

At any rate pastors, teachers, and missionaries, even when you are burdened down with ministry and responsibilities, there MUST be time for prayer. Take that time no matter how hard it is. Be it late at night or early in the morning. When teaching I found that the campus for the most part awoke about six A.M. and that if I was in my office, I was busy with people or preparation. It was soon clear that if I was going to meet with the Lord that I was going to have to be in the office by five and that was my practice even though bedtime was often two or three A.M.

He is the one that you minister for, He is the one that has your directions, and He is the only real strength that you have so you had better spend time with Him.

APPLICATION:

1. Luke is a little more detailed in his account of John the Baptist. Luke 3.4 "As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways [shall be] made smooth; 6 And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. 7 Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to [our] father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. 9 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 10 And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? 11 He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. 12 Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? 13 And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. 14 And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do?

And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse [any] falsely; and be content with your wages. 15 And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not;"

Luke records that John required works worthy of repentance, while Mark mentions repentance and confession and Matthew mentions only confession. There is something of importance here. We have mentioned that some deal with baptism and remission of sins as a unit, while if this is true Luke and Matthew really mislead their readers because they did not mention it. Since the three books were written to three different sets of readers that would need to know of the requirements, if remission of sins was part of the package, wouldn't all three writers mention such an important item? I think that they would.

In relation to those coming to John, note that there were leaders to soldiers coming for information on how to be prepared. It would seem that John knew that some of them had been told when he asked "who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Had they just heard it through the grapevine, or was there someone out there doing some advance work? It would seem just the word of mouth would be sufficient since John was calling people "vipers" which would tend to gain some attention.

This passage, as well as many others, shows the need to compare the gospels with one another as you study one of them. They give a total picture only when viewed together. Viewing just one will give you only a portion of the overall.

2. The gospel of John takes a different approach to the Baptist. John 1.6 "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

Just a simple introduction of the man in relation to the Savior.

3. Consider John's comment about John the Baptist, "sent from God." We often talk about looking for God's man to pastor our church, or ask God to lead His man to us, etc. Just how often do we say these things then take the first man who shows up on the doorstep no matter who or what he is?

Years ago a church had just gotten rid of a pastor that was quite tyrannical to his people. The folks were looking for "God's man" yet they took the first man to candidate and he turned out to be worse than the one they had just rid themselves of.

Finding God's man may take a lot of time, it may take a lot of effort and it should take a whole lot of prayer. The question may arise, how do we find God's man?

- a. Pray
- b. Pray
- c. Go looking

- d. Ask questions of the man
- e. Pray
- f. Check the man's references - all of them
- g. Find out if he feels that he is God's man for this place - Ask him why he feels this way
- h. Find out if he is in complete agreement with the church doctrinal statement, constitution, goals and purpose statement – ask if he will leave if he comes to be in disagreement with the items mentioned.
- i. Find out what his plans for the church might be over the next five years - do the plans fit those items in the previous point
- j. Compare his associational background to your own. (Many men of "other" groups are taking churches outside their groups and leading them into their own group)
- k. Pray

4. Luke 3.4b-5 mentions "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth;"

My wife and I grew up in a small town in mid Nebraska in the 40's and 50's. There was a road south of town that led to another very small town. This road was built many years before when dollars were in short supply. The construction costs would only cover building a road over the hills and into the valleys, and there were many hills and valleys. The fun of the road was to go fast and hit the top of the hill and feel your stomach go air born. Not that I was prone to take part in this activity because I like my stomach right where it is supposed to be, but my wife's father would give his girls a real thrill as they went to visit their aunt in that small town to the south.

The thrill rides continued into the 50's when the county had some extra road money. The county went out and completely ruined this road. They shaved off the hills and used the dirt to fill in the valleys and made that road into a plain ordinary boring flat road.

John the Baptist was to pave the way before the Master. He was to make the road smooth for the ministry that He was to have to the Jewish people. Isaiah the prophet prophesied years before of this man and told the Jews what he would do.

He preached a message of repentance and baptism as a preparation for the Messiah. He was setting the stage for the message that Christ would present to the Jews. This message was of a coming kingdom, the kingdom which was foretold by the prophets in the Old Testament.

The point of this might be that you personally may be one that is sent before. God may have a particular plan for a church. He may send you for a time to prepare the people. He may not choose to use you to finalize his work with the people. He may move you on to another place and call in the man who will fulfill His desire for the church body.

The point being that if you don't seem to be getting anywhere in your ministry just keep at it and stay tuned to the Lord. When He says move on, then move on and know that you have completed your work for Him in that place.

God has many servants to do many different jobs. Be sure you do your job to the best of your ability and let Him do that which He desires to do.

I knew an old church planter years ago. He would plant a church and assist it until they could afford a full time pastor and move on. Many of these churches grew to be large and good works of God. What did the man do - just started churches - well, just started great works of God. He knew his strength and knew his God and the two got along quite well in HIS plan.

Don't feel less because you seem to be lesser, because you may be the key to what God wants to do in this particular spot of geography and history.

5. One application that will not be made is to compare your ministry to that of the Lord. Often we tend to start comparing what we are doing with what others in the Word did for God. First of all this is the Lord Jesus Christ – God - that we are talking about in the study of Mark. You will not measure up to Him, but He is your example and your goal in life to emulate.

Some compare themselves to Paul, or to Moses and see the great works recorded of them and feel inadequate before them. One must remember that what isn't recorded is that Moses had to get out of bed and face the sheep for forty years and go to bed dog tired because of the stupid sheep getting into trouble. Paul had a lot of mornings of waking up on the cold hard ground with an ache in the back and having to go off on another long day's trek across country. We tend to see the high points of their lives and forget that the other days of their lives were full of pitfalls and hard knocks just like ours.

Don't fall into the trap of comparing yourself to anyone else as far as quality of life. Use the Lord as your example and discard all others as your standard. You will not equal his great ministry, but you can equal the ministry that He has planned for you. He knows what He wants you to accomplish, and it may be great in your eyes or it may be meager in your eyes, but in His eyes it will be just perfect if you do it.

On the forums I see so many pastors that are down about their churches not growing or progressing as they think they ought. It is Christ that will build HIS church and it is the Holy Spirit that will draw growth as God has planned it. Think of that! That takes the ball out of your court and puts it where it belongs - IN GOD'S - IT IS HIS RESPONSIBILITY TO DO THE GROWING NOT YOURS. That should take a large load of your back and allow you to move along as planned and watch God do His building.

Guess I wish that I had learned that earlier in life :-)) but then you probably will not pay too much attention to it either now that you have read it. We tend to think we can do it all while the Lord watches even though He set it up differently. We should watch while God does the work. Not to say you sit in the study all week watching reruns of your favorite show, you work yourself as hard as you can, just don't waste time worrying about what is or is not being accomplished. Follow His leading and do His work, and let Him give the increase.

6. The thing that might impress you most is the people's reaction to the Lord's ministry. He

taught with authority, not as the Scribes. Too much emphasis on this thought in relation to the church today, but one must see the application. So many today are preaching the gibberish of the day and fail to see they ought to be preaching the Word with the authority that it has.

You cannot teach “psycho-babble,” or “feel good shivers,” or “riches are for you” and expect people to understand the Word of God. It is the Word that is the authority, not all the fluff and stuff of today's pulpits. If someone stands in a pulpit today and preaches the Word, he will most certainly be perceived as not as one of the Scribes, but as one having authority.

Yes, do your topical messages now and then and let the Lord use them, but concentrate on the explanation of passages verse by verse and allow the Spirit of God to move in people's lives. Teach them what the Word says and they will feed upon it and will be edified. Give them fluff and stuff and they will feed on it and starve. Realize the fluff and stuff is the foo foo cuisine of today, while the Word of God is the steak and potatoes of the spiritual life.

7. Maybe one more loose application. The Lord did many miracles and they all were to draw attention to the kingdom offered. We may be the only attention to the kingdom that some people we meet see. We are living in a lost society that seldom sees true Christianity. They see the perversions the media likes to push, they see the pollution of a few as they use Christianity to front their schemes and crimes but they seldom see the real Christianity that only we can show them. We are Christ's testimony on earth and if we do not do it, no one else will.

It is your generation's responsibility to reach your generation. I shudder to think of the result of my generations work. When I was saved in the fifties it was through the ministry of the Word of God. It was due to a fundamentalist that loved the Lord and loved the Word and considered it his responsibility to talk to everyone he met.

The preachers of today are so into seeking the new programs, the new entertainment and the cutting edge methods to draw the lost into their churches to hear the fluff and stuff that they forget that their message is Jesus Christ - they may even talk about it but with what authority - they have none - the church looks just like the world, why would some message of Christ be too important amid all the fun and stun of modern day services?

Live your life before everyone you meet as a living testimony of the saving power of God. Then when opportunity allows, speak of that same message and watch God give the increase. Fluff and stuff may increase numbers, but it does not always produce Christians.

In my generation the polls show that Christianity has decreased. At one time they said that over half the nation was evangelical Christian and today that is listed as way under half the nation. Yes, we are a population for the politicians to deal with, but we are a shrinking population and you can see it at every turn in our nation. The majority is bent on crushing us through legislation, lies and any other means they can find.

Our message was lost long ago, and unless we get back on message they will be on us like hyenas on a dead carcass.

8. In verse thirty-eight Christ mentions, "And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also:" Not a common verse to advance missions, but it ought to be. Christ knew it was the purpose to take the message to where people were, not draw the people to where the message is. Missions is ALL about taking the message to the people. They seek not God, so why would we think that they would seek us out, the messengers to hear our message? Not a logical implication to be sure.

We are to take the message of salvation to the world, not create program after program, entertainment after entertainment, and not foo foo after foo foo to draw the lost into the church where the message might be heard. We should - every one of us - be taking the gospel to those we meet everyday and then when they respond, take them to church to be disciplined.

9. In relation to the leper it is recorded "Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth [his] hand, and touched him" The Old Testament tells us that the leper was put out of the camp. They were not to be in contact with others. It would be indicated that if Christ touched the leper and that Christ was here to fulfill the law rather than break it, that the disease may have been gone before the Lord touched the man. (See also Numbers 5.2; Lev. 19.1ff; and Lev. 14.4,10)

10. Constable states "The second person of the Trinity became a servant to create a gospel, to provide good news for human beings." Consider his phrase "to create a gospel." Is this a valid observation? Or is it not more correct to say that the life, death and resurrection of Christ was the Gospel. He did not create anything, he exists and thus the Gospel exists.

We need to be more specific in our observations of the Word. Recently a forum thread ran along the lines of "Are Christians copycats?" Are we becoming just like the world was the thought. Yes, this is what the church is doing for the most part.

One person responded that she thought that we were to be "Christianizing everything." Further she observed that this thought came from the great commission. I responded that we aren't to Christianize anything, we are to be reaching the lost and discipling the converts.

This sort of thinking comes from some of the wishy washy preaching of our day. Christianize everything - really! Where does the Word even hint at this task for the believer? We are here to evangelize, not reform society. No wonder there are fewer and fewer Christian's in this country today.

11. It might be suggested that the first verse "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;" is a bold declaration of the beginning of the redemption of mankind as Genesis 1.1 is the bold declaration of the beginning of mankind. What God did in Genesis to bring mankind into existence so God does in Mark to bring mankind into God's family.

Constable observes correctly that the Bible never uses the term "gospel" to relate to a book, but rather to the good news. Calling Matthew, Mark, Luke and John Gospels is a later usage of the word which was a rather natural transition.

12. Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew "Joshua" meaning "Yahweh saves" while Christ is the transliteration of the Greek word "kristos" meaning "annointed." Jesus was his earthly name, while Christ was his title. Constable mentions that Jesus Christ was by Mark's time of writing more of a proper name rather than a name and a title.

It should be mentioned that the name Jesus is seldom used outside the Gospels without "Lord" or "Christ" thus one might suggest that the familial usage of "Jesus" might be rather inappropriate. It tends to concentrate one's thoughts upon His earthly time. Most that overemphasize the name "Jesus" often overemphasize His earthly ministry and subjugate His eternal ministry to a lower place than the former.

13. In verse two Mark mentions "As it is written in the prophets" and he uses the perfect tense. This is quite important to the theologian in that this would indicate something that was written, that remains written and will remain written to an ultimate end. This, if you haven't caught it yet would indicate that the New Testament Jews held to the authoritativeness and the validity of the Scripture. It was something that was written, that is quotable and something that was of benefit.

Many today wonder at the real validity of the Old Testament and its accounts, yet Mark took them as valid, true, and useful for his own day. Can we do less? Not if we are going to give the Word its due place in our lives as a guide, both Old and New.

Constable gives detail to the quote and its original sources "This quotation is a blend of words taken from the Septuagint version of Exodus 23:20, Malachi 3:1, and Isaiah 40:3. Mark shaped this quotation to stress the messianic emphasis in these Old Testament passages. He probably introduced this quotation by referring to Isaiah because the Isaiah part contains the main point he wanted to stress (v. 3) or perhaps because Isaiah was the more prominent of the prophets he quoted."

14. There almost seems to be an emphasis on "desert" and "wilderness" in this passage. John the Baptist ministered in the wilderness, Christ was baptized in the wilderness, and Christ was tempted in the wilderness. I am not sure there is a lot of significance here, but one might consider this in respect to our everyday, American Christian living. Anything out of the ordinary is a major upset for most people. We tend to want our own way in our own little comfort zone and if we get bumped out of our comfort zone, we tend to get cranky.

Here we see John ministering in a miserable sort of place, Christ going out into the pits of Judah to be baptized and then being thrust out into other areas of similar geography alone - that should have made him cranky but it did not, He just went as directed and did what He had to do.

Likewise when we get knocked out of our comfort zone we ought to see what God might want us to do and just do it and enjoy the ministry we have no matter where it might be.

It might also relate to what God wants you to do with your life. He may have a desert for you to minister in or some far off remote place where you will be alone and tested. Be open to God's leading wherever it may take you and don't worry about the place, the situation nor the

conditions. Just let God be your guide, not your own sensibilities about country and situation.

15. Constable observes "Peter's sermon in Acts 10:37 began at the same place as Mark's Gospel, with the ministry of John the Baptist. This is one evidence of Peter's influence on the second Gospel." Not sure why there would be that evidence to him, it could have been that Mark influenced Peter, or it could be that some third party influenced both Mark and Peter, or it could well be that Mark and Peter were moved by THE SAME SPIRIT to record what they did.

16. One mention of the casting out of demons. Christ simply spoke and the demons obeyed. He had no special formula, He had no cross to wave over the person, He simply spoke and the demon responded. There was no struggle, no spewing forth of green gunk, no gyrations that fill a half-hour of the movie, simply the spoken word.

It should also be noted the man was normal immediately; he did not have to go a long series of counseling. Recently on television a man was interviewed and he spoke of the multitudes of demons that he had cast out. He mentioned in the process of his self glorification process that these people who he had freed had to go through extensive counseling to get over the years of torment. This would seem to prove that he is not of God in this process, for God completely heals of all problems including the demon.

17. Mark relates in 1.36 "And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. 37 And when they had found him, they said unto him, All [men] seek for thee." To which Constable relates, "Simon and his companions-who they were is unimportant-did not understand Jesus' need for prayer. They seem to have had the common attitude that when things are favorable we do not need God's help. Their words implied annoyance. Apparently they felt Jesus was not taking advantage of His popularity to promote His mission."

I trust that you do not take leaps of such in your own interpretation. Yes, they may have been wondering at the Lord's taking time, but to suggest their reasoning seems a stretch of one's imagination.

18. It is noted in the passage that some of the disciples left their father to take responsibility to mind the family business. This is not an uncommon situation in our own day. Often a son is called to the ministry which takes the son away from the Father and his care/influence. It should also be noted that there is no indication that the father failed, nor that the son failed. Both continued on in their calling and both prospered.

Years ago when the Lord first called me into ministry my father was ailing and not expected to live more than a few more months. When I felt the call of God this was one of the primary thoughts of my mind. When the Lord seemed to be leading me far away for college the topic again came to mind. If I were to go off to college I would likely never see my father again.

Of course when I opened the word looking for leading my eyes fell on the passage where the Lord was telling some to let the dead bury the dead - to go ahead in the calling under discussion. I made my decision and off to college I went.

God intervened in our lives as well as my fathers. He didn't allow us to go to the college we headed off to, but rather one about 300 miles away. Not only did we get to see my father often, but soon he was re-diagnosed to be without the malady that was to take his life and we enjoyed a number of years of seeing him.

If God calls you, do not allow circumstances to deter you from following - He will take care of the details of life, you take care of the obedience.

19. Verse 27 speaks volumes to the reason for miracles and the sign gifts of later on. "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." they were amazed - something really big had gotten their attention and they wondered about it. The miracle called great attention to the Lord and more specifically to His message, the "new doctrine" and this is the exact purpose of miracles and sign gifts - to draw attention to the Gospel that Mark calls out attention to.

Verse 29 further emphasizes the dual items of miracles and message, "having wrought this miracle, and finished his sermon." Further, verse 33 states that this process of miracles and spoken word had the desired effect. "And all the city was gathered together at the door."

20. In verse 40 we note that the man kneeled before the Lord. Might I suggest that this is the proper position before God? We ought to be kneeling before Him rather than jumping and swaying and hopping and laughing etc. before Him. Yes, this man wanted healing, but he also knew who this was and knew the proper approach for Him. If you study the word worship in the Bible it often relates to prostrate on your face before God. Moses was told to remove his shoes when he was before the Lord, Isaiah was undone in God's presence and America comes to this same God as if their pants were filled with biting ants. Screaming, waving, shaking and swaying if not jumping up and down and dancing are the norm for many congregations today.

Bow in His presence and you might be able to hear that still small voice. I rather doubt many really hear Him with all the racket going on around them.

When I was young and in the Navy a friend asked me to go to church with him. I accepted not knowing what kind of church he attended. The service went well - back in the 50's before the drums, keyboards, worship teams and commotion. However at the end of the service the pastor began to pray and the people around me started to holler, and pound the pew back before them and it went from prayer to chaos in a millisecond. It was so terrible that I could no longer hear the pastor and the door was the only acceptable course of action. My friend came out later and mentioned, "I guess you don't like that kind of service." We remained friends but not co-church goers.

21. Gill when commenting on verse 43 "And he straitly charged him" goes into a long section on the fact that the man had sinned and that the leprosy was due to his sin as it was in the Old Testament and goes further to state that Jewish writers held that Proverbs 6.16 problems were the cause of leprosy. It is not clear to me from those words that leprosy was due to sin in the man's

life, nor that it always was in the Old Testament, nor why he would suggest that Jewish writers were correct in their interpretation/application of the Proverbs passage.

It is hoped that application on the part of the reader is based on more than speculation and supposition.

22. In relation to Christ hearing the words from the Father "Thou art my beloved Son" in verse eleven some might wonder if this was some sort of revelation to the Son of previously unknown information. Indeed Maclaren seems to indicate this when he says "But we know that our Lord grew, as to His manhood, in wisdom, and that His manhood was continually the receiver, from the Father, of the Spirit; and the reality of His divinity, as dwelling in His manhood from the beginning of that manhood, is not affected by the belief that when the dovelike Spirit floated down on His meek head, glistening with the water of baptism, His manhood then received a new and special consciousness of His Messianic office and of His Sonship."

It should be somewhat offensive to the reader to think that Christ did not know who and what he was from his first thoughts of such things. It seems foreign to me to suggest that Christ did not know who he was from an early age. Indeed is the account of Jesus in the synagogue at twelve not clear on this? (Luke 2.42ff) He mentions clearly that He was about his Father's business and it is clear that he was not speaking of Joseph.

To suggest that Christ did not know who and what He was is to demean his character and nature.

23. Maclaren describes the astonishment of the leaders with Christ's teaching (verse 22) with great flourish of words. "They had got so accustomed to the droning dreariness and trivial subtleties of the rabbis, that it had never entered their heads that there could be any other way of teaching religion than boring men with interminable pedantries about trifles of ritual or outward obedience."

It rather quickly crossed my mind that he could have been describing modern day believers. The average church goer would be shocked at hearing the Word preached as it ought rather than hearing a steady diet of fluff and stuff. The Word should be fresh and new at all times, if not there is something wrong in the preachers/teachers relationship to it.

24. Some that teach baptism make grand stretches of the imagination to show that baptism was something carried over from the Old Testament. This might be a possibility, however the evidence is never shown by these that believe such things. In all the reading and study I have done I have never run across anyone that displays from Old Testament passages where baptism was a part of any dispensation prior to the ministry of the Baptist.

The Life Application Bible states that some believe that baptism was a part of becoming a follower of God in the Old Testament, that when a Gentile came to the Jews to become a follower of God that they were immersed. This again, may be true, but from what indication of Scripture would be my question.

Some suggest that the washings of the Old Testament were baptisms; however, again the passages are not suggested to prove this point.

It seems to me that baptism was something relatively new on the scene and that it was simply an indication of preparedness for the kingdom that was to be offered. Christian baptism is then explained as something else in the New Testament epistles.

25. In relation to the temptation of Christ the obvious question is always "Could Jesus have sinned?" Of course he could have sinned, he was truly human. On the other hand, of course He could not sin, He was God. There are good people on both sides of the discussion but one thing must be maintained in the discussion. He was tempted in all ways as we. Within those three major points find your position.

It has always been clear to me that of course He could not have sinned because He was God, but to be tempted as the rest of the human races is tempted He would have had to have that ability within His nature. The fact that He perfectly relied upon the Holy Spirit in all areas of His life would be the "could not have" aspect and the fact that He was human would be the "could have" aspect of the matter.

There is further on this in my theology if you would like to dig deeper. (See Christ/temptation of file 02350)

MARK CHAPTER TWO

In the last section we noted that Christ was introduced onto the scene by John the Baptist a man who stood out from the crowd to say the least. John was a bold and refreshing voice for God and many people flocked to him, yet he passed them on to the Lord Jesus Christ. John knew he was temporary to the scheme of things and that Christ was to be the focus of attention.

Christ set about healing, preaching and drawing to himself the disciples that would be the focus of His attention for three years. They would be taught personally by the Lord and prepared for the ministry that each would have.

Mar 2:1 And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house. 2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them. 3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. 4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

The press of people was great yet He willingly ministered to those that came.

This is one of the accounts that sticks out in my mind from early Sunday School in a church where I do not recall ever hearing the Gospel. I recall this account well and it seems many times, yet I was never instructed in the simple message of the Gospel. I was taught of the faith of the men, of the healing and of the taking of the bed, but never of the Savior that was the focus of the text.

Several years later at a sunrise service at the same church I was left to wonder why Christ was hung on the cross, why we had gotten up so early for a breakfast and a film. "What was the big deal with Easter?" were my thoughts as I saw an actor hanging on the cross. I spent many years in that Sunday school, in the youth group, in vacation bible schools, and junior church and I had no idea as a teenager what Easter was all about. It was not until a Bible church pastor down the street took me to the Gospel, plain and simple that I knew what I needed in my life - it just made total sense when he told me that Christ died for me and that I could have forgiveness for the sins of my life.

My how the Gospel can change the heart, but the accounts and teaching can only change the mind. Be sure to give the Gospel now and then no matter if you are a pastor, a teacher, or a youth leader. There may be someone sitting under your ministry that needs to hear those wonderful words that can give their life complete meaning before God.

Capernaum means "village of comfort" and was on the west side of the Sea of Galilee which is also called the Lake of Genessareth or Lake of Tiberius. It is near the river Jordan on the northwest side of the sea. The Jordan actually begins north of the sea and flows into the lake as well as out of it. The Jordan begins north of Lake Huleh and flows south through Huleh and

Galilee and into the Dead Sea. The river is the result of multiple rivers flowing into it.

When it mentions that Jesus preached, the term is normally translated speak. It is not the word related to preaching in the New Testament, but rather the idea of speaking or teaching. It relates to the ability to articulate with the tongue. He was simply sharing His word with those that would hear.

This might be a good example of how we should be sharing Christ with others. We should be speaking with them, conversing with them rather than all the hype, programs and preaching that we so often see being done around the country.

“Palsey” according to the Lexicon is weakness of limb or disabled. The man was unable to move on his own so was carried by friends. He was unable to make the trip by himself is the point and those that carried him must have had some special association with the man or with the Lord and His ability to heal.

Referring back to those Sunday school days I was taught that in the Holy Land the houses had flat roofs and the roofs were made with large tiles which could be removed. The lexicon indicates that the effort may have been more than just lifting something up and moving it and also mentions it could relate to thatch, however I am not sure just how much interpretation is in that term. At any rate the men opened the roof to allow them to lower the sick man into where the Lord was ministering.

Now when I see rescues by helicopter I wonder just how safe that is - swinging at the end of a cable. These men did not have a winch nor cable, but probably ropes to lower him into the room with the Lord. The man must have had a little faith in just this process of getting to Christ to request healing. Are the ropes going to hold, will they slip, will those guys be able to hang onto the rope, will they be coordinated enough to let me down somewhat level - without dumping me into the crowd?

This may relate to trusting our friends and church members to assist us when we have troublesome times. It might also relate to church members being available to assist those having hard times.

We are not given much indication of what the bed really was. Again, back to Sunday school it was always pictured as a thin mattress, but it could have been more substantial - we don't know, and it probably relates little since the healing is the important issue.

When Christ saw "their" faith - the term translated "their" can relate to multiple people or an individual. As to where the faith was residing we are not told, however there must have been faith on the part of all involved. Those carrying him would have had some amount of faith or they would not have gone to all the trouble, and the man as well must have had some faith or he would not have bothered with the trip or the bothering of his friends.

Christ's response to the man was that He forgave him of his sins. The term forgiven is in the perfect tense and passive indicating it was done from without the man himself and it was a done deal, not something that will or might be done, but that it was done and to a perfect and complete end.

Now we will cover the result of all this later, but just a quick note. The man was told to leave, he left and glorified God. Humm. If this was done by a faith healer today there would be a commitment card to fill out, a tithe promise to fill out, and a commitment to attend all services, yet Christ told him to leave and go home. Some thought on this situation might be beneficial.

When someone is won to the Lord in your church is it a victory for God or a notch in the handle for the church. Do you try your best to keep them in your church or if they have a church do you encourage them to go back to it - yes, assuming it teaches the Word.

We ought to disciple them if at all possible but it doesn't have to be in our church in particular. There is nothing wrong with encouraging new converts to stay, it is rather natural, but if they have other roots allow them to flourish elsewhere.

Someone once observed that we are becoming keepers of fish bowls rather than fishers of men. It has also been observed that many fish in other peoples bowls instead of going into the world to fish. God has many ponds.

Luke mentions that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law present and that they had come from all over the countryside to hear Him. Now I would not want to relate the preacher of today to Christ and His teaching but there is an application here. Christ knew that trouble would come. It might have been easy for Him to have toned down his rhetoric to keep it from coming so soon yet He just preached the message He had to give.

I am sure that He knew who these men were and why they were there, yet there is no indication that He changed His message one bit. Years ago I was asked to preach at a large church. I prepared as usual and was ready to share my message. As I sat down at the beginning of the service I looked out over the congregation and saw the president of a Bible college and a number of professors from the same school. My mind raced to consider my message and whether it would be adequate for that audience. Soon it was clear in my mind that God had led in the preparation of the message and God is their God as well as mine so I must be properly prepared. As I stepped to the pulpit I had nerves a bunch, but I was prepared for the occasion and God prospered the time in the Word. Don't worry about the audience that you stand before, just prepare properly and allow the Lord to get you ready for any occasion. YOU are HIS messenger - just deliver and let Him worry about the details.

I am not sure how many city codes these men violated when they went up on the roof and broke up the roof to let the man down. I'm sure one for being on the roof, one for improperly mitigating the dust below as they opened the roof, and at least one or two for endangering the man's life as they lowered him down with substandard elevation methods. They did what was needed to do the job and their faith was rewarded.

One might wonder at the reaction of the audience below that were listening to the Savior when the noise of the men on the roof began, then the dust from the roof disassembly, then the shock of someone being lowered down.

Imagine this happening in your church. How large a commotion would that be to your church service? All the self righteous like myself wondering who these jerks were interrupting our service! You might consider beforehand how you will take care of interruptions in a service.

Example: How would you react to seeing a large man slump forward in his seat unconscious? How would you react to a man walking in the back door and loudly asking who owned the van parked across the street especially when he went on to declare that it was illegal, was unsafe and a dumb place to park? How would you react to someone in the congregation raising their hand and asking if they could ask a question about the Bible teaching evolution?

Don't stress over it, but do consider it since this sort of thing happens from time to time and a smooth transition to care for the situation is needed before the situation arises. Thinking through some situations and having some sort of plan would be good. Deacons/ushers should be included in your thinking. In the case of the man becoming unconscious, the deacons moved in quickly to assist in getting him up and out (he was by then conscious) and the service went on without much of a hitch. A little less attentive the congregation was, but they came back rather quickly.

Mar 2:6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Mar 2:7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

Luke mentions that Pharisees and doctors were present while Mark mentions the Scribes. All of the spiritual leaders were represented before the Lord. One must wonder if Paul might have been present at some of these gatherings. It was only a few years between this point and the Lord meeting him on the road to Damascus so it is quite possible.

Imagine this group of scribes sitting in the crowd mulling all they are seeing over in their minds. The brain activity must have been generating humongous telepathic waves in the area. These guys must have been fuming in their minds. The sad part is that they had no clue as to who Christ was. They were totally in the dark. They knew nothing of the nature of this man who they were wondering about - not much different than many lost people we mingle with on a daily basis. They do not know Him because they do not know anything about Him.

From all polls and surveys the American Christian may not even know the one they serve all that well. Many give lip service to Christianity but have failed to make it a personal belief. Many espouse Christianity because that was the way they were raised, but if you dig into their beliefs, they know little about the true nature of Christ.

Once man knows who Christ is, we know that anything He says or does is the perfect thing for Him to do because He is God - one that is perfection.

Their question betrays them. They have observed Christ forgiving sins, they know that only God

can forgive sins, thus they wonder at why He is saying these things - they have automatically rejected the idea that He might be God. Not unlike many lost today. They assume that God does not exist, so they are left with tons of questions about why things are the way they are.

Mar 2:8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Mar 2:9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? Mar 2:10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) Mar 2:11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. Mar 2:12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

The phrase "when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves" is of interest. The term translated "perceived" is the Greek word that is normally translated "know." It is in the active voice which would suggest that it was something known from within, not from without, as in the Holy Spirit giving this knowledge.

Matthew uses another term which means "know" but it is translated "Jesus knowing their thoughts" while Luke uses the same term as Mark. Again it is translated "perceiving." Mark and Luke's term has the thought of knowing well.

Now, I do not know, because we are not told, but I suspect this "knowing" was related to something many of us have experienced. Sometimes when you are in a situation you just know what people are thinking. We are thinking beings and we can put two and two together. Here is Christ presenting a kingdom, He is healing people, He is forgiving people and He sees the "religious leadership" in the group. Offhand it is not rocket science to determine that Christ knew a little about the situation. Add to that the body language and facial expressions that would have been obvious to the Lord and it was probably obvious to Him what they were thinking.

Years ago we visited the niece of someone that we had met on deputation. She was in the Juvenile lock up. She was a typical know it all teenager that could do no wrong and did not understand why she was there. One Sunday she came out and flopped herself down in a slump in the chair totally disgusted. She began ragging on the staff for getting on her case about body language - well duuuuuh, I can certainly see why. After relating what we were observing she began to realize the correctness of the staff.

When you are in meetings with people, just be observant of body language and facial expressions - you will know much about what is going on in people's minds. It can be of great benefit. As Christ used His knowledge of their thinking to form questions, you can do the same to further God's work. Often you can head off traps by sharing information before someone in the group tries to lower the boom on your head.

Christ then confronts them with their thoughts. SHOCK time! "How in the world did He know

what we were thinking?" might have been on their minds now. Matthew reads "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts." That just had to be a shock to their intellectual highbrow systems! This guy heals, He reads minds and now He calls our thoughts about Him evil! What is that about?

Now, imagine you are in a business meeting and you know someone is laying for you and you can tell by their body language that they are about to spring and you open their minds up to the rest of the folks gathered. I am not suggesting you use this ability to know people to "get" them, but to allow you to run meetings to the Lord's best advantage and to avoid meetings that degenerate into problems. Use your God given abilities and senses to His advantage.

Christ asked them if it is easier to forgive or heal. Both take acts of God if you want to know the truth. They must have known this in their minds.

Christ presents the leaders with this question, then turns to the ailing man and says that to give the man knowledge that the Son of Man has power to forgive, he then healed the man. It is not clear, but it would seem that the ailment was due to sin, since forgiveness of sin was the basis of the healing.

Luke relates that the people were fearful due to what they had witnessed. Now it is not clear what caused them fear. Was it the ability of the Lord to forgive sin, was it His ability to heal, or was it the ability to seemingly read minds. Then again it might have related to the Jewish leaders being confronted in such a manner. Imagine the leaders being embarrassed in front of you and knowing you have to go to services with them on the Sabbath. All might be related to the fear that the people felt. (Some translations show Matthew using fear as well but the King James translates it "amazed.")

At any rate the folks were in a mental dither over what they had witnessed. They ended in glorifying God which is always good and the end result of man no matter what our condition of mind - we are to glorify Him with our lives and minds.

The man who was healed, just took the situation in stride and did not get overly excited it would seem. Just did what he was told - picked up his bed and left - which might indicate it was light enough for one person to carry thus probably a mattress instead of a four poster.

The man is pictured in Luke as glorifying God but all three accounts treat it rather matter of factly - picked it up and left. All three accounts speak of the forgiveness of sin which might indicate that sin was a part of the ailment. This is not always true in sickness, but often is. Be sure to take some time to consider your life when sickness comes along. The Spirit is usually quite able to show you if sin is related.

Mark mentions "We never saw it on this fashion." and Luke says "We have seen strange things to-day." while Matthew mentions "glorified God, which had given such power unto men." It would seem that Matthew fills in the "what" of Mark and Luke's observation of the activities of the day. God had given great power - power that they had never seen, power that was strange to their normal life. In short this rocked their world. They were taken aback by their observations

of this man with the new teaching.

I'd guess these folks went home considering just what was going on. Wondering what their response should be to such activities and teaching.

Mar 2:13 And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.

It would seem that he could not get away from the people. They knew He had a message they wanted to hear and they wanted to be sure they did.

The term "resorted" is normally translated "come" or to come from one place to another. I do not know why they picked a three dollar word for a thirty cent term but it just mentions that the people came to Him. It also simply makes the statement that He "taught them."

We might suggest that the application might run along the line of anyone that is ministering the Word of God will find people coming to them to hear. Pastor, when you are tired and someone shows up on your doorstep, just minister. Teacher, when you are tired and someone shows a need for learning, teach. Helper, when you are tired and someone needs a hand, just help away.

Today a teacher in many churches just cannot teach a full month of Sunday school without a break. Many Sunday schools have "team" teaching where one person teaches for a week or two then the other so they don't get tired. Christ ministered as long as people were there to listen. We ought to have the thought that we will do the same. We are not in this life to rest we are here to work for our Lord - not that you would know that from all the people sitting idle in the pews in our churches.

Mar 2:14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

Matthew identifies Levi further as Matthew and Luke identifies him even further with the phrase "a publican." Levi was a toll taker, probably not one of the more popular folks to deal with. Every time you saw him it cost you money. My father was the county treasurer in our town for many years. People would come from all over the county to see him, but it always cost them money - he gathered taxes of several sorts from the public.

Unlike my father, when called Levi responded immediately. My father heard the claims of Christ, but never to my knowledge accepted Him (though he may have at some point before his death). Levi just up and went with Christ. He did not stop to take care of business, he just followed. In fact Luke adds "And he forsook all, and rose up and followed him."

Leaving all is the cost of following Christ properly. He may not ask us to leave all our worldly possessions, but we need to be willing to walk away from it all on a moments notice to honor Him. We know that Levi did not immediately leave everything because in the following verse it mentions that Levi fed the Lord in his house.

Just what is a publican? The Lexicon mentions that they were tax gatherers; they were a class of society that was viewed by the people as detestable. They were not a class that people wanted to associate with, yet Christ saw something in this man who he wanted as a disciple.

Easton mentions that the publicans often farmed the tax gathering out to others. They would gain the job from the Roman government then hire others to collect the taxes. These underlings were not always honest in their dealings thus the hate for the tax gatherers of the day.

Mar 2:15 And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.

Christ called Levi, but soon was in his house for a meal. Might we suggest that the man of God should be hospitable? Indeed isn't one of the qualifications for elder related to this (I Tim.3.2 "given to hospitality")?

I must confess that hospitality is not high on the priority list in many churches today. Hospitality today often means inviting someone out to lunch or dinner, seldom to the home for a meal.

Hospitality has to do with inviting into the home, it has to do with showing an interest in the person and it has to do with a genuine caring for the person - note the term genuine. Often it is done automatically as part of the office rather than a real care for people.

The King James translates the next phrase "as Jesus sat" which really states "as he lay" in the Greek. The term translated "Jesus" is the word normally translated "him" and the term translated "sat" means "lie."

Not only were there publicans and sinners in Matthew's house with Christ, but there were MANY of them present.

I would guess that this dinner had already been arranged when Levi was called and he just invited the Lord to dinner that was about to begin. At any rate, the dinner is going on, Christ is on the floor eating surrounded by publicans and sinners.

No matter what you want to see in this passage do not read into it that it is okay to live among sinners as sinners live. He was invited to eat and that is what He did - He responded to an invitation, this was not his normal lifestyle. Feel free to accept an invitation to a dinner where sinners will attend - nothing wrong with it - just do not make it your lifestyle.

Years ago a pastor that loved golf died. His obituary and the article in the local newspaper barely mentioned the fact that he was a pastor, but took great pains to show how highly esteemed he was at the local golf course. He had made golfing his lifestyle rather than pastoring his flock in the eyes of his community. I had to wonder how his congregation felt to see such an evaluation.

Note might be made that there were publicans and sinners present. Since there are two groups mentioned, one being a class and the other a general term for lost people, one must wonder if

there was not a specific purpose in listing the two thusly.

Possibly that the only people who would associate with publicans were sinners? The term translated "sinner" relates to one that is given to sin. The distinction might be that there were people given to sin, there were publicans and the "religious" non-sinners were not present.

Since there is no mention of discomfort on the part of the Lord or His disciples we might assume that they felt quite comfortable dining with this lot of people. Indeed, is this not the case when we enter a restaurant? We enter in to eat with a mixed variety of people and there should be no discomfort for the Christian. The problem would arise when the Christian feels more comfortable with the lost than with the redeemed.

Don't forget to share your faith when you are with the lost and have opportunity. That is how the church will grow.

It is normal for people to feel more comfortable talking over a meal than just meeting as strangers and beginning a conversation. Take advantage of such situations and use the opportunity to share the gospel with them. Often they will listen even if just out of courtesy.

We are not told that Christ did any teaching but they were there because they wanted to be with Him. Both Matthew and Mark mention that Christ was sitting and the publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him.

Now had that been THIS person sitting, the people probably would sit elsewhere, but in this case they desired to be with Christ. Years ago in a ministry with a number of other folks when we had pot lucks now and then the wife and I would get into line first and go to a table and sit down. We often noted that the rest of the group would congregate at other tables leaving us to sit alone. I would smell myself to see if that was the problem, but it never seemed to be :-). The other times, when we were last in line the one table was filled and we had opportunity to sit alone also. We did not try getting into the middle of the line to see what would happen.

Consider Matthew's situation. He had just agreed to follow Christ and here he is mixing Christ in with a bunch of his old coworkers that are despised at best by the rest of the population.

I would assume that these "sinners" may have really been the dregs of Jewish society as well. They are set apart as "sinners" in a world that is full of sinners. These must have really been SINNERS.

None of us should look too closely as we gaze down our noses at these sinners. We all were once sinners, and indeed many of us were probably SINNERS. We all needed to sit with the Lord for a dinner of saving grace as did this group of Levi's friends.

All too often the sinner saved tends to feel the rest of sinners are really the dregs when indeed we all were once the same. Let not pride be a problem in your life!

Mar 2:16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

It is of note that the naysayers were questioning the disciples, not the Lord Himself. Maybe they had learned already that they could not win talking with Him. Not unlike complainers of our own day, instead of going to the pastor, leader or teacher with whom there is a problem, they go to everyone in the church first and do their complaining. It is a good standard to set for yourself, if you have a problem with someone, go to them to deal with it - do not go everywhere else in the church trying to understand things.

It is clear when you read all three of the synoptics that both the Pharisees and the Scribes were involved in the questioning of the disciples. It is also of note that the Scribes were under the thumb of the Pharisees. The text calls the Scribes "their" Scribes (Luke 5.30).

This is not a proof text to go out into the pubs of the world to eat and drink in order to witness, but it certainly is a proof text that we are to have contact with the lost of our generation and be the witness that we can be to them.

It is also a text that illustrates the "SPIRITUAL leadership" of the ages - nose bent out of shape at those that are trying to do the work of the Lord. They are the fault finders of the world and most generations have had them. People who think it should be done only their way and that anyone doing anything else is absolutely wrong.

Over the years these "SPIRITUAL" ones have climbed my case to let me know I am not doing it their way. To which I usually replied to them with a loud message that I thought that was a good thing. Many times I have done the "not acceptable" at the time, but these things turn out to be - in time - the norm. One such was education by extension. I took two degrees by extension in a day when it wasn't acceptable. Today it is the norm to consider extension to save costs and relocation costs both material and immaterial. Of course the educational snobs still look down their collective noses at such degrees, but the Lord uses us lowlifes anyway.

If you feel God leading you to something, just do it, don't worry about the spiritual naysayers, they will naysay no matter what you do most likely anyway. God has a plan for each of us and if it means extension degree, then that is what He wants. If it means a hard seminary degree then follow Him. It is the Lord that knows what He wants you to do in the future and it is the Lord that will prepare you as He sees fit - in that light what difference do the naysayers make? None.

Christ was working among those that needed His message and the spiritual leaders had a problem with it. Christ ignored them and went about His Father's business as each one of us must do while ignoring those that would detract from God's best for us. Follow God not the detractors and you will find a smoother path.

Mar 2:17 When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

The glaring application of this verse is the fact that Christ Himself, the one that healed people time after time tells us that the sick need doctors. Now if Christ told us that, why would the faith healers of the world tell us differently? He knew his healing was a temporary thing. He knew that the gift of healing would soon pass. He knew that doctors were the only hope for the sick so why would we not accept His word and reject the foolishness of the healers of our day.

Yes, James speaks to healing and that is part of the church instruction. If the doctors are not doing the trick call the elders of the church. Note carefully from the context though that James indicates strongly that the sickness he is speaking of is caused by spiritual problems. Thus go to the doctor for your physical problems, and be sure the spiritual is on track as well.

Christ continues to mention that he is there to call sinners to repentance, not the righteous. The righteous are already repentant and ready for the kingdom, but the sinners have not heard the message nor have they given heed to that message. (Rather hard to heed something you have not heard :-)

Mar 2:18 And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? Mar 2:19 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. Mar 2:20 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

Several things to note:

1. The disciples of John fasted. We know that he preached repentance as preparation for the kingdom and since his disciples fasted, it must have related to that repentance and/or preparation. Fasting must have been a practice in the Old Testament since John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees practiced the ritual.

2. The disciples of the Pharisees fasted. One might conclude that since these men were strong proponents of the Law, even though they strained at the letter of the law, thus their fasting might indicate that the Law required fasting in some manner.

Neh. 9.1 pictures all the children of Israel fasting in sackcloth and dirt. This was in the context of reading of the Word and confession of their sins. In Esther 4.3 the Jews were shown in sackcloth and ashes fasting. In Psalm 35.13 fasting is in the context of sackcloth and ashes as well. See Psalm 69.10 also. Dan. 9.3 mentions confession once again, thus part of fasting is related to getting right with God as well as prayer.

Psalm 109.24 mentions being weak in the knees because of fasting. "My knees are weak through fasting; and my flesh faileth of fatness." This would indicate more than just giving up one meal a week for prayer time, though once a week is preferable than not fasting.

Jer. 36.6 mentions a fasting day thus the Jews in the time of the prophets had a day set aside for

that purpose. Dan. 6.18 mentions the king fasting all night and in the context of not sleeping and no music. We might draw from this that the Jewish thought of fasting was to go without food, and possibly sleep and amenities such as music.

Thus far we have seen nothing from the law itself. It seems more of a common practice for the common person rather than a national or spiritual leader sort of item. It was called for as a people at times, but individuals as well are shown fasting. The term is also missing from the early part of the Old Testament and seems to be something that was in place in the time of David (there is one reference in Judges), but not much earlier. Most of the references begin in the Psalms and Nehemiah.

The concept of food in relation to God is not new. In Ex. 12 we can recall the Jews were told to take a lamb and eat it before the angel of death was to cross Egypt taking the firstborn of every house. Food or no food has a specific relation to God at times in the Word. It should be assumed that the Pharisees fasting was on these ideas in the Old Testament, though possibly not wholly on the law.

Life Application Bible makes the following comment about fasting. "Fasting is both an outward sign of humility and regret for sin, and an inner discipline that clears the mind and keeps the spirit alert. Fasting empties the body of food; repentance empties the life of sin."

Fasting is not an item we hear much about in the church today. If we hear the word it is usually in the Scripture reading rather than any instruction. We hear nothing of fasting because the draw to McDonalds and Burger King is too great. We hear nothing of fasting because we are in too big of a hurry to take time to do such things, since fasting also usually requires time in contemplation or prayer and we can't do that. Eating can be done on the run, fasting takes time away from the hustle of the day.

3. The disciples of Christ did not fast. It is of note that Christ's response was not from the Old Testament nor from the coming message of grace, but from the disciples relationship to Him. This is not a dispensational issue, but a Messianic issue.

4. Christ prophesied of his coming death ("the bridegroom shall be taken away"). This would be the first indication to the disciples and the public that He was going to be crucified, though the crucifixion itself was still unknown to them.

5. Christ spoke directly to those that had gone behind His back to talk to the disciples.

6. If the disciples fasted not while Christ was with them, then does it not follow that when we are with Him in eternity, we will not fast? It seems logical to me.

Note should be made that this is a strictly Messianic context and Christ speaks of the Bridegroom. Some in recent years have suggested that the bride of Christ is the Jewish nation. This might be one good proof text to that thought. Others suggest that the bride is the Independent Baptists that follow that belief. While others would suggest that the church is the

bride of Christ.

Since this is a Jewish context it might, on the surface, seem Jewish in nature, however the disciples were the foundation of the church. I believe that Christ was looking through his Messianic message to the message of Grace that He knew was the outcome of His life on earth.

Mar 2:21 No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.

I never understood this passage until in Bible college when a professor explained that if you put new cloth into old that shrinkage would result in tears when the cloth is washed. The reason I could not wrap my brains around it was that my mother was constantly patching my clothes when I was little. She would find something similar or maybe not and patch things so they would last a little longer. Since this was normal for me how can Mark know what he is talking about when he recorded this passage? I didn't realize that my mother was using "old" material to patch "old" material. There was no shrinkage so there was no problem.

This and the next verse relate to the context of the disciples not fasting. Christ was relating to the listener that you don't patch this new teaching of His into the old ways of John or the Pharisees. Rather a blunt statement to the Pharisees - you are old and I and My teaching are new and the two should not be sewn together. Too bad the Judaizers of the early church didn't catch His drift!

Likewise the wine illustration pictures the same idea, that new should not, or more to the point, cannot be put into the old. Had the pastors that brought their contemporary music into the churches considered the Lord's teaching we might not have had so many split churches and distanced older generation folks.

Mar 2:22 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles. Mar 2:23 And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. Mar 2:24 And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? Mar 2:25 And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? Mar 2:26 How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? Mar 2:27 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Mar 2:28 Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

I once was given a Bible study course from the Seventh Day Adventists. I took the one on the Sabbath because I needed to cover the topic with a Christian woman who had been married to a Seventh Day man, but had been a member of our church for some time.

The slickness should have been evident to me for there must have been an oil slick on the sheet.

They started in the Old Testament and pointed out what the Sabbath was and quoted a few verses from the Old Testament and ended by using Mark 2.28 "Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath." That was the end of the study and you were left with the impression that the New Testament had nothing more to say on the subject.

Well in fact the New Testament does have something to say both with its words and with its silence. The words tell us that the early church met on the first day, not the last day. The silence screams that the Ten Commandments are all restated in the New Testament EXCEPT FOR ONE, the Sabbath commandment.

I might also point out that THE SABBATH IS SATURDAY, NOT A RE-MADE SUNDAY preachers! So many pastors/teachers make this mistake. The Sabbath is Saturday and this has never changed. The cross did not magically change the Sabbath to Sunday. The Sabbath is Saturday and Sunday is the Lord's day, the first day of the week.

APPLICATION

1. What an application for the pastor that arrives on the field. Identify yourself with your message, choose some men to disciple, rebuke the incorrect establishment and assist the needy.

Do that and you certainly will not be popular in the current church climate where all is fuzzy wuzzy and no waves.

The same application will go for anyone really. We all ought to find some people to disciple and teach them as you go along ministering. That is the natural course of things in the Bible. II Timothy 2.2 was not included for nothing. "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also"

As to anyone that is lost and without Christ, this is quite a confrontation. He is set forth by God as the Son of God, coming to earth to care for the lost. He either came to save the lost or He was a tad on the crazy side to reveal Himself as such.

2. The four men bringing their friend to Christ give us the idea of teamwork. As believers get together to do the work of the Lord the task becomes more manageable and easy. Doing it "MYSELF" works but it is usually rather difficult and probably full of pride. It should be obvious that doing it as a team will get the work done faster and more effectively.

All too often in churches where there are multiple pastors the problems begin. Some want to do it themselves, others do not want to do it this way or that way and the idea of "TEAM" is lost in the shuffle to impress the congregation so that the job is more secure.

I recently observed a little neighborhood church that was in dire need of paint, but the church only has a handful of members most of which are women and seniors. I wondered how they were going to get the work done since their finances are very limited as well.

I was given my answer this week when I saw the women of the church out scraping paint. They had gotten together to fill the need and were doing it as a team.

3. There is also the thought that these four men thought enough about their friend to go to all the effort required to get him before the Master. They could have found excuse upon excuse, but they went so far as to raise the roof over the issue.

Oh that such concern be shown in our churches today. Often people go on for months hurting in all sorts of problems and trials with no one in the church knowing. Why? No one is really talking in the church today. We have our greeting times that get that out of the way in three minutes or less and we do not have to worry about getting involved.

I recently purposed to ask each and every person I shook hands with in the greeting time "How are you this morning?" Probably 25 people shook my hand but not one responded to my question. Why? No one is listening in the church today - shake hands, say good morning and heaven forbid anything else go on in greeting time otherwise they will not be able to shake enough hands to feel good about themselves.

4. Now there is one person who is not mentioned in the raising of the roof. The homeowner. This man must have been quite the person. Personally if someone was climbing on my roof they would get hosed off immediately. If they started tearing up the roof 911 would be in order. What was this man doing? Why was he so patient with the four men? He must have been quite a man to allow his home to be so messed up for spiritual purposes.

Uuuuuups, how about you? Do you open your home for church related items? Do you offer to transport people in your SUV? Do you open your garage to projects and youth get togethers? Our favorite mantra as believers runs along the lines of "everything I have is God's" well except my house - I will not open it so that people can come through and mess up my home.

What is it that the New Testament mentions of the elder and his hospitality? Hospitality is a generous way to show your love to the brethren. It is an easy way to share what you are and what your Lord has done for you with others.

Years ago we were invited to the home of a construction worker and his wife for the afternoon. We went home with them and they showed us around. We sat and talked for several hours then they took us for a ride around their town. After supper we returned to the church for the service.

The man was common in the realm of occupation but I found him to be a giant in faith. He shared many things from his life and how God had helped him triumph through adversity. I felt honored to have met the man and listened to his testimony. The man and his wife used what little they had in their small row house to share with other believers.

We ought to open our homes to other believers and allow God to bless others instead of keeping our homes as our little sanctuaries. Use what you have been given to the maximum advantage for God.

5. In Mark 2.5 Christ said to the man "thy sins be forgiven thee." and he also healed the man. Christ met both the spiritual and the physical need of the man. So when we meet people's physical needs we ought to attempt to meet their spiritual needs. On the other hand if we meet their spiritual need we ought to attempt to meet their physical need as well. Not to say that we must or that we can, but a serious attempt should be made.

Years ago we used to stop to assist people on the road. Breakdowns usually, and enjoyed the ministry for many years. I would attempt to fix the car problem while leaving tracts for the people to read when I left. If they needed a ride we would give them a lift and witness as we drove.

Often we would get the reaction that the person never thought anyone would stop. What an attention getter for someone to want to read a tract from someone out of the blue. One night very late we were able to get a man's car running for him and as we drove off, as far as I could see he was reading the tract via the dome light in his car.

Meet both needs if at all possible. Some may not be interested in one or the other. We stopped to help a young lady who had a stalled car. She wasn't interested in help with the car, only a ride to where we were going. She was late for a skydiving get together and didn't want to wait for the car.

As we drove she began talking about Ralph. Finally I asked who Ralph was. She excitedly told us of the skydiver's god Ralph and how Ralph always took care of them when they were skydiving. We had a chance to tell her about the God that is over Ralph but she was not interested. I reminded her that if her chute did not open, that Ralph was not going to be around and that she had better cry to our God.

She wanted neither physical nor spiritual help, but she knew about our Lord before she left the car. God can take care of the rest of the story.

6. Some speculate that after Matthew was called that he invited Christ to dinner so that Christ could talk to all his friends. What a great opportunity for a believer to talk to old friends - friends that knew the old version of their friend.

When God called me to the ministry I had made plans to go to Bible College and was waiting for the move to Texas. My brother and I went to visit one of my brother's friends one evening and in the conversation my brother mentioned that I was going into the ministry.

My brother's friend's reaction was "What? Stan Derickson is going to be a minister? Wow!" He knew there had been a drastic change in this person and was totally shocked at the change.

Be sure to take some time to share your Lord with your old friends so that they might have opportunity to know His life changing power!

7. There is perhaps a loose application to the wine in wineskins and material in material. We

find the world has many religions. They all claim to have the truth, indeed many have some truth however there is only one true God and that is the God of the Bible. Many religions speak of the Bible within the context of their man made teachings but all are putting new into old and disaster is always the result.

When you become a believer you must put off all that was before in way of belief and follow the only truth we have and that is the Word of God.

The Roman church does not bother with this for they just move into an area, adopt the ways and beliefs of the people and stir in a little of their own doctrine as they see opportunity. They adapt their teaching to fit into the culture and ways of those they would reach. Truth just isn't that moldable.

The Word tells us that man can only come to God through Jesus Christ. No angel, no book and no man can provide a path to God other than Christ.

8. Just a note from Constable that would make a basis for a good study relating to Christ's view of Himself and how he presented Himself to the public.

"Jesus used the title "Son of Man" when He spoke of His sufferings and death (8:31; 9:9-13, 31; 10:33, 45; 14:21, 41). He also used it when speaking of His future return in glory (8:38; 13:26, 32; 14:62). Thus He used this title to blend the concepts of the Suffering Servant and the Messiah in His readers' minds. It also connected Him with mankind as the Son of Man. Still He was the man with "authority on earth to forgive sins," the Judge."

9. Some find a contradiction in 1.25-26 where Mark mentions that Abiathar was the high priest. This was referring to I Samuel 21.1-6. I Samuel mentions that Ahimelech, Abiathar's father was the high priest. It is assumed that Mark used Abiathar since he was the more prominent high priest of the time.

10. Ralph Earle in His book *The Gospel According to Mark*, p. 49 quoted in Constable, brings up an interesting point, "Human need is a higher law than religious ritual." This is in the context of the Jewish leaders faulting the Lord and His disciples for doing certain things on the Sabbath. How does that relate to working on Sunday?

The Sabbath was made for man to use, to recuperate, man was not made for the Sabbath, to serve it, to abide by ritual etc. related to it.

11. Christ was declared by the Father to be His Son, the Son of God and in this chapter we see Christ declare Himself as the Son of Man. Now, that folks is theology even if you detest theology, you have just studied theology. It amazes me how many pastors/teachers deride theology, yet teach it all the time. They think they deride the intellectual, yet in my mind they deride themselves by showing their ignorance.

If a person is teaching the whole Bible they are teaching doctrine and theology - fact even though

they may deride, ridicule and put down theology and doctrine.

Christ was just as much God as if He had never been man and just as much man as if He had never been God. Someone else said that originally, but I like the quote and use it often for it puts the doctrine of the God-man across quite accurately.

Christ knew exactly who He was and knew that He must declare Himself accurately to the people. Not that the people liked how He defined Himself - the leaders took great exception with his claim to deity.

No, we are certainly not Christ, however He is our example. If he knew who He was and what He was here for then certainly we also should know the same things. We ought to understand who we are in Christ, and who we are in the grand scheme of things - or in the mind of God if you want the more technical terminology.

What are you to be doing? Where are you supposed to be? Who is it that you are to be ministering to? We are told that we are ministers of reconciliation - that implies that we are to be working with people on an ongoing basis. Is there a special people who you should be ministering to? Maybe somewhere else in the world, maybe in your own town or your own church? Spend time with God and ask these questions and request the answers from the one and only one that can give those answers.

Know what you are to do with your life before it is over and too late. Find out if God wants you to be a pastor, a teacher, or a missionary. Don't worry about the qualifications, find out and then move toward that end. He will provide the way and the means, you just move.

He may tell you He wants you as you are, where you are and that what you are doing is just right, but give Him opportunity to have input into your life.

Don't sweat it if He hasn't made a call on your life - I doubt the disciples had given God's service much thought before the Lord called them. Rather out of the clear blue. Not unlike many modern day ministers of the Lord that have received and responded to a totally unexpected call.

A stuttering reclusive not overly bright television repairman was called on the dark road home one evening - not out of the clear blue, but out of the clear black - a call to minister the Lord's word. I had no idea God wanted me, I had no hint that He could ever use me, and I was totally shocked/blown away at His request.

12. Life application Bible gives us a little further information about Capernaum and Tax people at this time in history. "Capernaum (2:1) was a key military center for Roman troops as well as a thriving business community. Several major highways intersected in Capernaum, with merchants passing through from as far away as Egypt to the south and Mesopotamia to the north. Levi (Matthew), a Jew, was appointed by the Romans to be the area's tax collector. He collected taxes from citizens as well as from merchants passing through town. Tax collectors were expected to take a commission on the taxes they collected. Most of them overcharged and vastly enriched

themselves. Tax collectors were despised by the Jews because of their reputation for cheating and their support of Rome. The Jews must also have hated to think that some of the money collected went to support pagan religions and temples."

13. Just contemplate the Jewish leaders for a moment. They are well trained in the Old Testament, they know of the Messiah, they look forward to the Messiah, they long for the Messiah, yet when they are in the same room with Him they reject Him because He is not what they were looking for. The Jew of this time was looking for a Messiah that would conquer the Roman's and set up His kingdom RIGHT NOW, they were not looking for a Messiah that was healing, and worrying about people's sin.

They could not see Him as the Messiah because He did not fit their profile of Who He was to be.

Today there are many that reject men of God because they don't fit the profile. If they don't take on the dress, the demeanor, and the rest of the profile specific characteristics they cannot possibly be a minister of God. Sad that so many have been rejected because they do not fit the mold. Many that could have contributed so much to the Church have been rejected and held outside the normal church circles because they did not fit the profile of the present day church.

If you do not dress casual, if you do not swing your hips, if you do not preach fuzzy wuzzy feel good "talks" you are not one of us.

Imagine the Jewish leaders when they died and faced God - knowing that they had been in the same room with God's Chosen One and they did not recognize Him for Who He was.

14. Do not concern yourself with what the roof was like, there are all sorts of ideas and none are more valid than another - we don't know. Most agree that there were stairs to the roof and flat roofs on houses of the time period, but beyond that there is little agreement. Roof materials from clay to wood to straw to mortar to tar to ashes are mentioned. One commentator goes into great detail that it wasn't really a roof they took up but only a curtain that was covering an opening. The roof is not the point of the account so do not get stuck on it.

15. Do not allow interruptions to sidetrack you from your appointed purpose when ministering. In one small church a man raised his hand and wanted to ask a question in the middle of my sermon. I recently saw a pastor baptizing people when a young boy did a cannon ball into the baptistery. I will not comment on what I thought of the boy, but the man recovered as best he could in a terrible situation. People have died in the middle of services, so just continue the best you can when interruptions come along.

Remember however Christ took his interruption to heal the man. You might well have a great opportunity to minister unexpectedly.

16. Life application Bible brings up an interesting idea about verse 17 where the Lord says he did not come for the righteous. The authors relate this to a dig against the Jewish leaders. They hold that this use of the word translated righteous would be the idea of SELF RIGHTEOUS. Indeed,

that is a possible use of the word as in Luke 18.9 "And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:"

Christ may well have been saying I am not here to help those that think themselves righteous, but those that know they are in need.

It is rather interesting that in the physical realm we all know when we need a doctor, but in the spiritual realm we do not always seem to know that we need spiritual assistance. Possibly in both cases we know, but we just rationalize the symptoms away and/or ignore them.

In the last twenty plus years I have gone to the doctor yearly with a long list of problems. He just sits and listens and declares each one as part of aging. One time He interrupted the list and said, "Come on give me something hard!" Kind of makes you happy you are paying that kind of prices for a comedian. At any rate, we often go overboard worrying about symptoms, but at other times ignore serious problems thinking they are simple.

There might be a side application here, but one should be careful in the use of it. Possibly we ought to use the same tactic with the self righteous - pay them no mind until they realize that they have a problem. Do not allow the problem go on without making it known to the person, but if they are unresponsive then going to those that know their need might be a wiser use of your time.

MARK CHAPTER THREE

Mar 3:1 And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. 2 And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. 3 And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. 4 And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

The term "synagogue" is a transliteration of the Greek word rather than a translation. It was the gathering of men, just as the term "church" means a gathering or a called gathering. It may well have been in a building, but the building was not the synagogue, the people were the synagogue just as the church is the people rather than the meeting place.

Among these men at the synagogue was one with a withered hand. What was wrong with the man's hand is not known, other than it was withered. The term used relates to drying up, of crops, of water or of a person's hand. Not being a doctor, I would guess this was just a shrinking of the hand due to not being used for some reason. The man may have had an injury that caused inactivity or he may have had a circulation problem, or some other injury/malady that caused his problem. His hand is not the focus, but rather the tension between Christ and the Jewish leaders.

One is left to wonder how the disciples felt at this point. Will He heal the man and get us all in trouble, or will he do the safe thing and not make waves? Not an unimportant consideration for the freshly chosen disciples - did I really follow this guy and open myself to all sorts of trouble with the leaders?

Some times we need to stand against a corrupt leadership even if it will cost us dearly. Standing for right almost always has a cost, but we as believers must count the costs and stand anyway.

It is quite evident that the leaders were looking for an opportunity to clobber the Lord - why - because he stood for truth, because He claimed deity, and because He taught as one with authority. Anyone today that stands for truth and teaches truth (which is the authority) will be coming to trouble with the established leadership.

More than once in my meager ministry I have stood for what was right in the face of leadership and found myself on the outskirts of the group or organization I was a part of at the time. One particular time I had dinner with one of the leaders of the church group I was with. I was asked point-blank what I thought of the organization leadership. I put forth several disturbing items that I had come to know about. At the time I was looking for a church to pastor and the group had several churches open. Not one contact came to me from the group - hummmm wonder why.

The joy of such situations is knowing that when I stand before God to give account I will not be asked about why I did not stand for truth in those numerous situations. Take Christ's example and stand for what you know to be right and proper. Do not shrink from doing what you know to be right even if you know your enemies are watching.

Not only did He want to confront the error in the place, He wanted to be right up front about it - He wanted to be sure all that were present knew what was going on and where He stood in relation to the established leadership.

This is God, and He knew what was right as opposed to the Jewish leadership that THOUGHT they knew what was right. When you take your stand, be sure you stand on the Word of God and not on your own opinion.

He got into their face with this one. He was upset with their attitude and their rejection of Him as Messiah. He was drawing the line in the sand for His disciples and followers - these gentlemen are wrong and we are going to be sure everyone knows it.

His confrontation is stark. "Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace." Mark said that they "held their peace." or was it that they knew they had better keep their mouths shut?

Mar 3:5 And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other. 6 And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

We see in this passage that Christ "looked round about on them with anger." Do not take this for more than it is. He did not strike out in anger. He did not attack them verbally in anger. He "looked" at them in anger. WHOOPS! Bet some of them had a few shivers in their beings.

I can't really imagine what Christ looked like, but to imagine him looking in anger - not sure I want to know what that looked like.

Anger is a topic that needs to be covered in our day. Many people are angry and their anger is just below the surface waiting to lash out against anyone or thing that is near to set it off. Recently Dr. David Jeremiah on his television program explained that Christ's anger (not in this context, but when he cleansed the temple) was different than our anger. He explained, and correctly so, that our anger is usually due to someone doing something to us or to our belongings. In Christ's case it was anger due to their misuse of God's things and being an affront to God. I think this is probably a true analysis of the difference, though in this case there is a difference stated. This difference may have been part of Christ's anger in the temple as well. The next phrase modifies the anger phrase. "Being grieved for the hardness of their hearts" tells the reader where the anger came from. It was based on His grief, at their hardness toward God.

The term translated "anger" is a general word normally translated anger, but can indicate any violent emotion and it is a strong word that is translated vengeance as well as anger, wrath, and indignation. The point however is that it was simply a look, not an outward verbal or physical out working.

The attitude of the leaders was a total affront to Christ and Who He was, yet His anger was

fueled from their hard heart.

Now let us get back to anger and the average Christian. It isn't Christian and we all know it, and don't relate the explosion at the wheel over the stupid idiot that cut you off to Christ's anger. Our anger is that which Dr. Jeremiah pointed out, our anger against someone that does something against us or our toys - not the Christian attitude.

There is another point to this anger. The "look with anger" was an aorist tense or a momentary thing, yet his being grieved is a present tense, or a continuing thing. I would think that this gives insight into God's justice and compassion. His concern for His creation is ongoing and never ending. He seems to grieve when the lost refuse Him yet He is longsuffering with them and gives them every opportunity to come to Him.

Constable points out that Mark is the only Gospel writer that mentions this "anger" and "grieving" of the Lord thus pointing out to his readers the complete manhood of the Lord. His emotions were as ours, except He successfully controlled His with the assistance of the Holy Spirit - as we ought, it might be added.

Matthew adds that the Scribes and Pharisees asked the Lord if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath and further adds that they wanted to accuse him. Not nice folks. Luke adds as a doctor would that the man's RIGHT hand was the one that was withered.

Matthew also records that Jesus asked the leaders if they had a sheep fall into a pit if they would not rescue it. He also told them that a man was of much more value than a sheep. I do think that Christ answers the environmentalist that submits that man is the same as the animals. The environmentalist is incorrect.

Luke mentions that the leaders went away in "madness" trying to figure out how to do the Lord in.

Again we see the Lord heal and none of that partial stuff, He healed the man "whole." What a wonderful experience for the man. I'm sure it was hard to make a living with only one hand and to know that your physical life had been changed in an instant. His mind must have been in a total mess. He had gotten up in the morning to the same drudgery of life and along comes this Jesus to mess up his whole day - his heart must have been full of joy and his head full of questions.

Mar 3:7 But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judaea, 8 And from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him. 9 And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him. 10 For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues. 11 And unclean

spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God.

This is no small group for a Bible study these folks were from all over the country. Idumaea is south of Jerusalem which itself is a far piece from where the Lord was. His reputation had spread throughout the area of the Jews. One must wonder if part of this quick widespread knowledge was not in part due to the ministry of John the Baptist. After all he was to make the way for the one following him. It would seem that he had done his job well.

The Lord was not oblivious to the impending dangers of such a crowd, many of which were there in search of healing. He made arrangements for a boat to be made available in case he needed to set Himself apart from the crowd.

This seems to me to be a good proof text for the thought that we ought not take unnecessary chances in our ministries. No, do not pull into a shell so you cannot get hurt, but make provision so that you can protect yourself if you can. If danger comes to your door, then do not flinch, but there is nothing in the Word of God that we should throw caution to the wind.

There is also a practical aspect to the boat, as the crowd increased, He could get into the boat and go offshore a bit and preach to an even larger crowd.

Mar 3:12 And he straightly charged them that they should not make him known. 13 And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. 14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, 15 And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils:

Christ "charged them that they should not make him known." What does that mean? It could mean that He did not want them talking about Him, but in the context I suspect that it related to making His presence/location known. It seems that He wanted some quiet/down time with the disciples.

It seems that He took some time to choose those that He wanted to talk to. Luke 6.12 records that he called His disciples and chose out of them the twelve and named them apostles. Luke's use of the two words is of note. He uses disciples which means learner or disciple while apostle means a messenger or one that is sent, or one that is a delegate or one that is sent forth.

The term "ordain" is a little misleading here. We have the idea of "laying on of hands" and a big service to ordain people to the ministry. The term translated "ordain" simply means "make" which it is translated in verse twelve in the idea of making known.

His intent was to make them constant companions until he would send them forth to preach, heal and cast out devils. Wonder how the twelve felt when they heard that? Did they know what was ahead when they followed Him? I would doubt it, but none ran off so they must have been willing to do as they were commanded.

I trust that you will not miss the calling, the setting aside and naming of the twelve as it relates to

what we as believers ought to be doing in our lives. We also should be choosing some to disciple, men who we can be with, spend time with, train and disciple. Women also should be in this business with other women.

Christ is our example in all things of life. He selected twelve to spend extended periods of time with so that he could prepare them for the ministry that God would later call them to.

How would I go about this? I don't know how you would do it but do it. Take some time to get to know some people, select some that you think are possibilities, talk to them, tell them what you are interested in doing and see what they say.

There are a ton of Bible studies online that might be of assistance to you, or just spend time with them and watch the conversations - steer them into spiritual areas that you can challenge them with. If you are in the same church discuss the pastor's messages, or the Sunday School lessons. Do anything that will start these disciples down the road to doing the same thing one day. II Timothy 2.2 you know!

Mar 3:16 And Simon he surnamed Peter; 17 And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder: 18 And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite, 19 And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house.

The renaming of the men was of note. He renamed Simon, Peter, and James and John "The sons of Thunder" but did not rename the others. One is left with the question of why these three and not the others? What was the significance of renaming men when they became disciples? Is it something we should be doing in the church today?

This tradition is carried on in some of the movements of our own day, but usually the fringe to cultic movements.

"Boanerges" is of Aramaic origin according to the lexicon and means sons of thunder, or something fiery and loud. Peter means rock or stone. This is important in later passages. The names they were using were of Hebrew origin so the Lord many have been just setting them apart from their past toward their future and new life.

Now, for a little further information on the twelve. The following information is a compilation of sources including Encarta Standard Encyclopedia 2003 and other sources. Note should be made that most of what we know of the apostles comes from outside of the Biblical record. Most comes from tradition either Catholic or Greek Orthodox, thus historical but not Biblical.

Peter: We all know about Peter and his future. He was strong in the beginning of the early church and continued his ministry to the end of his life. He is said to have been crucified upside down at his own request thinking he was not worthy of suffering the same death as the Lord. Most feel that he became a pastor/writer due to I and II Peter.

James: In Acts 12.1-2 we see that James was the first apostle to die for his faith. Tradition tells us that he preached in Spain just prior to his death. His remains were supposedly moved to Spain in the middle ages.

John: John the Gospel writer also was a disciple of The Baptist and went on to become very important in the founding of the church. He wrote the book of Revelation from the island of Patmos where he was exiled because of his Gospel witness. Some suggest that he survived death when he was to be boiled in oil. He put in a lot of work at the church of Ephesus and the surrounding area. Some think that he took care of Mary in his own home for many years. He is the only apostle thought to have died a natural death of old age.

Andrew: Andrew, Peter's brother was a fisherman from Bethsaida. He had been a follower of John the Baptist according to the Gospel of John 1:35-42. Encarta details his life further, "According to tradition, Andrew was crucified at Patras, in Achaea, on a X-shaped cross, the form of which became known as Saint Andrew's Cross (see Cross). Eusebius of Caesarea records that Andrew preached Christianity among the Scythians, thus becoming the patron saint of Russia. He is also the patron saint of Greece. In the 8th century relics of Andrew were taken to the future site of Saint Andrews in Scotland, so that he is the patron saint of that country as well; a white Saint Andrew's cross on a blue field is the national flag of Scotland."

Philip: Tradition suggests that he was powerful in the church at Carthage in North Africa, but little is known of him.

Bartholomew: Bartholomew was thought to have gone preaching as far as India and was skinned alive according to some sources. Some relate him to Nathaniel in the Gospels. Some mention other preaching trips to the east and that he may have traveled with Thomas.

Matthew: We know little of Matthew other than that he was a tax gatherer and an apostle. It is evident that he is the Gospel writer, but not much else is known of the man other than that he was a willing follower of the Lord Jesus which speaks volumes to his intelligence and commitment to God. Matthew means "gift of Yahweh." Some say he ministered in Persia and Ethiopia.

Just a brief side note. Since we know little of him it may be that Christ called him simply to be a gospel writer. God calls many people to minister for Him in varied ways. Some pastors feel they do little for the Lord, yet they fail to give thought to writing for Him. There is so much training that goes into making a pastor and yet many of them preach and teach their entire lives with no thought of setting their thoughts to paper or disk for future generations.

I find reading on Internet forums that there are men that have spent years studying in small areas of the Word and doing so in minute detail. All of that study is lost because they shared their thoughts in a message or two and there is no record. Might I suggest that you take some of your ministry time to write, to put down on paper/disk that which you have found. It might save many others that same study that you have just done.

I find that reading what others have found assists me in two major areas. One, they are a good

check upon my own conclusions. I do my study, then read what others have found. Often they have noticed things that I completely missed. This is the second area in which they assist me. They add to what I have found and they are a good double-check on what I have concluded.

All too often the areas where I desire assistance are areas where no one has written. Please consider doing some writing pastors. Some of you will find that you do not do well at the written page, but others of you will find that it is another great medium to communicate the Good News with. You may never get anything published, but you might put your information on the Internet so that others can share in your efforts.

Thomas: Thomas supposedly preached into India and is said to have lead a proconsul's wife to the Lord for which he was crucified.

James son of Alphaeus: According to Josephus the historian James was stoned and then clubbed to death.

Thaddaeus: Luke adds Judas the son of James which seems to be Thaddaeus. Jude 1.1 mentions "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James...." The Lexicon states that these two are the same and that he is the writer of Jude. Some mistakenly call him Lebbaeus as mentioned in the Lexicon and Encarta.

Simon: Luke mentions that he was called the Zealot. Tradition places him in Persia and killed for not sacrificing to the Sun god.

Judas: We all know of Judas and his future as well. Some wonder at the Lord's choosing of Judas. Why would He choose someone that He knew would betray Him? The obvious, is that maybe He did not know that he was going to betray Him. The crux of the matter rests on how you view Christ during His earthly ministry - whether fully God in his omnipotence, omniscience etc. or was he limited in these areas in some manner and relying on the Holy Spirit for His powers over nature.

Either way, He may well have known of the coming problems whether by omniscience or by the leading of the Spirit. Why He wanted the culprit within his own group is not known to us. It would have been God's way to be sure the man would have every opportunity to see and know the Messiah and to force him into a choice one way or the other.

The downfall of Judas due to his greed is well known. Might we have just a little application to pastors and other church leaders. Greed is a terrible taskmaster and it will put you down if you do not control it. The history books are filled with greedy preachers that allowed that greed to ruin their ministry for Christ.

Not many months go by between newspaper and media accounts of men that have fallen victim to the temptation to greed. Beware your physical appetites and control them or they will control you and stop you from God's best for your life.

Mathias was the disciple chosen in Acts. He is said to have been with Andrew in his travels and that he was burned to death. (Acts 1.13 lists Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon Zelotes and Judas the brother of James.)

Now back to Mark.

Mar 3:20 And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.
21 And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.

As I read this the crowd had located Christ and the disciples and had come together around them with such a press that they could not even eat. The "friends" that heard of this press and that had come to help seem to be external to the apostles - probably other followers/disciples.

We live in a very small home, 800 square foot, and it is split into two levels. All three of our children showed up the same Christmas a few years ago with all their children. Eight adults and eight children in less than 400 square foot when we were all together. Most of the time there were several standing on the stairs or in the kitchen.

My point is this, even in this press of people we were able to "eat bread." Among the press we could cook and serve meals for all present, but Christ found Himself in such a crowd that they could not even eat. Some crowd!

"He is beside himself" can be translated as it is, or of someone that is amazed, or indeed of someone that is insane, however I think in the context it would be better viewed as the fact that Christ was just so busy with His activities that He may have lost track of time, personal needs and indeed was running on automatic.

When teaching I was teaching a heavy load, class sponsor, had two teenage sons at home, preaching weekends and just altogether running on automatic. I had little time to think about anything but all the detail that was going on in my life. I'm sure some thought I was beside myself when they would see me moving from one task to another in a flash that was required to get everything done.

Add to this the fatigue of such a schedule as Christ was keeping and I suspect that the Lord may have seemed to be on automatic pilot, though I am not sure their perception would have been deemed correct by the Lord.

The other Gospel writers do not mention this account leaving one to wonder if this was not Mark's impression rather than the facts as others viewed them. Mark being of a younger nature may have just had this impression of the Lord, however the fact that friends came to assist the Lord would indicate that there was a widespread feeling that Christ was over extending Himself.

It may, in view of other passages, be that the Lord was over extended and that he was running close to the edge. Recall His activities when praying about the coming cross. His mind was

running all around the coming events. It is not hard to imagine that His manliness was over taxed and that He needed someone to step in and give Him relief.

We often get stuck on His deity or His manhood and forget that the other side was always there as well. He is not just Christ, and He is not just Jesus, He is the Lord Jesus Christ. We would do well to remember both were completely and fully existent within Him at all times.

The point of application might run along the lines pastor/teacher, you are one person, you are a person with limits, and that you should find your limits and live within them.

Referring back to my teaching comments, I felt I had no limits, so I kept taking on more and more without thought to how it was affecting me. I was becoming burdened, I was becoming weaker physically, and I was headed for problems. The physical finally met with collapse when my back went out completely. Stress and fatigue finally gave way to bed rest for a week over Christmas break.

We are physical beings that have limits. Know your limits, but more importantly when you find them keep on the good side of them so that you do not do damage to yourself.

On the other hand, do not use this as license to become lazy and lax in your ministry. God wants our best not our "what we can get along doing with the least effort."

Mar 3:22 And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils. 23 And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26 And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. 27 No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house. 28 Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: 29 But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: 30 Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

The term translated "scribe" is related to our English word grammar. Not sure what we might make of that fact other than the fact that I would never have made a good scribe since grammar and I are sworn enemies.

"The Scribes which came down from Jerusalem" might be of interest to you. Since the Lord is in the northern part of the country and Jerusalem is in the south, why would Mark state that they "came down" from Jerusalem? The Jews viewed Jerusalem to be the center of the world. Everywhere in the world is down from Jerusalem. If they are anywhere in the world except Jerusalem and they are going to Jerusalem, they would go "up" to Jerusalem.

Just a little off the subject, but this is another reason why I personally view the Garden of Eden as being in the area of Jerusalem, if not on the very site of the old temples. There is a study on this

on my website if you are interested. In the short of it the temple site has been God's place to deal with Israel, and even back to Abraham, and it will be prominent in the coming kingdom as well.

I suspect that this is all tied up with the Jewish thought of Jerusalem being God's holy hill so to speak.

Beelzebub means "lord of the house." It is one of the names for Satan. One might suggest that any family that is not living for God ought to call upon their lord Beelzebub, for their failure on God's part is certainly success on the Devil's part.

This is kind of typical of religious leaders, saying things that are illogical and poorly thought through. Why in the world would the Devil throw his own workers out of people and cause failure for his team? He would not and the scribes did not think their conclusions through.

I trust as you minister and study the Word that when you make a conclusion about something, take time to think through to the logical end of your conclusion. Recently in a Sunday school class we were told by a lady who if we live for God He will bless us materially. Now that is a great sounding sound bite and I've heard it more than once from pulpits around the country, however some are not thinking that one through to the logical end. If this is really the case then, all Christians that are poor and living without food are not spiritual because God is not blessing them. Not a valid conclusion - God blesses those He chooses to bless but also tests those He would test.

In verse twenty-three Christ points out the fallacy in their thinking. He does not just ask them, he illustrates it for them so they are sure to get the fallacy of their thinking. Indeed he illustrates it in four different ways for them to be sure they understood his point.

He then continues to blast them with the news that they are blaspheming and that they will never have forgiveness for such sin. The unpardonable sin is right here. Many wonder about it and many have all sorts of ideas of what it is, but Christ states clearly what it is. "because they said, He hath an unclean spirit." They had accused Christ of being possessed by the Devil.

Now in their context they were denying Christ's deity, but more importantly they were denying the Holy Spirit's witness in their life. Today the only sin that is unpardonable is that sin of rejecting the Spirit's witness about who Christ is. When one rejects Christ in salvation they will not be forgiven of this sin, they will spend eternity with the lord of the house - Satan.

The following translations translate this passage as follows: asv: "hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin." Darby: "has no forgiveness; but lies under the guilt of an everlasting sin;" Net Bible: "will never be forgiven, but is guilty of an eternal sin"

The point might be made that the verse mentions the person is "in danger of" or in other words he is not yet destined for hell, but he certainly is in danger of it. The phrase prior states however "hath never forgiveness" indicating that this is a done deal. I would assume that the Christ

rejecter has ample opportunity to accept the Lord until one day he finally and completely rejects Him and it is then that they have committed the unpardonable sin.

Mar 3:31 There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him. Mar 3:32 And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. Mar 3:33 And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? Mar 3:34 And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! Mar 3:35 For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

Christ's family came to visit or show concern for Him but could not get close to him - this is stated in Luke 8.19 "and they could not come at him for the crowd." They sent word to him and he asked the group who his family was.

This is a definite principle of life that many ignore today. He was saying quite clearly that his family was anyone that heard the Word and did it. Not any claim to deity or anything is it? He is the spiritual head of the family that He is gathering together. Anyone in God's family that hears God's word and does it is a part of the family.

We won't get into the discussion that "do it" might bring, but it seems that works are closely tied to Christ's recognition of His family. (Mark and Matthew speak of doing the Will of God while Luke mentions hearing the word and then doing it.)

This is in no way a rejection of his blood family, but recognition of His spiritual family.

We also see that Mary had other children after the birth of Christ. Plural brothers are mentioned. (Not to throw rocks at the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary which some teach, but it does throw a rock in front of their truck in my mind.)

APPLICATION:

1. Christ in showing the marked difference between His physical family and His new spiritual family seems to be a demarcation from His past life growing up and His future life of ministry with His apostles. Not that the physical family is to be cast aside, but that the physical family is no longer the focus of the being.

Part of life is this breaking away from the physical family that nurtures us to adulthood, but there is a time when the break should take place. When marriage comes there is to be a leaving of the former family and a cleaving to the new spouse.

Christ seemed to be distinguishing between that physical bond with His mother and brothers (Joseph seemingly is not there - most likely passed on.) and the future family that He was building for God. Both are important, but the later is the more important.

Some might balk at such comments, but consider further Matthew 10.37 "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." or Matthew 19.29 "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

There seems to be a setting of importance upon the spiritual. Not that we abandon the physical family, but it should surely never be placed above the spiritual in focus. This flies in the face of some teaching today where we put God at the top, our physical family next, then our lively hood and finally if there is time the church.

Christ seems to list it as God, spiritual family and then physical family. Between families might should come livelihood since that is our responsibility to our physical family. Again I don't mean to say abandon the physical, but not to put them above any ministry God has given you. The emphasis is on doing what the Word tells you to do. If it means going to Africa and never seeing your physical mother, father and siblings then so be it.

2. We need to set our study thus far in its context. Basically John chapters 1-4 occurred between Mark 1.13 and Mark 1.14. This includes a number of events including the marriage feast miracle, his encounter with Nicodemus, the healing of the nobleman's son, and the cleansing of the temple. The gospels are not chronological accounts all the time. They are collections of thoughts set down to portray the Lord in the way that the individual writer and the Holy Spirit deemed fitting. Matthew, Mark and Luke are basically chronological thus far with John interjecting a set of material that is recorded in none of the other gospels.

Mark 1-3 covers about a year to a year and a half of His ministry on earth. We have only seen a portion of the goings on that Christ has been involved with. Graham Scroggie places the beginning of John the Baptists ministry at January of 27 A.D. and the choosing of the disciples at May of 28 A.D. almost a year and a half into the Lord's three year ministry.

We have seen the account where Christ is accused of doing miracles by the power of Satan. The Matthew account adds some content to the occurrence. (Matthew 12.32ff) We can see that the Lord is rather upset in that he calls those that have rejected Him "offspring of vipers." I'm not sure but I suspect in the culture of the time the offspring may have been worse than the viper, or it may be that Christ was relating them to offspring of the Devil. (It is of note to understand the man who He is speaking about. Mark 3.22 mentions the Scribes and Matthew 12.24 mentions the Pharisees. (Matthew 12.22 adds to the context that Christ had healed a man "possessed with a devil, blind and dumb:"))

The leaders' thinking is wrong on two fronts. One that the power behind Christ is the Devil rather than God, but it is also the attribution of divine healing powers to the Devil which is a power of God only.

Why on earth would Jews schooled in the Old Testament think that the Devil had that sort of

power?

This is a total rejection of Christ by the Jewish establishment. Yes, there were Jewish followers but the leaders and majority of the Jewish people had rejected, in this moment, their Messiah come in the flesh.

The word "vipers" is used in: Matthew 3.7; 12.34; 23.33; Luke 3.7. The Jewish leaders knew full well what Christ thought of them. Even before they had rejected Him He knew what they were.

In short on this end of things we should take this rejection into our understanding of how to interpret the Gospels. To this point Christ has been preaching and teaching as though He were going to set up the Millennial Kingdom. After this point He knows this will not happen, so there is a shift in his preaching to a foundation for the coming church age. This is not to say that all prior to this is not useful to us in our lives, but that we need to understand it in a dispensational line of thought. Information in the Gospels prior to Matthew 12.32 speaks specifically to the Millennial Kingdom and after speak to the foundations for the church age.

This is one of the fallacies that some make in using John's early chapters as directly related to our own dispensation when they should certainly not be used for our time.

Basically, information prior to Matthew 12.32; Mark 3.23 ; Luke 8.4 and John 6.1 is Kingdom information and after those references is foundational material for the church. Depending on the harmony you use there are some passages in Matthew that are in the church section yet sequentially are after this break off point. Mark, Luke and John are chronological from the rejection on. (Matthew's passages that are in the church information based on one harmony I checked: 5.15; 6.9-13, 22-23; 7.7-11; 8.18-34; 9.1; 20-38; 10.5-42;)

3. This thought of the unpardonable sin has caused many people great anxiety. They have heard from the pulpit or lectern that there is such a thing, but they have not been taught what it was so they go through life worrying about whether they have committed it or not. Many are the times on the Internet that I have crossed paths with poor souls that are worried to death about their eternal salvation because they have not been properly taught on this subject.

Great relief is had by all when they understand the context and meaning of the passage - that it is not something the believer can commit - that indeed it is the act of rejecting the Spirit's witness to bring the person to salvation that the passage speaks of.

4. Some relate that in Christ's time there was no Social Security, no welfare, no food stamps and little if any "government" help thus a person with one hand was left to begging etc. for their livelihood. There is truth in this and I'm sure that the man's options were limited, but I would caution the expositor of this passage against making too much of this truth. I can just see the justification of every social program known to man from this passage being misunderstood. (I've read comments that since social security is not in the Bible that it should not exist, or at least

believers should not be a part of the system.)

The man had a withered hand, not a withered body, nor withered brain. True the options for a one handed person would have been limited but don't make too much of that. Christ does not make a point of this poor man's physical needs of food and home, he makes note of his need of being made whole. Indeed, note should be made from the passage that this healing had to do with the Jewish leaders, not the man with the need of healing. The healing seems somewhat secondary to the illustrative power it portrayed.

Don't mistake the power of Christ, but don't mistake the point of the passage. It was a confrontation with the Jewish leadership.

Now back to the point. Yes, we must need care for those that cannot care for themselves in society, but America has gone off the deep end and even further than that. Recently I was informed that a new program in our fair state would extend health care to all children without health care. Many of these children come from household incomes above \$50,000 per year. Some are from \$100,000 a year families. This is social consciousness run amuck!

We need to look to our past to understand what helping the needy was all about. It wasn't making sure everyone has what everyone else has - which by the way is called Communism - it is about helping the needy to make it through life. Needy in this case is quite qualified rather than the blanket definition used today.

Point: In 1921 there was a terrible train wreck in Utah. In the mangled wreckage they found a man, twisted and torn up internally. He was assumed dead and placed in a long line of dead with sheets covering their bodies. The man regained consciousness and pulled the sheet from his face. Someone finally noticed him and they rushed him with others to the hospital.

A year later after months of recovery he was dismissed from the hospital. He returned to Nebraska where he went back to farming his land. Now, this is not a complete story for his injuries included a broken back which left him paralyzed from the waist down. He could not use crutches but found he could move about using two canes and shuffling his feet. He continued to farm his land for a number of years until he ran for county office and took on responsibilities of assessor, then later treasurer. He remained in office until his death in the seventies. He married when he was still farming and fathered/raised two children.

Now in that time in our country, help was available, but not all that could gain that help used it. Many did their best and found they were able to live decent lives without taking help from the taxpayers.

When I was seven or so, I would walk beside dad as he shuffled to the car to go to work. I would climb into the car and go with him to work and walk home just for the fun of being with him. I recall many times there was a one legged veteran that walked by our house going to work and dad would give him a ride.

It was several years later when I was thinking of that poor crippled veteran and it dawned on me that my father was also crippled. His life before his family was as normal as any other, just a little slower.

The point: I am not against helping those that "NEED" help, but the government giveaway that we have today is simply the Robin Hood philosophy - take from the rich (and in this case middle class and poor) to give to the takers. NO OFFENSE TO THOSE THAT NEED HELP - it should be taken with no recriminations, but there are millions taking without NEED.

Most of our lives when the kids were still at home, we qualified for food stamps and other programs, but we did not NEED them and lived fairly well on what we had.

To the leaders of the church, be careful your attitude toward the NEEDY, and to the church folks - beware the NEEDY, for they may or may not be needy indeed.

5. One might wonder at the groups involved here. We have the Scribes, the Pharisees, the Herodians and the Sadducees. All were bending their own version of Scriptural right and wrong. Then there was Christ, the disciples of John the Baptist, and the freshly appointed apostles.

All claim the same God, all claim the same moral code of the Old Testament, yet all have a completely different outlook on what spirituality is.

Not unlike today in the church. Some might suggest that they are the correct group, however in the case of Christ and the apostles - they were right, Christ is the final authority and He appointed the apostles.

Today we have no group that has this authority. We have no group with God as their leader, though there are a few out there that do claim to be God. (Recently I read a news report of a man who claimed to be Jesus. A month or two later I read another report that stated that he was now saying he was God. Now, the last report I read has that he was claiming to be the Anti-christ - hummm, maybe he is getting closer to truth.)

Today we have many that see their truth as just as authoritative as Christ's even though they may be wrong as can be. Some feel the pastor is the totalitarian leader and that all should bow to his dictates. Since I do not see this in Scripture I must reject it. It is very important that we see what Scripture has to say on a subject and follow that rather than some groups dictates.

We have the contemporary worship group, we have the traditional group, both of which have it all wrong because there should be a mix of traditional and contemporary - and on and on it goes with the group differences, that really make no difference when we all stand at the Judgment seat of Christ to see how we have done in this life for Him.

There are groups that will not fellowship with other groups, there are groups that have determined that they are the right of all the groups, and there are groups that just group and do nothing for the Lord or His church.

Groups are good for one to gain fellowship and support from but do not buy into the line that your particular group is special or more spiritual because they are who they are.

It is evident that the groups that gathered against the Lord put aside their important issues to deal with this one common issue that was threatening them all. There is power in unity to be sure. They, together, had power to get the Savior of the world crucified, but in the process they missed the Messiah that they were all looking for. They missed the major while concentrating on the minutia.

Our major is serving Christ, glorifying Him and leading others to Him. If our concentration is anywhere else we have misplaced our focus.

6. One commentary mentions "Here we see that the demons know Christ is the Son of God even though they refuse to believe in Him." Might I challenge you to think on this comment for a moment and see if you agree? I think this is the sort of thing that brings false teaching into the church as fact. This is a comment that just feels okay, yet it is error. As people read this sort of thing they have it stuck in their memory banks and out it pops in some conversation or lesson for others to hear and retain.

Demons know Christ and they believe in Him. They have known their creator from the beginning. Their error is in rejecting God's sovereignty and following the prideful Devil in his attempts to be more than God. They do not continue in a lost state just as man because they don't "believe" in Christ. They are lost to damnation because they opted to follow Satan. They have no possibility of heaven as man has been offered it. They were created under a completely different set of options than we. Heaven was never an option, accepting Christ to be saved from sin was never an option, and being a brother with Christ was never an option, so I trust that you set the quote aside as something not to be agreed with.

I am not picking on this one commentator for I find such in most of the reading I do, and if I am not too much in error you find it in my writing - we all need to be on guard of our tongues and know that what we say, not only sounds good, but that it is good.

7. It should be noted that Christ picked ordinary men to become his apostles. So today God chooses ordinary men to do His work. It is the janitor, the pianist, the teacher as well as the pastor that God uses for the totality of His work here on earth.

Even within pastors, we find if we dig down below the facade of correctness, that most are just ordinary man who God called into the ministry. The great missionaries of the past were cobblers, lawyers and trades men who God called. I have known preachers that were drunks, drug addicts, television repairmen, appliance repairmen, salesmen, and every other type of man who you can think of. God uses all kinds. I am sure there are some somewhere that were called when they were in professional positions with their schooling finished, but I have yet to meet one.

Someone once said that God prepares whom He will call, not call one that is already prepared. Normally God has a lot of molding and training to do when He calls someone, and He seems to

like to use blank slates, rather than full ones.

The point is that God can and does use anyone that He pleases, even those that the world would automatically reject. This man was always the last chosen for teams when there was a group choosing up sides. This man was always the one that no one talked to. This man was told that he was too dumb to take chemistry when he was in high school. This man was rejected by many in his hometown because they knew of his activities in school. Yet, God looked down and saw potential in the reject of society. I fear I have not lived up to that potential but I have given it the college try and God has chosen to let me run on at the mouth for many years thus I assume the message is still going down His prescribed path.

If you feel God is calling you into ministry then get going, He will smooth the way before you and provide all the necessary items along the way. No matter who or what you are, He can use you - the only key is your willingness to follow as the apostles were willing to drop everything to follow the Lord.

8. Is it not a tad ironic that the Lord is doing total good on the Sabbath, but the Jewish leaders are involved in total evil on the same day that they held sacred? He did good while they plotted His death. Consider that for a moment. They had followed Him for a time, they knew His teaching, they knew His actions, and they knew His authority, yet they had such hate for him that they wanted to kill Him. They knew that He was a large sized threat to their way of life. Not that Christ was going after them, but that He was shedding light upon the darkness of their way of life and their total philosophy of life.

We do not see this sort of hate from the lost of our day. The lost just continue on in their own ways leaving the Christian alone - hummm maybe there is something wrong. Are we following through with the teaching of the Lord, of the actions of the Lord, of the authority of the Lord?

Please consider some food for thought. Today we see some opposition to Christians in America but normally it is related to our political activity rather than our preaching of the Gospel or of our actions generated from spiritual activity. How come?

9. It seems that many that were coming to Christ were coming for the physical benefits. The healing, or the casting out of demons was their goal rather than learning of Him or His teaching. This is not unlike what we see in the church today. When you ask people what they find in church it is usually the good music, the good preaching or the good programs, seldom do they say that they are there for the spiritual blessing.

To be in church for any reason other than spiritual blessing is completely wrong - you approach God out of physical want rather than spiritual need. Church is not for our physical benefit, it is for our spiritual benefit. It is a time to meet with God and His people to consider Him and not ourselves.

Many churches minister only to the physical in the hope of meeting the spiritual, though the way they attempt it sometimes you would think that any spiritual benefit is strictly accidental. The

Sports Bar Church is an example. The preacher teaches while the ball game is on and if there is something exciting the honorary referee calls attention away from the message - if indeed anyone is even listening, so that all can concentrate on the game.

I've been in conversations with man who were constantly being distracted by other things going on around. It is rude not to give the one you are speaking with your full attention, yet these folks give God only glancing attention while they fill their physical and emotional need for sports.

Many are probably appalled at the Sports Bar church concept, but are our churches any different? We have the performers on stage belting out the hit of the week, we have the band backing them up, we have the bouncing worship leaders to keep us with the beat. Rather reminds me of the little bouncing ball over the lyrics in the old movies so the crowd could sing along. Add to that the greeting time and the other fillers that grace our church stages today and what is left for God?

The churches are filled with folks that love church but is it God that they love or the beat, the performers, and the whatever or God? One must wonder.

10. Covenant theologians have coined a new phrase to rename the church, they call it the "new Israel" meaning the church is just a continuation, or rehash of Israel. This is not so and it is very misleading. The church is the church, not Israel remade or reformed. Israel is for the Jews and the church is for Christians. If you do not keep this simple distinction you will find yourself in false doctrine.

11. I would like to consider Christ's response to the leadership concerning Satan. "23 And he called them [unto him], and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26 And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. 27 No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house."

His comments:

a. "How can Satan cast out Satan?" The answer is that he cannot, it is illogical to even consider it. Christ has proved to them that He is not Satan.

b. "If a kingdom be divided against itself that kingdom cannot stand" Here, it seems that he refers to Satan's kingdom not being able to stand if He were indeed empowered by the Devil.

c. "If a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand." This is just another illustration from logic.

d. "If Satan rise up against himself and be divided, he cannot stand." And a further illustration.

e. "No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the

strong man; and then he will spoil his house." And just in case you don't get it yet guys, here is another illustration.

Christ even goes beyond what they teach preachers. Tell em what yer gunna tell em, then tell em what you want to tell em, and then tell em what ya told em.

Christ moves from the personal to the kingdom, to the house back to personal and ends up in the strong man's house. It seems to me that Christ is proving them wrong on several fronts, but also it seems that he is pointing out their error in rejecting the kingdom, in the house of Israel rejecting the kingdom, and finally their own personal rejection of the Messiah.

The leaders were leading the Jewish religion, the Jewish people, but also themselves individually. They have rejected Christ on all levels and He moves on to tell them that they are in an unpardonable stance before God.

12. I wonder if there isn't just a little of the Jewish leaderships attitude in all of us. Here they are watching the Lord and waiting to trap Him. Some even suggest that they had laid the trap. They are waiting to see if Christ would heal the man and break one of their rules.

Let that sink in. These men know that Christ can heal. These men know that this man's hand can be made complete. These men have closed their minds to the wonder of the former two items and are waiting to catch Him doing something that they think He ought not.

Do we know that God is able to do anything? Sure we do. Do we allow Him to bless us with these wonders that He can do? Sometimes not. We would rather do it ourselves.

Do we go to church to gain something from the Lord or do we go looking for someone doing something that we think they ought not do? If only we could see others as we see ourselves - you know - as always being right, as always doing the right thing, and always thinking just the right way.

13. In relation to Christ showing anger then compassion. This is something we can do if we are walking with the Lord and depending on him for our reactions to people. I will preface further comments with the fact that anger has been one of the besetting problems of my life. In a flash I can go from zero to ludicrous with my emotions. For the most part God has allowed me to find control for this, but only as I have been walking with Him.

One incident comes to mind with many others following close behind. We were pioneering a church in a small town. A church in another town had started a Bible study and it grew to the point that they thought a pastor was needed. Another long story is that the men involved were starting a church of "their brand" in this "needy" town. A town that had five very sound churches within ten miles of the town one of which was in town. Of course they were not brand "....." churches.

Anyway the church was outgrowing our living room. We had rented a home with a large area

that was quite adequate but we were having growing pains. The wife and I committed ourselves to purchase a home that would be more adequate to the need and make the payments etc. We assumed that if we left before the church had its own building we would just turn the house over to the church and allow them to take responsibility.

I took an evening service to open this discussion with the folks. The meeting was rather short. As I was introducing the concept one of the men of the church rose and started spouting venom of which I had never received before. My first reaction was to punch the man out, but almost instantly I saw the man's smallness, his lack of knowledge and his lack of Christian charity and my compassion took over. Humor is my next reaction when in these situations. I was almost laughing at the man as he wore on with his diatribe. I looked down and my wife was in tears having to sit there and listen to the drivel.

She knew that we had moved from out of state at our own expense to take on this ministry, that money and houses have never been a consideration in our lives, that I was working forty-five hours a week at my money making job and taking nothing from the church and preparing five lessons/services a week for the church. She knew that we were tickled to the bone with this house - the first house we had lived in as a family and we were overjoyed with its prospects as a family home, just that as a church home it was becoming inadequate.

His main accusation was that the house we were living in and holding church in was not "good enough" for me, that I "needed" a much classier house to put my family in and that I wanted the church to pay for my social climbing appetite.

When trouble comes along with other people be sure to turn the compassionate side to the person. They may be as wrong as one can be, but you should be the more mature and seek God's strength to put up with the idiots of the Christian world. Did I really say that? I would love to know what the Lord said to the disciples later when they were alone and discussing the Jewish leadership. What would Jesus do? Would He call them idiots? Most likely not, but His compassion can be yours if you are open to allowing it. Maybe even His vocabulary :-)

14. I do not wish to play down the "paid pastors" of our day, but would like to draw some conclusions from the Jewish leadership. They were fully supported, they were "THE" authority and they were quite ingrained into Jewish societal life. So are pastors in our own day.

Some parallels that I see in SOME of the pastors that I mingle with. First of all those that are fully supported are often today unhappy with their level of support. They feel they work hard and that they are worth much more than they are given. Many go as far as to complain behind their churches backs to strangers on the Internet. Is this not the same as talking behind someone's back - we used to call it gossip I believe. If there is complaint take it to someone that can deal with it not strangers that can do nothing.

The Jewish leadership was ingrained. It was a father to son handing down of the leadership. Not uncommon today, but just as poor an administrative method as in Jesus days. A son should learn and make his own mark on his own, not on the coat tails of his father. Just because a man

pastors a church well does not mean that his son can do the same job.

The Jewish leaders were against truth that tended toward upsetting their apple carts of spirituality. Pastors today often have their own credo that they hold as sacred and anyone that doesn't come under his thumb is to be rejected - much as Christ was rejected.

The Jewish leaders could not see past their robes and rituals to see their Messiah come, nor can many pastors see spiritual growth and power when they see it in their own church. If they see growth they are afraid of losing their power so squelch the growth.

Years ago I was asked to take on a Sunday school class of senior citizens. Being the brash know it all that most Bible college students end up being I dove into the challenge with both feet.

God blessed my ministry with those folks greatly. I saw a class that was sullen, quiet and disinterested become alive with folks that thought they could actually do something in their church. One Sunday I challenged them to tell me what they could do for the church. I chided them with their age, their infirmities and their slowness of gait. I filled a large blackboard with the little jobs that they said they would do for the church if given opportunity.

I took the list to the pastor and asked him to consider it. His power and hold were challenged with that list. He soon spread some confidential information I had shared with him to the congregation. When I confronted him on it he blew and told me off in no uncertain terms. I thought my next step should be to talk to one of the deacons. I phoned one of the leaders to see if he would talk with me. As soon as he knew who was on the line he began to spew venom of a sort that I had never heard from a human being before (This occurrence was before the last illustration where I was venomized :-).

We left the church feeling that I had let those old folks down miserably. Over the next six months the Lord lead me across the path of a number of ex members of the church. In total there had been four others before me that had been run off in similar manner, all of which had started to have a good ministry with the church folks. I also found out that my replacement teacher had only lasted a few weeks before he was looking for a church.

Is it any wonder that the class was quiet and sullen? Pastors, please realize that you are not the center of attention in a church and that others in your church may have a ministry there blessed by God. The Life Application Bible says it well, "" Already the Pharisees had turned against Jesus. They were jealous of his popularity...."

Contrast the above with the Lord and His followers. Unpaid, uneducated, and unspiritual men from all sorts of backgrounds called together for their growth and nurturing. They were not followers for the bucks nor for the attention of the public, but they were willing participants in their own maturing as believers.

They went on to be just what the Jewish leaders were not. They spoke truth, they followed and presented Christ as the basis for all that they believed. They served the church in humility,

poverty and truth.

Power and money tend toward corruption in the world system and I have seen over the years that the spiritual system is not exempt from the same problems. Pastor, do not allow your personal wants and desires to get between what God wants you to do and the conclusion of same.

15. More than one commentary mentioned the fact that the leaders were accusing Christ of sinning while all the time they were plotting murder, one of the Ten Commandments.

How often are we critical of the way others live their lives while we are in the midst of some sin or another? I think it is human nature to not see our own sin but easily view and point out the sins of others. What was it that Christ mentioned - cast out the block of wood in your own eye before you

15. The Life Application Bible mentions of the evil spirits "they refused to turn from their evil purposes." Think about that for a moment theologically. Is it possible for a fallen angel to change its ways? I see nothing in Scripture to indicate this. They followed Satan in rebellion and have been judged.

I think we ought to be careful the idle words that are set to print. Check your thinking with the Word and be sure you are on the mark. I do not single out this source to rail against, just pointing out what I see in many works that I read and what others may see in my own work. We all need to be very careful with what we are saying.

Many in the churches of today do not take a thought about what they hear in church. They just soak it up as if all they hear is truth when in fact seldom do I hear a message that is not problematic in some matter or another.

They continue their thought "Knowing about Jesus, or even believing that he is God's Son, does not guarantee salvation. You must also want to follow and obey him (see also Jas 2:17)." What they say is true but of human beings only, no such statement is to be found in the Word of God to support their thought.

They further their thought "Jesus warned the evil spirits not to reveal his identity because he did not want them to reinforce a popular misconception. The huge crowds were looking for a political and military leader who would free them from Rome's control, and they thought that the Messiah predicted by the Old Testament prophets would be this kind of man. Jesus wanted to teach the people about the kind of Messiah he really was—one who was far different from their expectations. Christ's Kingdom is spiritual. It begins with the overthrow of sin in people's hearts, not with the overthrow of governments." I think they need to rethink their limited statement that Christ's kingdom is spiritual. He was offering a literal worldly real kingdom here on earth, not something spiritual only.

They are correct in their idea of who the Jews were expecting. They had a healthy expectation of a Messiah coming to free them from bondage. It is a reality that American Christians could soon

be under a politically oppressive government that is dead set against Christianity. What a wonderful hope we will have to know that one day He is coming to set up that real worldly kingdom here on earth and set up a completely just government to rule the world.

16. I shared with the pastor of a church we were attending that I was taking medication that was causing me quite a stress reaction. When driving or doing something out of the usual every day, I would get quite stressed. I then illustrated one of the items that stressed me that would not ordinarily cause me problems. A few weeks later my illustration was his in a message about those that lack the peace of God. Not unlike the Jewish leaders - they didn't give a hang about the man who was healed, they only wanted to condemn the Lord. This man did not hear or care that my stress was medicine related, he just seized on the "problem" of this simple man who does not understand things the way he does.

Further, the man did not give any solution for being without the peace of God, only that it is wrong.

Pastors please take one on one conversation and keep it to yourself instead of turning them into fodder for your sermons. Be concerned about the problems of your people, not how to put them on a spiritual plain below you. That is arrogance of the highest order and is not becoming a man of God that is supposed to assist his people rather than find ways of condemnation. The Jewish leaders were intent on putting down rather than building up. Be sure you aren't on the same level as they.

17. Often we see the miracle but miss the point that Christ was making with the miracle. In the first verses of the chapter the man with the withered hand miracle was to prove a point to the people and the religious leadership. He asked if it was alright to do good on the Sabbaths. Indeed, there were reasons you could do good under the Parasitical law, but not healing. It is clear that the leaders were going to accuse Him if he stepped over their line.

Christ made the point crystal clear that it was okay to heal on the Sabbaths no matter what the leaders believed. By healing the man he stuck His finger in their eye and proved their man made laws incorrect and set the stage for the law of God to be seen instead of their false customs.

Because of the hardness of their hearts they could not see the point, they knew their law had been broken and that someone should die.

A small application might be of interest. I have run into Calvinists on the Internet that know their own beliefs to be true, that know that their view of the world be true, and that know their interpretation of Scripture be true. They also don't mind seeing things in verses that are really not there and they don't mind seeing these things as true.

Now enter anyone that does not have their mindset. The new person is automatically wrong, unbiblical and heretical because they are totally and utterly wrong. Why? Because they interpret Scripture incorrectly, they don't see the deeper things of the Word and they just are inferior because they just don't believe the way the Calvinist does. When you present any information,

Scripture or interpretation it is automatically incorrect because it is not in line with theirs. See any similarity to the Pharisees? They knew their ways to be the correct way, thus Christ was in error and must be eliminated.

As you walk through this life, be sure that you allow others their own beliefs. They may well be right and you wrong. We can never know all truth from the Word because we all view it through our own mindset and life experience. These differences ought to be acceptable so that we can fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. If you need to stay away from those differences to get along then do so. No I am not talking about the fundamentals of the faith, they are in need of standing, but when we speak of the minor questions we ought to find ways to get along.

There are churches I have attended where the pastor allowed no hint of difference. You agreed with him and his long list of doctrines and if not you were not made comfortable in his church. It is no wonder why there are so many churches, denominations and fellowships. It is also no wonder many churches are very small today. It is hard to find many man who will agree with you on all things.

The further point should be clear as well. It was not right for Christ to heal a hand on the Sabbaths, but it was quite all right to gather and plot the murder of this young upstart on the Sabbath.

18. We have not mentioned the co-conspirators yet. The Pharisees were the religious leaders, and the Herodians were political in nature. They wanted to keep the Herodian line on the throne in Israel and they knew that Christ's talk of a kingdom was upsetting the balance of politics in the land.

Humm sounds like watching the polls for political direction is not so new after all. They knew that John the Baptist and his talk of the kingdom and now Christ continuing on that theme was resonating with the common people. They knew that if Christ became too powerful of voice and action that He would turn the political tides away from their avowed plans.

This is not all that uncommon in reality. During World War II there were many strange soft alliances between religious leaders and the German war machine. To cooperate was to continue living, to resist was to die. Many chose to live with whatever rationalizations they came up with to sooth their conscience.

Separation of church and state is good, though I do not hold to what is going on in America today. Religion and politics haven't worked well in many cases through history, and it isn't working now either. The Muslim holy wars, the secularization of America and the other mergers of political power and religious belief.

I might add that there are religious/political lines of thought that would set up a "God's kingdom in America" which is just as wrong. We have no command to religousize the political system, nor to take it over for our own "Christian" purposes. That is another book.

19. I do not want to beat this kingdom business too badly but Life Application Bible mentions "Jesus wanted to teach the people about the kind of Messiah he really was, because he was far different from what they expected. Christ's Kingdom is spiritual. It begins, not with the overthrow of governments, but with the overthrow of sin in people's hearts."

This is blatantly false. His kingdom will overthrow all governments on earth. He will rule Himself over the entire planet with no government but His. Yes, there is a spiritual aspect to the kingdom, but it is most assuredly political and religious in nature.

Today there is a truth that He has a kingdom program going on and it is spiritual, but when he was offering the kingdom to the Jews it was most certainly a political and spiritual kingdom. God has an overall spiritual kingdom going on, but the rule of Messiah was to be a political worldwide program.

20. Life Application commentary rightly notices that there is very little known of the apostles other than in the book of Acts. We have some information about those that remained around Jerusalem, but the ones that went to other parts of the world are not mentioned.

I would wonder why the concentration of the Word was on the few, rather than the many that went out into the known world with the Gospel. Why concentrate on Jerusalem and Paul's trips?

Some possibilities might be offered, but they are just that, possibilities. The fact is we do not know and the Holy Spirit did not move any of the authors to tell us so it probably isn't all that important.

a. God wanted to extend the truths through primarily one man. This is based on the fact that God choose to allow Paul to do most of the New Testament writing, and Christ purposed to work through only one that he taught personally after His resurrection.

It would be quite notable as well that Paul's past could not have been more fitting to show the stark contrast of what Christ can do for a person's life. From persecuting/aiding in killing of Christians to a Christian passionate about telling others of Christ.

b. The change in emphasis between Israel and the gentiles might not have been so vivid to the reader if the activities of the other apostles had been included. The stark contrast of the Jewish church in Jerusalem to the many churches scattered across the European continent is clear.

c. There is also the fact that there is little indication that any of the others did much writing. If they did it has been lost. The Holy Spirit could certainly have overcome all obstacles had God wanted their thoughts/writings included in the canon.

d. The work that the others did might not have been as successful as Paul's and may have taken many more years to produce results. The New Testament shows the quick and extensive spread of the Gospel across many lands.

e. While wanting to retain the clear distinction between Israel and the church yet picture the clear implication that the church arises out of Israel's rejection of their Messiah, there is no better person to declare this than Paul. He, as a believer, arose from the depths of Israel to become the leading figure in the Church. No one pictures the complete rejection of the Messiah and the complete acceptance of the Messiah better than Paul.

f. In hindsight it could be suggested that if we have as much trouble reconciling James and Paul's writings, what would it be like to try to reconcile the writings of twelve men. Not that we would not know that all were talking of the same thing, but from our perspective we tend to try to find difficulties where there are none.

21. In verse twenty-one it is mentioned the concern of the family for Christ. Life Application Bible Commentary suggests that John 7.5 indicates that some of Christ's brothers did not believe in Him as the Christ but later did in Acts 1.14. They also suggest that they probably were concerned with their brother to the point of thinking He needed an intervention for His own good.

To most outside of the ministry there are some in the ministry that seem like they are out of control. Probably the person is over extended but out of control is probably not the case. The fact that they are totally in control is how they can take on all of the responsibilities.

I am not likening myself to Christ in any way, but know how it is to be pressed so completely that you do not take time to eat, indeed at times not take care of yourself quite as you should. When teaching the first year I offered to take on a number of responsibilities with the qualification to the rest of the faculty, "You men know what the first year of teaching is like - I will do this job if you think I would be able to handle the coming load of work." None suggested that I should not take on these extra responsibilities so I did. I was off and running on a four year stint of activity that bordered on out of control.

Teaching a heavy load, a committee or two, headship of a couple of departments, class sponsor, this and that, speaking on weekends at churches filling the pulpit and in there somewhere all the other normal school activities and some family time as well.

I do not suggest this sort of scheduling, but it may be necessary now and then to get everything done. It might also be quite a good lesson to some of the great possibilities of how God can intervene in these times with the strength, foresight, and assistance to get you through the hard time.

It probably goes back to the leading of the Holy Spirit. If your schedule is truly Spirit led and not "YOU" led then you will most likely be okay.

I might suggest that the last year of Bible College, when I was taking a full load, working 25 hours a week, rearing a family of three, teaching Sunday School class, going on visitation and doing a few other odds and ends was great training for the time spent teaching. God prepares us for what is coming down the road.

22. When the Jewish leaders accused Christ of casting out the demons by the power of Satan was an "EXCUSE" to reject Him as the Messiah that they probably knew Him to be - just not the one they wanted.

A pastor once used a fantastic illustration to define and excuse. There was a farmer that went to his neighbor and asked to borrow his rope. The neighbor asked what he wanted to use it for. The farmer said, "Oh I want to tie up my milk." The neighbor suggested that it was impossible to tie up milk. The farmer said, "Oh I know, but one excuse is as good as another."

I'm sure that the Jewish leaders would have found some other reason to reject Christ if they had not found this one.

Churchgoer - what excuse are you using to mean mouth the pastor or the church leadership?
Pastor, what excuse are you using for not doing the job you know that you should be doing?
Student, what excuse are you using for not doing the best that you can? Wife, what excuse are you using for not being in submission to your husband? Husband, what excuse are you using to not love your wife as you should?

MARK CHAPTER FOUR

Mar 4:1 And he began again to teach by the sea-side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. 2 And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine,

I truly enjoy this first verse and the images that well up in my mind. Many years ago we attended a small Bible church that had no baptistry. Some wanted to follow the Lord in Baptism so the pastor planned a picnic/evening Bible study/baptism for Sloan's lake in Denver, CO. Picnic finished, we all settled along the shore and the pastor brought a short Bible study while standing at the lake's edge.

Christ, the pastor was not, but the situation is so similar that it always comes to mind when I think of the Lord teaching by the shore. The peacefulness, the openness to the message, the calm of the entire situation touches my very hurried soul.

Some suggest that the multitude could easily be translated "immense multitude" indicating a very large group of folks pressing to hear the message of the Lord.

"Parable" is often defined as an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. It is just an illustration of the point one is attempting to make. Christ wants to make a point with the multitude, so uses a story to assist their understanding. We find later that Christ also used parables so that His detractors would not understand His teaching. Webster in one of his older dictionaries defined parable as "A fable or allegorical relation or representation of something real in life or nature, from which a moral is drawn for instruction;" Webster's 1828 Dictionary. Life Application Bible New Testament Commentary tells us "These stories used familiar scenes to explain spiritual truths. A parable compares something familiar to something unfamiliar. It compels listeners to discover truth, while at the same time conceals the truth from those too lazy or too stubborn to see it."

"Doctrine" just means teaching or more to the point probably the content of what He was teaching. When I open my mouth many would say I am boring, but I am still putting out content or doctrine no matter the effect upon the listener.

We might take a look at how we should deal with parables before we attempt to dig into the first one that Mark gives to us.

a. They are stories, not factual events, though they might have some natural event as their basis. In the following parable there is a sower sowing seed. This is the factual basis, though the sower's name was not Stanley Derickson, nor do we know what his name was because he is the fictional character of the parable or story.

b. As Webster indicates in his definition, there is normally just one moral or point to the story. Do not get tied up in knots about the details that might be given to make the story understandable

and appealing to the listener.

An example of a parable might be the farmer, I have mentioned many times, that went to his neighbor to borrow a rope. The neighbor asked the farmer what he wanted to use the rope for. The farmer replied "I want to tie up my milk." The neighbor questioned the farmer because you cannot tie up milk. The farmer replied "I know, but one excuse is as good as another."

Now there is a lot of detail in the story, but one truth - an excuse is an excuse. There may be little truth or value in the excuse. Now, we don't know if this milk was pasteurized, homogenized or organic, and we do not know what type of rope the farmer wanted to borrow, whether it was hemp, nylon, or cotton and we do not know how long the rope was nor its diameter. Now if the rope was twenty feet long it might indicate that the milk to be tied up was about 400 gallons, but if only ten feet long it would be about 200 gallons of milk. The type of rope is important in that the hemp rope would probably soak up too much milk so we can assume the farmer wanted the nylon type of rope well I think you get the idea. Don't get stuck on the detail of the parable or you will totally miss the point of it.

Scroggie observes "Care should be taken in studying the parables to distinguish between interpretation and application. All of the Bible is for us, but it is not all about us. Interpretation is limited by the original intent of the parable, and this intent is determined by occasion and circumstance; but application is not limited, for the way in which it can help us is its meaning for us. Interpretation is dispensational and prophetic. Application is moral and practical" A GUIDE TO THE GOSPELS; W. Graham Scroggie, D.D.; Fleming H. Revell Co.; Old Tappan, NJ.

He goes on to observe that when there is more than one parable to be sure to compare the parables and see how the Lord used them together, not as separate entities. He also notes that the miracles were instructive as well as the parables. The miracles are instructive in the context of how and when they were done and who the main audience was.

The usual methods of interpretation must also apply such as the context, the culture, and the meaning of the speaker.

3 Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: 4 And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. 5 And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: 6 But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. 7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. 8 And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred. 9 And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

HEY, LISTEN UP, might be the thought of "Hearken; Behold," for both are in the imperative or they are a command and the words draw special attention to what is being said.

We do not know who the sower is because we are not told in the text. Some assume it and treat

it as fact, while a wise interpreter might suggest that Christ is the sower but not assume and declare it.

The sower is one that is sowing seed. Anyone in my neighborhood knows what a sower looks like, they know that on the capital dome there is a large statue of a pioneer sower. They also have most likely seen old man Derickson out sowing in his yard. My lawn is so terrible I sow grass seed twice yearly at the very least. Now I am not gold plated but I resemble that statue. We both have a bag of seed and we are both casting seed in a sweeping motion to spread the seed as it falls from our hands. Well, his hand is not really swinging, but you get the point of the story I am using do you not? You should look to the point of the story, not the detail, remember.

Now, like the sower in the Lord's parable there are different types of ground. There was ground that was stony, some weedy and some good. Well this is where my story falls apart. My yard is stony and weedy but there is little good ground so I will stick to Christ's parable from this point on.

I wish I could quote to you some of the long expositions that I have heard on these few verses, but I have none to quote. On the other hand those illustrations would probably detract from the Lord's own exposition of the parable that follows. He explains all of it quite clearly in the immediately following context so let us go on (not that all expositors leave it at the Lord's interpretation).

The Net Bible translates verse nine as follows: "Whoever has ears to hear had better listen!" This indicates the imperative that the "listen" is a much better translation than the "let him hear" of the King James. The listening isn't an option, it is a necessity to the spiritual life to know.

10 And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.
11 And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: 12 That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. 13 And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?

First of all some of the people did not understand the parable. These were not the twelve from the construction. Then second the Lord broke the people into groups. The twelve, those present at the question and those present for the parable. Third He explains the reason for parables, and fourth He seems to question the spiritual condition of those asking the question.

Let us look at these four things for a few moments.

First of all some of the people did not understand the parable. These were not the twelve from the construction. The twelve, if they did not know were being quiet about their ignorance and allowing others to show their ignorance so they did not have to. We do not know if the twelve knew the meaning of the parable for we are not told but I would assume that Mark would have clarified his statement if they did not grasp it.

Second the Lord broke the people into groups. The twelve, those present at the question other than the twelve and those present for the parable. There is a contrasting of the groups as well.

There is the group that was with the Lord for the question, which included the twelve, however the twelve seem to be slightly separate from the group.

There are those that heard the parable but did not come with the Lord. Christ describes the parable listeners as "without" and that they see but do not perceive and hear but not understand.

Third He explains the reason for parables. The parable is to separate the lost from the saved. Obviously these are lost people who do not grasp spiritual truths. Further they will not be converted, nor will their sins be forgiven.

Fourth He seems to question the spiritual condition of those asking the question when he asks them how they will understand further parables if they do not understand this one. The clear implication is that anyone that does not understand this parable will not understand further parables. Further the implication is that those raising the question are lost and in the same group as the parable listeners. Further that they will not be converted, nor will their sins be forgiven.

If true this had to be a real wake-up call for those folks to evaluate their true condition. "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God:" seems to be a clear indication that they would be believers in that they were to know the mysteries but also the entire text would indicate that some of them were not yet believers.

The parable seems rather obvious to me as a believer, but to one that does not understand the Word, it would be a nice story. We know, as believers, that the Word sometimes falls on deaf ears, while it sometimes falls on a listening ear, but after a seemingly change in life, there is a falling away to the old life. We also know by experience that when the Word was planted in our life that it grew miraculously into something wonderful for us as a believer.

To look upon the Christians that we know we can know that the increase is more for some and less for others. We all grow where we are planted and we all produce in different ways/amounts. This variance in result is not necessarily a direct result of our efforts though it may be. Results are normally up to the Lord if we are open to serving Him.

It is of great note that Luke records an interesting fact concerning the Lord as He spoke the parable. In 8.8 Luke states that the Lord did something as he finished this parable. "As he said these things, he cried" Now we are not told what brought the emotion to the Lord, but it is easy to assume that it was either sadness over the loss of some, or the joy of the saving of others as well as their increase. It would not be inconceivable that it was a mixture of both.

A couple of obvious points might be made - Christ as our example and as a man, cried. The other point is that we ought to also be emotional at the lost or coming to the Lord as we go about His work. Emotion is not wrong, it is human and it is to be expressed if it comes forth.

Just a little side note, this passage shows a particular truth that there were the disciples and there were the twelve apostles. We know that the twelve were once disciples, but this text shows the two groups distinctly. Mark in verse ten the two groups are shown as different. Matthew 13.10 mentions only the disciples, but they are the ones questioning the Lord. Also we see that Luke in 8.9 mentions the "disciples" asked the question rather than the twelve.

One further point we should notice. When Christ is speaking of the reason for the parables, Matthew mentions a little further note of information. 13.12 "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." Just how many times have you heard that text quoted out of context to mean material blessings or money? I trust you will understand it to be speaking of spiritual knowledge rather than money.

Matthew adds information that Mark does not relating to the purpose of parables. He mentions that this was a prophecy from Isaiah 6.9-10. This further information is obviously to the Jews that Matthew was writing to. I will quote Matthew's comments on the parable below for your reading.

"14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: 15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and [their] ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with [their] eyes, and hear with [their] ears, and should understand with [their] heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. 16 But blessed [are] your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. 17 For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous [men] have desired to see [those things] which ye see, and have not seen [them]; and to hear [those things] which ye hear, and have not heard [them]. 18 Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. 19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth [it] not, then cometh the wicked [one], and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. 20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; 21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. 22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. 23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth [it]; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

14 The sower soweth the word. 15 And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. 16 And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; 17 And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended. 18 And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, 19 And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. 20 And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some

thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

As you read this portion it is not hard to envision the Lord speaking and as he speaks he motions to the groups that He is speaking to. "These are they by the way side" - can you just see the Lord sweeping his hand toward the Jewish leaders direction. "These are they likewise which are sown on stony ground" - again sweeping His hand toward another group, possibly a portion of the disciples that have asked the question. "These are they which are sown among thorns" - again sweeping gesture toward another portion of the group. "These are they which are sown on good ground" - a sweeping hand to indicate the apostles and any others that had believed.

If this be true, would not there be a lot of people considering their stance before Christ - were they true believers, or just followers for the benefit of the miracles and teaching. I would think there was a lot of soul searching going on. At the same time I must wonder if the apostles didn't have a great feeling knowing that their Lord and Master accepted them as complete and devoted believers.

The obvious question arises, were all these but the final group lost, or were some saved that became lost? If you look at the passage alone, you could come to the final conclusion that they were, but if you look at the whole of Scripture it is hoped that you would come to the conclusion that the doctrine of eternal security is the Biblical truth rather than the heresy of lost salvation.

Years ago an aunt of my wife dropped in for a visit and being a Seventh Day Adventist doctrine soon came into the conversation. My wife stated our belief in eternal security and the aunt replied "You don't believe in that damnable heresy do you?" The topic was dropped and we returned to family talk.

The first group is definitely lost. The Lord of this world, Satan the great deceiver, deceives this group. He destroys any vestige of the Word in the lost person's life. As to the middle two groups it is difficult to decide whether they be lost or saved. It would seem easiest to view them as believers that accept the Word, that begin to grow but are not sufficiently grounded (rooted) or are choked out by the thorns. John 15 is clear that some of the branches are taken away but that the fruitful ones remain so that they continue to bear fruit. This picture seems to fit these two groups. They are people who hear and then respond and are saved, yet later on are sidetracked by lack of growth or the cares of the world and are not fruitful.

The last group of course is those that hear, respond, accept and grow into fruitfulness. This is the group that God is primarily interested in for the furtherance of His work here on earth. The middle two groups are of interest to God but they fail to bear fruit for their Lord and as a result are not helpful to the harvest of souls through time.

This should concern those believers that fail to produce fruit of some sort for the Lord. These may be taken from this life early if they do not produce for the Lord. This fruit need not be souls but should be some sort of fruit for the Lord be it soul winning, teaching or ministering in some manner for His work.

I assume the main point of this parable is not that there are several groups of people, but that there are the lost and the saved and within the saved category are some that are fruitful for their Lord. The following parable would indicate that this is true. It suggests that once a candle is lit it should be useful and give forth light, not be hidden somewhere. It is also evident that the two parables teach that fruit is the expected result of the life of the redeemed. You may not have much fruit, or you may have a lot, but fruit seems to be the result. This after all is part of the basis of our judgment seat of Christ experience, the burning of wood, hay and stubble and the emergence of the rest from trial by fire.

21 And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? 22 For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad.

Well, in our own world this might not relate as well as with Christ's world. I seem to remember when I didn't want to go to bed and when I was made to do so as a child I would take my flashlight with me along with a toy or two, prop up the covers with my knee and play awhile with my light hidden from view. Christ must have been speaking to adults in this context most definitely.

Christ used a little humor here I would think. Who in their right mind would put a lit candle under a basket or under a bed where fire would most likely be the result? Of course the parable is speaking to the hiding, but the safety is an added reason to let your candle be placed on the candlestick so that it can be of use.

The point of Christ's statement about the candle relates to the hearing but not understanding issue of the previous thought on the purpose of parables. The light is made to be shown forth not hidden, or the Word of God is given to man to be made manifest to the world, not hidden within the church walls. Though the lost do not accept the Word and as a result do not understand it is not the Word's fault but the lost person's fault. The truth of Christ's teaching is to bring light to the world, but also to hide it from the lost that reject it out of hand.

A little application might be appropriate here. It is of interest that something as small as a seed or the light of one candle would be used to picture the believer and his works. Maybe it is the Lord's way to show that it isn't OUR individual work that is important to the plan of God but the cumulative work of all those that produces God's desired accomplishments in the world of our time. One plant is not going to do much to feed the hunger of the world, nor is one candle going to light the cities of the planet, but the combined crops of the farms across the world will feed the world, the light of billions of candles can light our way and the fruit of millions of believers can change the earth for the God that we serve.

Mar 4:23 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. 24 And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. 25 For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

Simply put if you respond to what you are first given, then more will be given to you. The opposite principle also applies, if you have a little and respond not, then what you have and more will be taken from you.

I personally would relate this to Romans one where it speaks to the fact that creation displays information about God and if you respond to that revelation then He will surely give you more revelation, but if you reject what he has given in nature then He will take even that away from you - that is what Romans one illustrates - they reject the creator and start worshiping the created.

Romans 1.18 "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; 19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed [it] unto them. 20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, [even] his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified [him] not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. 24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen."

I do not believe for a moment that God is sitting up there waiting to drop the ax on those that do not respond, but when they have had every opportunity to hear and respond, He will certainly say "ENOUGH!" and as Romans puts it "[gives] them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts...." He does not seem to sugar coat his actions, just states em like they are!

Mar 4:26 And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; 27 And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. 28 For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. 29 But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.

A simple illustration to convey the truth that there is a harvest coming. When the harvest is ready it will most certainly come to pass. When the fruit is ready it will be picked. This life will one day be over for each of us and the fruit of our labors will be harvested. The fact of the differing amounts of fruit in the earlier account may indicate the accounting at the judgment seat of Christ where our fruit is examined and our reward given.

30 And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? 31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: 32 But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

The Lord continues in his declaration via another illustration. The kingdom of God is like a small seed planted that grows to give forth great benefit. The kingdom seed was planted when the Lord shed His blood for our sins. The great benefit has been going on for centuries, but will have a culmination when all will see the grand kingdom set up in the Millennium when all mankind will fall under the rule of God on earth.

There is great discussion about the validity of the science behind the mustard seed being the smallest and it being able to produce a tree. The Life Application Bible New Testament Commentary may shed light on this discussion. Some suggest that there are smaller seeds than the mustard seed, though the writers of this commentary specify that this was the smallest seed a farmer would use. They tell us that it takes 12,000 mustard seeds to make an ounce of seed. Truly small seeds.

Mar 4:33 And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.
34 But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

Another declaration that Christ was not in the business of trying to convince the doubters and rejecters, indeed He now is in the business of keeping the truth from them. It also indicates that some of the disciples still needed to have the parables explained to them "he expounded all things to his disciples." This also might indicate that there was a constant separating of the disciples from the others so that the Lord could give them further instruction.

Matthew 13:33ff adds the parable of leavening and adds a quote from Ps.78:2. Matthew 13:35 mentions this: "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world."

My, what an education the apostles were getting. They had opportunity to listen to the expounding of the mysteries that were hidden from the beginning. Too bad they did not have recording equipment so that we could have enjoyed it as well.

Mar 4:35 And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. 36 And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. 37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. 38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? 39 And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? 41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

I think we can all relate to this account. They are on the sea of Galilee when a storm comes up and the boat is filling with water - worry and fear would be the normal reaction for the thinking person, though with the miracles that they had been seeing they might have considered the possibility of another in this instance.

Christ chides them for their lack of faith and their fear of the storm. After the occurrence they had other fears "And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Now, I've been in storms like this. When in the Navy two of us on a bright sunny day climbed up the mast to do some work on an antenna. I happened to look forward of the ship and saw a wall of storm. It was much too close for us to chance climbing down the metal ladder on the mast so we clamped our legs and held on. The squall was over in a couple of minutes, but there was strong wind, strong rain and a lot of swinging to and fro as the ship wallowed in the heavy seas.

The storm passed, we squished our way down off the mast, not a dry spot between us. I was wearing boots at the time and had to remove my boots and pour out the water that had accumulated. Storms can come along so quickly and they are so harsh. I can relate to their fear, though with the Lord with them you would think they would have been stronger than they were.

There is indication that they knew that he could care for their situation in that they asked Him if He did not care if they perished. It may also just indicate that they thought "If we are going to die, He is going to wake up and suffer the fear with us." I think the first is more the likely. They had seen great things and they would have hoped that he would be able to deal with this situation.

One might wonder at the knowledge that they had of the Old Testament. It contains a number of comments about God controlling the rain and the sea. If they had known this surely they would have had a different reaction if they had grasped the fact that Christ was truly God.

Ps. 104.3 "Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind:"

Ps. 107.23-30 "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; 24 These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep. 25 For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. 26 They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. 27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. 28 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. 29 He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. 30 Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven."

Ps. 135.7 "He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of his treasuries."

By way of application we might wonder about our own fears and lack of faith when the storms of life find us and pummel us. Do we turn to Him in faith? Do we look to Him for our safety? Do we understand that He can most certainly assist us when we are in trouble?

APPLICATION:

1. The Lord taught with parables so that the lost might not understand, but so that the apostles and other followers WOULD understand. Preaching is something that is to be understood by the believers present. Christ was not out to make converts of the Jewish leaders and those that had rejected Him, but was there to educate and train His followers to do His work.

How many churches across the nation have pastors that preach salvation messages in the morning service in case some lost folks wandered in off the street? Many I fear and these men are wasting the saint's time. The saints are to be edified in the services, not bored to counting ceiling tiles or wondering about why the person in front of them is loosing his/her hair. The lost are not to be in the worship services committed to God. If there are lost there, then they will be edified by the Spirit who must draw them, not the preacher.

We had been trying a new church years ago and only attending on Sunday mornings to see if we were interested in trying it further. The last Sunday we were there the pastor followed us to the car in the parking lot trying to explain why we needed to come to the evening services to be taught. He explained that the morning services were for the lost to be saved. I am not sure just why he assumed that we were believers and not lost but he made it clear that he preached to two peoples rather than to his sheep all the time.

2. Anderson says of verse 25, "Verse 25 gives a real warning to the Christians that are not sharing the Word of God that they have received with others. When we learn the Word of God and then teach what we have learned to others, then God gives us a greater understanding of the Word. However, if we fail to teach others, then we lose the understanding that we once had of the Word of God."

The verse mentions, "For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath." I trust that you will consider seriously the validity of the man's statement.

The Net Bible states, "The measure you use will be the measure you receive," indicating that as we give forth what we know so we will receive more.

Some suggest that if you do not give out with what you know, that what you know will be taken from you. I believe that this can be seen in some of our church people these days. Some are able to only take milk from the preacher because they give forth with so little to those around them on a daily basis.

3. When interpreting parables it has been observed that only one principle is involved, but do not be mistaken there are many parallels to life contained therein. The description of the growth of the seed in the parable is much like the growth of the spiritual seed of the gospel and how the new believer matures over time. (Verse 28 "For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.")

Do not miss either, the parallel between man not knowing just how the seed produces its fruit. No matter how well studied we cannot know just how the gospel message is transformed into

newness of life in the lost perverted sinner.

There is much sermon making material within the parables but just be sure that the people know that the parable is not teaching all your application, but that the application is coming from observation and hopefully other texts from the Word. I suspect much sermonizing without this clarity of thought has brought about the confusion that has been observed about the teaching of the parables.

I recall one Bible study that we were in years ago where a parable was read and the discussion began. There were multitudes of possible interpretations presented, but none considered the context of the parable. All possibilities were based on just the parable alone.

As the study came to a close the "leader" of the study observed, "Well, there are a lot of possible meanings that have been presented and I am sure one of them is the correct one but I am not sure which." Now was not that a profitable Bible study for all concerned? NOT!

His observation was correct in that one of the interpretations set forth was correct, because it was based on the context of the passage and what Christ was teaching at the time.

Appalled was the word that came to mind when I left that study where such confusion was passed off as a Bible study. I trust that all will struggle with the text heartily before attempting to interpret each individual parable so that a proper interpretation can be made rather than a consensus of opinions based on little more than the parable itself.

4. Barnes comments on a common teaching that is really in the area of suspect. Some teach that when a person is of full maturity as a believer they are automatically taken home. They further teach that this life is just preparation for eternal life.

Barnes states "Immediately he putteth in the sickle. This is the way with the husbandman. As soon as the grain is ripe, it is cut down. So it is often with the Christian. As soon as he is prepared for heaven, he is taken there. But we are not to press this part of the parable, as if it meant that all are removed as soon as they are fit for heaven." He correctly observes that to apply this interpretation is not proper.

If the teaching be true, then any believer that has spent many years on earth must be considered to be unspiritual and not growing to maturity which is blatantly a false assumption. Further, consider the idea that we can become fit for heaven. Can fallen man, even one that has been redeemed, by his own learning gain the "right" to enter into heaven? Oh how evil some of our teachings are if we only take them to their logical end. It is only the work of the Lord on the cross that fits us for heaven, nothing we do can ever assist in that final trip.

5. Constable quotes Wiersbe about parables. "A parable begins innocently as a picture that arrests our attention and arouses our interest. But as we study the picture, it becomes a mirror in which we suddenly see ourselves. If we continue to look by faith, the mirror becomes a window through which we see God and His truth. How we respond to that truth will determine what

further truth God will teach us."

Now that sounds quite spiritual in nature, but "Is it true?" might be the readers question to ponder. In these parables relating to the kingdom it is not a proper view. The parables are quite clear and to the point that the parable is speaking to what the Word can do for man in the realm of entering the kingdom and they relate directly to the kingdom purpose. Do they twist deeply into the soul to change spiritual life? Not hardly unless one is lost and they bring about change, but Christ used them to keep the lost from understanding so that is not going to happen either.

Consider your words before you set them to paper or tongue lest you mislead others that read or hear. I charge not Wiersbe for I have no idea of the context in which this paragraph resides and that may color what he had to say completely.

Again, in the same vain Constable states "Probably Jesus taught this parable many times during His ministry as an itinerant preacher, and the disciples were familiar with it." There is no explanation as to what he based this statement on. There is no indication that jumps out at the reader of the Gospels that says or even indicates that Christ repeated any of his teaching. He may have, but we have no real reason to believe that He did. Since He is the creator of man and there is no end of variation of face and personality in His creatures, one is hard pressed to believe that He could not develop new and different teachings for each new and different teaching situation.

He further submits "4:10 Mark alone noted that those who asked Jesus to explain the parables included the Twelve plus other disciples (v. 10). Evidently their question concerned why Jesus was using parables to teach as well as what they meant. He could have been clearer."

Hummmmmmm it is the Holy Spirit that is guiding the inspired word of God as it is set down by Mark, yet the Spirit is unable to be clear enough for the man? Not sure I would want to make such a statement. Oft times the Word is spoken of as if the Spirit had nothing to do with its existence.

6. I will commend Constable on the way he explains how the parables effect the different type of listeners as he discusses revelation. "God uses it to enlighten the receptive, but He also uses it to befuddle the unreceptive."

This is great information to know for those that witness to others of the saving work of Christ. Some will just accept it as what it is - truth, while others will reject it out of hand as foolishness and argue to the death the lack of truth that revelation contains.

I recall when a pastor shared the simple gospel with me, it just fit, it filled in the holes in my mind about spiritual things. I thought to myself, this is the information I have been waiting for. This is just what I need to do to be right with God. Before that I understood little of what I had been taught for so many years. It was just so much information that made little sense. God chooses the time of our conversion and until then we are no different than the Jewish leadership in relation to revelation - we are "befuddled."

7. Another quote to ponder: Constable quotes Plummer "The judgment is a merciful one. The parable which the cold-hearted multitudes hear without understanding they remember, because of its penetrating and impressive form; and when their hearts become able to receive its meaning, the meaning will become clear to them. Meanwhile they are saved from the guilt of rejecting plain truth." Alfred Plummer, "The Gospel According to St. Mark," in *The Cambridge Greek Testament*, p. 124.

First of all the Lord said that the parables were so they would hear and not understand, thus his premise seems incorrect. As to whether it is a merciful one, again the premise is that they will one day understand, but this is not correct. Thus we have one that is lost hearing but not understanding but feeling good about his ignorance. How is that merciful? To go to the grave feeling good about rejecting Christ cannot be good. Yes, they do not live a life of guilt over rejecting, but that is usually called hardening of their heart not mercy and is not presented in Scripture as a plus in this life.

8. Constable quotes Cranfield "The blindness of men is so universal that even the disciples are not exempt from it." in the context of the disciples not understanding the parable. The lost went away blinded to the truth of the parable, but the disciples just did not understand. They stayed to ask of the Lord and His teaching while the others left not wanting to know what the Lord had taught. That is quite a large and distinct difference in my mind.

9. Constable understands the parable to mean that the hearer controls what type of soil the seed lands on. He is open to the word or he is partly closed to the word or he is completely closed to the word. I am not sure that the text indicates this in any way.

He quotes Moule to support his thought. "Words may be sound and lively enough, but it is up to each hearer to let them sink in and become fruitful. If he only hears without responding-without doing something about it and committing himself to their meaning-then the words are in danger of being lost, or of never coming to anything. The whole story thus becomes a parable about the learner's responsibility, and about the importance of learning with one's whole will and obedience, and not merely with one's head."

This seems to be some of that over interpretation that has been warned of in the preceding thoughts. The ground is inanimate while a person is alive and thinking. That is quite a difference. Do not take your interpretation too far.

10. There are several groups of people illustrated by the different types of ground. There is some discussion as to which are saved and which are lost. This seems to be the best deduction to me.

Groups:

a. WAYSIDE

The Parable: 4 "...some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up."

The Explanation: 15 And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

This group would seem obviously to be lost in that they never made any attempt to respond to nature's laws. The seed was taken away immediately so there was no opportunity to be anything but bird feed.

b. STONY GROUND

The Parable: 5 "And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: 6 But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away."

The Explanation: 16 "And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; 17 And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended."

The seed that seems to germinate and grow but have no root to feed and water, thus they are short-lived. Some may feel these folks are saved, but it seems to me that they are lost and only professors. They have accepted the message on the surface, but deep down have no real understanding or footing. When problems arise there is no reason to stand against them and they are turned away.

We should probably realize that the parable speaks of the seed as being the Word, not people. The Word when sown gives forth with a number of results. In the first the Word is not even heard, the second the Word is heard but probably without understanding. Thus we are not really talking about people, but of the seed and its result.

c. THORNS

The Parable: 7 "And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit."

The Explanation: 18 And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, 19 And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

Again, the Word seems to sprout but is soon choked out or made to be so puny that there is no fruit. Again, the result would be in no person being saved. Though the person is involved the results are to be seen as the seed rather than the seeds fruit. The person hears but does not respond to the Word because their interest is in the world and its riches.

d. GOOD GROUND

The Parable: 8 "And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred."

The Explanation: 20 And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive [it], and bring forth fruit, some thirty fold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

Now we see the result of saved people, but again the emphasis is on the seed and its fruit not the people's fruit. Some seed yields large and other yields less, but all yields fruit. By application we can relate this to the people.

11. It may occur to some after much study that Christ's use of the different types of ground was probably a parable that was conceived on the fly so to speak. It most likely was not brought to His mind because he saw a sower out sowing seed in different types of soil. It would be hard to imagine a poor farmer out sowing and being so careless as to sow seed among rocks and thistles when he was standing near good ground. You don't see farmers in the mid-west running their tractors/seeder out through the weeds between the prepared field and the highway, then running up on the highway to seed it then back through the weeds and into the fertile field. No, they keep their precious and expensive seed for the fertile ground.

It is rather to be expected that the Lord looked out upon His audience and knew their attitudes and positions in life and made the comparison. So the teacher and pastor of our day should know their congregation and know how the Word will apply to each one. It is also incumbent on the congregant to be in attendance so that they can receive the message that was prepared for them.

It is such a frustration to prepare a message or lesson to meet the known needs of the group and when you rise to present what the Lord has put on your heart half the people are missing.

Christ met the people on their level and met their needs. Pastors today often are meeting needs of what they feel their people need when they do not know their people. Often the morning message is geared for the lost instead of the church, the evening message is meant for the believer but many of them are not there.

Others know their people and minister to them on a level that is not appropriate because they are limited in their own depth or are not interested in digging deep enough to feed everyone under their charge.

We attended a church where there were three retired pastors and their wives, and a widowed pastor's wife yet the messages were so basic that most new believers would have been bored to sleep or counting tiles on the ceiling. The pastor either had no idea where his people were or did not care. The messages were rather like reading a passage and commenting off the top of the head about what was just read.

12. Maclaren observes that there is a definite article in front of lamp, bushel, bed and lampstand indicating that these were the only objects of their kind in the home. A very humble home might be the idea. More to the spiritual point might be that this is the ONLY light that is available.

However there does not seem to be that emphasis. Christ is speaking generally, not specifically of a house He is familiar with. I found no indication that this should be a point of emphasis.

To apply the point of not hiding our light to our own day, there is only one light and it certainly must shine forth to the lost or they will not have opportunity. Oh yes, I can hear the clicking of the logical minds of all Calvinists as they chew up and spit out what has been said as Armenian bunk. However it is the Lord's illustration not mine. Even if Maclaren is incorrect the truth is still there - one light of our God and it must shine forth or the lost will not hear.

As I sit at coffee in the fast food joints of our city I see so many trekking their way to where ever they go and so many look so sad - sad enough to have just lost their best friend. Our society is crammed with people who have no purpose, that have no reason to live, and that have no real desire to continue, yet they muddle along - why? Maybe it is their desire to know their creator, to know their potential as spiritual beings, and maybe to know the reality of what they see revealed in creation.

13. We usually dwell on the not hiding of the light or the diminishing of the light but we ought also dwell on the clarity of the light in a darkroom, the brightness of the light in a darkroom and the revealing nature of that light in a darkroom. This is the light that shines as a spotlight into the darkest recesses of a lost person. It is that which reveals just what that person really is - lost and without hope. Hide the light and that person will not know the darkness within. Hide the light and that person will not know what could be.

This light is the one pure and perfect light that God has revealed to us in our own lives, and has given us to share with others in their lives. There is another danger. Do not concentrate on the beauty of the light in your own life, and forget to allow others to see the light. Someone suggested that we often get caught up in the stained glass and its beauty but forget to enjoy the light that it allows to shine upon us. In other words do not get stuck in testimony mode - telling others of what the light did for you, but to tell them how it can do something for them.

While on the subject of light we might point out that the Word is not only a light unto the world but it is a light unto ourselves. It sheds forth into the dark corners of our own lives to reveal the sin and problems that reside there. If we are hiding the light under the bed it will give forth no light into our own lives and thus we will become as the lost as to this life.

It is within this context that MacLaren declares in a better color than I "So, then, that being so, He being our light, just because He fits our needs, answers our desires, satisfies our cravings, fills the clefts of our hearts, and brings the response to all the questions of our understandings - that being

the case, if the lamp is lit and blazing on the lampstand, and you and I have eyes to behold it, let us take heed that we cultivate the single eye which apprehends Christ. Concentration of purpose, simplicity and sincerity of aim, a heart centered upon Him, a mind drawn to contemplate unfalteringly and without distraction of crosslights His beauty, His supremacy, His completeness, and a soul utterly devoted to Him - these are the conditions to which that light will ever manifest itself, and illumine the whole man."

He continues his discussion with the other side of this idea. "But if we come with divided hearts, with distracted aims, giving Him fragments of ourselves, and seeking Him by spasms and at intervals, and having a dozen other deities in our Pantheon, beside the calm form of the Christ of Nazareth, what wonder is there that we see in Him 'no beauty that we should desire Him'? 'Unite my heart to fear Thy name.' Oh! if that were our prayer, and if the effort to secure its answer were honestly the effort of our lives, all His loveliness, His sweetness, His adaptation to our whole being, would manifest themselves to us. The eye must be 'single,' directed to Him, if the heart is to rejoice in His light."

Indeed is not the light of the world dependent on the light that is within us. If we aren't brilliant ourselves, we cannot shine forth to enlighten others.

14. "And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow:" I won't make comment on the varied ideas of what "pillow" might mean. One suggests it was the seat in the back of the boat, one said that it was padded and covered in leather, one suggested that He was laying in the bottom of the boat with his head on this seat. The point to me might run along the lines of the extreme exhaustion of the Lord as He took this brief break from ministry.

A couple of points come to the surface. One that the Lord was tired, that He slept and that He slept soundly. He indeed was truly human and indeed He truly faced the things that we face in our daily lives. He could overextend his physical being as we often do.

Second, I hear constantly of how overworked some pastors are. Recently I heard the wife of a pastor complaining of her husband's schedule and fatigue. I was tempted to tell her to tell him to stop taking on things that did not concern him, but I refrained for the polite.

It is not wrong to get tired in the ministry, indeed it might be that we ought to be getting more tired in ministry for our people's sake. Fatigue is not sin, it is the natural way of things when you are busy about the Lord's work. It makes sleep so much sweeter so why do we avoid it as if it were a plague?

When you are weary of a heavy schedule remember the Lord catching a few winks in the bottom of a boat and remember how nice that soft bed of yours is going to be. He had little of the comfort that we have yet we complain so easily.

MacClaren calls noticed to the weary Lord finding what comfort he could in the situation. Years ago when in the Navy there was a time when I was the only experienced technician on the ship. We had 15 other techs, but they were all just out of school and could not accomplish anything on their own. They needed constant oversight that took me from what work I could accomplish.

The ship was in terrible shape electronically and I determined to correct the situation. I started working on equipment and did not stop until the entire ship was in top shape electronically. It took me a couple of days of around the clockwork but it was finally done. I sat down in a chair leaned it back against the bulkhead and slipped into lala land immediately. I didn't look for a soft mattress, I didn't look for a recliner, I just closed my weary eyes and was immediately where I

needed to be.

Pastor, if you are tired, be thankful for that little respite that comes along now and then and do not concentrate on what you have not. Even the Lord found Himself fatigued from well doing, can we do less?

We might also take note that Christ was so fatigued that the storm did not awaken Him. It was the apostles speaking and possibly shaking him physically that finally aroused Him to a conscious state. That would indicate the depth of the Lord's fatigue. In recalling the ship incident we had an officer coming on board to inspect the ships electronics the morning that I collapsed into the chair. About fifteen minutes into my respite the man showed up and it took the fellows several minutes to bring me back to a conscious state. I could hear them calling and could feel the shaking, but I just could not crawl out of that deep hole of collapse. Finally it felt like my brain cells finally started coming to attention slowly and in a bit of a wave as reality started to overtake the fog.

This passage presents Christ as a servant of God toiling in the field. This is part of the reason most scholars view Mark's purpose in writing to be to present Christ as the servant of God. MacLaren comments on this emphasis of Mark when he says "For instance, did you ever observe the peculiar beginning of this Gospel? There are here none of the references to the prophecies of the King, no

tracing of His birth through the royal stock to the great progenitor of the nation, no adoration by the Eastern sages, which we find in Matthew, no miraculous birth nor growing childhood as in Luke, no profound unveiling of the union of the Word with God before the world was, as in John; but the narrative begins with His baptism, and passes at once to the story of His work. The same ruling idea accounts for the uniform omission of the title 'Lord,' which in Mark's Gospel is never applied to Christ until after the resurrection. There is only one apparent exception, and there good authorities pronounce the word to be spurious Even in reports of conversations which are also given in the ether Gospels, and where 'Lord' occurs, Mark, of set purpose, omits it, as if its presence would disturb the unity of the impression which he desires to leave. You will find the investigation of the omissions in this Gospel full of interest, and remarkably tending to confirm the accuracy of the view which regards it as the Gospel of the Servant."

Maclaren continues to lay out the physical strain that the Lord was under from Mark's viewpoint. He was constantly on the move and there is the air of stress and hurry throughout the first three chapters.

For those that do not teach or preach I would explain that there is a heavy toll for the activity. Most when finished with such activity feel drained physically as well as mentally. I have taught two hours in some of my computer classes, and when finished feel as if I have put in a day of hard labor. If your pastor/teacher is not as responsive to you as you think they ought please cut them some slack and realize that they may be tired.

For those that do preach/teach please take solace in the matter that Christ Himself also felt your pain, indeed, maybe much more powerfully than you yet have.

More importantly than "us" and fatigue, we probably ought to dwell on the reason that Christ submitted to the stresses that He went through. US. He did it all for us. He did nothing for glory, nothing for fame, and nothing for Himself, all for us. Too often we dwell on the cross for His suffering, and rightly so for His work in salvation, but there was much suffering long before the pain of the cross. We might do well to consider His lifestyle before we go into our usual pity parties about not being able to afford that big screen or SUV.

15. Now to the fear of these men. Some of them had been fishermen and had weathered such storms often in their lives, but this one must have been extremely severe for they feared for their lives. Their calling for the Lord may have related a little to the difference in their backgrounds. The fisherman apostles probably knew of their peril and they were doing all that they could to save themselves and then they see this dumb carpenter laying sound asleep. How dumb it that?" they might have wondered. Let's get this guy up and get Him into this worry mode so that we can get out of our situation quicker.

You know the more you worry the better off you are - NOT. It has often been said that worry just must work because all those things we used to worry about didn't come to pass - worry must work.

The key probably is not that worry helps, but that we always have God close by waiting for our call for assistance. Often we tend to just keep rowing our boat into the waves when we could call upon the one that can control the waves of life to give us an assist.

16. Mark alone tells us the words spoken by the Lord. "and said unto the sea, Peace, be still." Rather like a loving mother calming her baby that is crying as if the whole world were crashing down around her. Peace, be still. Almost as if the calming words of the creator were truly calming the created - indeed is this not exactly what it was?

Mark alone suggests that the Lord did not care of the impending dome. "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Maybe we just have the more honest showing of feelings in young Mark as opposed to the more mature gospel writers, but at the minimum we have to see it as honest reporting of the facts as he saw them.

In my mind these two items indicate that Mark was reporting his gospel as something other than under the guiding hand of Peter as many suggest. Matthew was present for the event and he does not record these two items nor does John. If Peter were guiding the writing of Mark, I would think that the two comments would not have appeared.

17. We see the apostles fearing for their lives, and then they witness the calming of the sea. They are met with rebuke from the Lord "how is it that ye have no faith?" However I think this is a gentle prodding of the Lord for the men to consider just who they were the apostles of. Their reaction is "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

It is evident that they have no idea whose cloak they have tied their hopes to. They had followed Christ, maybe even thinking that He was their Messiah, but they had not caught the concept that

He was also God.

Imagine the roller coaster that they were on. From elation of the crowds, to the relaxation of getting away from the crowds for a break, to fear of death, to excitement of their lives being spared to wondering about whom this man was that they had decided to follow.

So, many that are seeking eternal peace in our own day go through many emotions and mind games trying to figure out what the truth might be, the truth that will give them peace with God. At times God will put a person through trials and hard times to bring them to a realization that they are not capable of the eternal things on their own.

And the great thing about God's work with mankind is that He has opted to include the likes of us to assist these lost folks through their quest for peace - if we will only take the time to do so.

Do not miss the clear contrast here. The apostles were going through hard times, but the Lord had also been through a rigorous time and was fatigued, even exhausted yet when He was awakened He did not rebuke them for their need, nor did He neglect their need. He ministered to them in the clear and concise way that was needed.

Pastors and teachers, when you feel you have been through the mill, when you feel you are about to collapse, when you cannot go further and the phone rings -Christ is our example. Did I have to say that? No, but it is quite really the truth and we ought to be willing to minister at any time there is a need.

When teaching I was up by 4:30 or so and in the office shortly after and seldom left the office before midnight and oft times 1 or 2. When the phone would ring and a pastor on the other end asked if I would fill the pulpit for him Sunday - you get the picture. Be ready to minister at any time for your Lord.

18. If this topic has arisen prior to this please overlook the second raising of the subject. The Jewish leaders were those that were to point man to God. Their responsibility was to teach about God, to assist the lay person to finding a relationship with Him. They were as stated, leaders, yet they threw their responsibilities out the window when the Lord started to point out their fallacies in thought and action.

So, today when someone dare question a pastor or teacher the leader is not open to consider the question, they are immediately on the defensive to protect their turf and buck. Heaven forbid they realize that someone else in this world with billions of people walking the surface of the earth might have a single thought that might be superior to theirs!

The Jewish leaders lost all concept of reality when they went off to plot the murder of Christ to protect their little power scheme of life. I have seen pastors/church leaders tear churches apart because "they know best" and the lay people "know little."

I do not mean to say every pastor is power hungry, but there are many today that are swinging their power as if it were a club. I personally believe that much of the disenfranchisement that has gone on among Christians is from power hungry leaders that are going to have their way no matter who it hurts nor how divisive their wants might be.

There are so many that have left the church over the music that is being forced upon the church by many "hip" pastors that need it to fit their casual, laid back type of ministry. It just does not fit to have a man standing on the platform that looks as if he just stepped out of the garden to be leading songs about the majesty of God. Gotta have some singy songy stuff to make him fit into the church he is supposed to be leading.

Others have given up on church because of the heavy handedness of pastors in running their church under the assumed guise of being "God's appointed." Even more crowds have left over the King James only furore that has become normal in many churches.

I have written to a person for a couple of years now and one day out of the clear blue he was totally, unequivocally and rabidly King James only. He had read a book that set his mind into a shoe box and set it on the shelf. He went from a totally logical, well thought out person to a radically non-thinking quoter of others. He made the comment that his was the only stand any "true believer" would take. I encouraged him to consider whether he really thought I was a lost person :-)

I do not believe that pastors today are as the Jewish leaders, plotting to kill the Lord, but it seems they have plotted the demise of many spiritual lives and churches. Yes, those believers walking away from the church are responsible as well, but just where do they find the fellowship and encouragement that the church is to give its members if they cannot find it in the body of believers that was once home to them?

19. The Life Application Bible observes that Christ was surrounded by all sorts of people. There were power hungry men plotting to kill Him, there were true believers, there were people following for the political Messiah they thought He was, and there were those just wanting healing or some other benefit. All sorts of needy people wanting a piece of Him for their own polluted reason - pastor, are you feeling a little of his pain today :-) Sounds like many of the churches of our day. People who come for every sort of reason, yet the pastor must lead each and every one to Christ for their particular answer.

Pastoring is not an easy life even though it is much easier for many than in years past. Pastoring is about leading and shepherding people. I once saw an interview of a modern day shepherd. The man was asked of his life among the sheep and he described his solitude and loneliness. Even as tears filled his eyes telling of the long lonely days and nights he was asked why he decided to take on such a life. His reply was simple, "Because the sheep needed a shepherd."

Pastor, consider well the Timothy passage when it says if a man DESIRES the office. If you are a pastor for any reason other than that you desire to be a shepherd you are probably in the wrong business. The sheep need a shepherd, not a power grubber, or an egomaniac.

A fine line there is between the Jewish leader and the true leader of God's children but it must be found and adhered to even in our modern age.

Recently a survey was released in America and there was a very close similarity to the groups of people just mentioned. There were the actively churched, the churched, the professors and the personal Christians. The later group being the believers that have been disgusted with the church its sin/compromise and have left it to find some semblance of their Christianity in their personal lives aside from the organized church.

Pastor - you have a big job ministering to such people with such a wide gap of stance. Just remember you are in good company, for He was faced with it long before you.

20. It might cross one's mind after seeing these different accounts of Christ's activities and teachings that the passage that mentions there are many other items of Christ's teaching that are not recorded, just what was contained in some of that teaching. One must not speculate too far into this thought due to the fact that the Spirit of God inspired that which He intended for us to have. (John 21-25 "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen." John 20.30-31 records "These stories used familiar scenes to explain spiritual truths. A parable compares something familiar to something unfamiliar. It compels listeners to discover truth, while at the same time conceals the truth from those too lazy or too stubborn to see it.")

One might just think and ponder what else might Christ have taught to the apostles that we do not have recorded. It could be surmised that most anything "good" would be something that Jesus would have taught, though if it were important it would have been included in the written record one should assume.

MARK CHAPTER FIVE

Mar 5:1 And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. 2 And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, 3 Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: 4 Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. 5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. 6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshiped him, 7 And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. 8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. 9 And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.

Gadara is a town located southeast of the south end of the Sea of Galilee. The word "Gadarenes" is a transliteration of the Greek term. The meaning of the name is rather appropriate since it means "reward at the end" which is quite fitting for the reward of the demons and as we will see the owners of the swine.

Christ was met by a man of unclean, or foul, spirit. He was possessed of demons and one can only imagine the depths of uncleanness and depravity of the poor man. As you can imagine someone living in a cemetery might be, he cannot have been a pleasant person to find waiting for you on the other side of a quiet ship ride.

What a contrast in a person:

Dwelling in the tombs: Living in the dirt filled tombs with dead people and bones. Remember the Lord Himself was buried in a cave rather than in a six-foot deep hole as many of today are buried. These men were living in dirty caves among the hewn out rock.

Could not be bound by chains: He had great strength and a strong desire to be free.

Untamable: No one could bring him under control - even with chains and ropes.

Without sleep: He was described as being active day and night.

Crying: He was a totally miserable wretch it would seem.

Cutting himself: He was somewhat self destructive, yet for the demons own sake, they must have been controlling the man so that he did not destroy their abode. The fact that they killed the swine gives understanding to what they could have done to the men.

Worshiping Christ: Yet when he saw truth he came to worship. He knew where his help would come from, somewhere in that demented mind he had hope of something better and when it came along he took advantage of the situation.

The question might arise as to this clarity of mind. Just why would such a demented sort of person full of demons have clarity of hope? Was this clarity a mistake on the part of the demons, or might we suspect that in the demon possessed person there was some part of the person who was conscious of what was going on. This seems to be a distinct possibility.

Consider what that would be like to have conscious realization of what is going on around and to you and not being able to control your physical being. On the other hand might the demons had a lapse of power over the man? Might the Lord have given the man a moment of sanity? Might the man have had some control over himself, though had given up to the power of the demons out of fatigue of fighting them?

It may have been the evil spirits that drove the man to his knees. Remember that in Mark 3.11 we read "And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him...."

This man, so pathetic in nature, yet Christ took time to deal with his problems. Christ has time for all sorts of people, even today, it should be an obvious application that as believers we should do no less than our supreme example of life, Christ Himself.

The man actually has some similarities to the lost person of our own age, though not as outwardly foul yet just as inwardly tormented of mind. The lost person is chained in their own way, they are crying for help yet not finding it. They are self-destructive and ready for the tomb, yet some have clarity of mind to come to the feet of the Lord to worship. That was not a Calvinistic nor Armenian comment, just a general observation.

The term "see" is also translated know. The man may have known who the Lord was, whether by inner knowledge, or from hearing others talk of Him, he knew the Lord, he perceived who He was and immediately worshiped Him. All of the verbs are in the active so this was a personal set of actions that the man set out to do on his own. Well, one might assume that but there is also the possibility that the demons were still controlling his actions. In the next verse we see the demons speaking directly to the Lord.

When you combine the passages you are left with the impression that this falling down and worshiping is more of the idea that the man is driven down by the demons and they either are using this position to plead from or possibly that they know that is the position they should occupy when before the Creator of the universe. Matthew does not mention the prostration, but Luke mentions "And when he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus thou Son of the Most High God?"

The term translated "worship" is of interest. The Lexicon mentions that it comes from a word meaning to kiss or licking of the Master's hand by a dog. I think that from this we can assume that it was the demons causing the falling down. Whether there was any knowledgeable admission on the part of the man himself it is not clear. The term came to picture one kneeling with forehead to the ground in reverence and it is always translated "worship." From our context we know it to be a general term definable by the context.

We will not comment on "worship" as it is done today in most churches nor compare it to Biblical worship, which often means prostration.

It also seems that this prostration was in response to the Lord calling the demons out of the man. Luke and Mark both mention that precursor.

Just what/who is controlling this worshipfulness of the poor man? Let us consider this for a moment. Matthew may shed some light on this question when he records of the demons "What have we to do with thee, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" BEFORE THE TIME would indicate that there was some special time that the demons were awaiting. It would seem to me that they knew of their ultimate end and that they knew that it was not yet time for that end.

Oh the things this could indicate. First that demons know the finality of their fate, that they know the progression of God's overall program, and that they knew that this was not the time for their final fate.

Indeed Luke records "And they intreated him that he would not command them to depart into the abyss." (Luke 8.31) One translation (It is a version put out by Collins World but does not state what version it is.) mentions "into the deep" rather than "the abyss."

On the other hand they did ask Him to send them into the swine. The contrast of options would indicate that they thought He had power to send them to the place of His will. They may not have fully understood that until the cross He did not have eternal power over them. At any rate He allowed them to go into the swine.

Now I don't know what you think of pigs, but Winston Churchill said that he liked pigs. He said - ruff quote - dogs look up to man, and cats look down with disdain upon man but pigs treat man as equals. I have to think that the swine did not appreciate the demons entering into them.

We might note that there is a close enough affinity between man and animal that demons can possess either one. I am not sure where that would go theologically but it seems to be a true statement.

Mark alone mentions that there were about two thousand swine. Whether there were that many demons or whether the pigs acted in mass we are not told.

The keepers of the swine went into town to tell of the happenings and the entire city returned to the spot to see what had happened. Matthew records that "all the city came out." There was great interest, whether due to the swine killing themselves or whether to see the freed man we are not told, but the towns-folks found the man with Christ.

The people's reaction was not that of awe, but of fear and they asked the Lord to leave their country. There is some speculation that the towns-folks were in part Jews that owned the swine. We are not told whether this is true or not but it is a distinct possibility. This could relate nicely

to the Lord being so quick to grant the demons their request since the Jew was not to eat pork based on the Old Testament law. The very fact that Christ had arrived on this shore would indicate that He was there to reach the Jews. He was not going to the Gentiles thus Jewish swine owners might be the conclusion.

Even if the owners were Gentiles the death of the swine was just for they were raising pigs, which would have been an affront to the Jews.

The man freed from the demons when he saw the Lord leaving asked to go with Him, but the Lord told him to return to his home and tell of what He had done for him. This the man did.

There are a couple of items that we are not told. Why were that many demons in one person? What happened to the demons when the swine killed themselves? We assume that the demons were free to indwell others, indeed possibly some that came from town. There is a possibility that there is a need or strong desire for the demons to indwell people/animals by their very nature. We just are not told that much about them.

There are a couple of differences in the texts of the synoptic Gospels. Matthew uses a different term for the country "Gergesenes" and he also mentions two demoniacs. Some suggest that a recently discovered village ruin on the shore of the Lake may have been the specific of Matthew while the other two Gospels went with the area. Constable suggests simply that there were two towns a few miles apart. As to there being two demoniacs A.T. Robertson in his Harmony of the Gospels has a footnote indicating that he believed that Matthew's pair of demoniacs is explained by the fact that one of them came to Christ as spokesman for the pair.

The Greek term used is "duo" which is translated "two" one hundred twenty two times. It is also translated "twain" and "both" but always indicating more than one. Thus it would not hold that Matthew was just speaking of the demons, for in the same phrase he says "two possessed with devils." Very clearly he mentions two men possessed of multiple demons.

There might be the possibility that there were two men but that they came to the Lord at slightly different times. Matthew just chose to lump them together, while Mark and Luke just mentioned the one that was important to their account. Indeed, we might have three accounts. Mark may have been speaking of one of the men, Luke speaking of the other and Matthew speaking of both.

Luke adds that the man wore no clothes and specifically "abode not in any house, but in the tombs."

Both Luke and Matthew leave out the portion relating to the fetters, chains and the fact that they could not hold the man in the place where Mark placed it. Luke mentions these things later in the context of the discussion between Christ and the man about the demons/name etc.

There are questions from this situation about the demons and their abilities to possess. They possessed this poor man, yet when he came to Christ they were dispatched elsewhere. They requested to be transported to the swine. Why? Especially in light of them running the swine

into the sea.

What can we learn from this situation? There is a desire if not need of the demons to be within a living being. There is a tendency for them to make the being/animal act unnaturally. They seem to take joy, if they can have joy, in making the possessed miserable. Why keep the man alive, yet destroy the swine?

Perhaps someone with time can come up with some answers to these and other questions. I am to assume that there is a desire to indwell, or perhaps need. It has crossed my mind that the demon that has no one/thing to indwell is cast into the pit with the rest of their brethren, but I find no Biblical reference that would indicate this other than this possible proof text. If this is true why would they request to go into the swine, then destroy their abode so quickly? Their question to Christ about casting them before the time would indicate that they probably continued on after the swine.

In relation to the cutting of himself with stones, this may have been a side effect of his possession in that he was running and tearing around the graveyard that was full of grave stones hewn from a nearby quarry and the edges may have been sharp. He may have just been running into and hiding behind these stones.

10 And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country. 11 Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. 12 And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. 13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea. 14 And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. 15 And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. 16 And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. 17 And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.

Why would the demons not want to leave the country? Why would what country they were in concern them? Were they worried about homesickness - it is quite doubtful. Mark mentions country, Luke mentions they did not want to be sent into the abyss and Matthew does not cover the topic.

Luke and Mark probably were just recording different parts of the conversation, but why would the country they were in be a problem to them? It is possible that we have some little insight into the make up of the fallen angels. It may be that they have emotional attachments to their "home" though I would not want to make too much of this point. It might indicate that they have emotions as do we. We know that they have decision making powers, we know they have curiosity so why not emotions as well? There is also the possibility that they had a real freedom in this area/country. There would have been many lost people to possess and there would be very little opposition to their activity.

This would be fitting with their similar eternal existence to that of fallen man. There would be purpose to punishment etc. more so if they had similarities to man in these areas. We know further from Daniel that they war, they know allegiance etc. so why not emotional attachment to a locality.

Now, just why the demons wanted to go into the swine is a question to be answered, as is the question of what happened to the demons when the swine died. Did they cease to exist? It is doubtful since they are to be judged with the Devil. Did they just go into the abyss? There is no indication of this though that is a possibility. Did they enter into other humans? This would be the obvious conclusion, but why would there be no record of legions of possessed people?

The best option would be that something occurred other than immediate re-indwelling. First of all we have no indication that they are required to indwell. The swine may just have been their desire to cause more destruction. It is quite possible they just reported back to the Devil for further assignment.

The Roman legion, which they would have known about at this time, was around 6 to 7000 soldiers. Imagine 6000 different personalities acting out in your being - there must have been tremendous turmoil in the man if he had any consciousness at all.

Another question that arises is why were legions of them indwelling one or two individuals when they could have been causing legion of people problems? Why this concentrated effort by the Devil? It most likely relates to the fact that the Devil wanted to confront the Lord at this juncture in this particular way. It might be that this was a confrontation of Good and Evil in the most real sense.

It might well have been the Devil trying the Lord to see what powers He had, and how powerless he himself was going to be now that God was walking among men. This might be indicated in the questions that the demons asked the Lord including their wondering if they were being sent to the abyss or whether He was there to torment them. This would indicate they and more importantly the Devil did not know just what the rules of the game were going to be now that God was man and operating in the Devil's domain.

Some thought might be given to the idea of Christ tormenting them. Was this related to the abyss and eternal torment in their minds or was this the thought that He might just torment them as part of His earthly ministry?

18 And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. 19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. 20 And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

What a wonderful testimony this man must have given of the Savior as he passed through the

area telling people of what Christ had done for him. The natural response was to want to follow the Lord, but the Lord had other plans for the man - "GO" is the word.

We also might want to join the Lord in heaven as soon as we can but He says GO rather than come home to be with Him. He has plans for every one of us. Those plans may not be the super saint preacher or evangelist, nor the missionary that goes to unknown tribes, but we are all to go telling of what Christ has done for us. To the workplace, to the play place, to any place where we meet other people who might be interested in what the Lord has done for you.

"Go" and "tell" are both imperatives - commands. Not a request, not a suggestion but a command to go and tell the message of the Lord. Nothing plainer need be said, we are to go and tell. Easy enough to follow those instructions, yet, many do not.

This does not require great personal evangelism skills, nor does it require great courage, just the telling of what Christ has done for you.

We should note that there is a two-fold message Christ wanted him to give. Tell of what "the Lord hath done for thee" which we have covered, but also "and hath had compassion on thee."

Now, I am sure that there is a general sense in what is required - that of the Lord stopping and caring for the needs of the man, but there may be a hint of the undeserved mercy that we all as believers have enjoyed. The man did not inherently deserve to be freed from the demons, but Christ took compassion or took mercy upon him to deliver him.

This sets the proper tone for our testimony to the world. God in HIS mercy gave us that which was needed to be saved; not because of anything that we have done or will do, but because of HIS mercy.

So as you tell of His work in your life, keep yourself out of it except as being on the receiving end of things. We did not draw God's interest. He was interested in us and acted upon that interest to our benefit. Don't take too much of what I have just said in the context of Calvinism, it is a matter of record that God acts as He wills, not as we will but that does not give credit to all that Calvin nor his adherents have taught and do teach.

We will split the next section into two parts. There is one account interrupted by another. We do not want to miss the fact that while on His way to raise one from the dead, Jesus took time to deal with a woman who had been having problems for twelve years nor do we want to miss the fact that the father with the sick daughter did not take issue with the interruption, but seemingly knew the Lord knew what He was doing by stopping and dealing with another.

We will take the account of the sick girl first then deal with the woman who touched His garment later.

21 And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him: and he was nigh unto the sea. 22 And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the

synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, 23 And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. 24 And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him.

It is at this point that the Lord was interrupted by the woman touching his garment.

Note that this was of the Jewish leadership - a ruler of the synagogue that is falling before the Lord to make request. Do not be deceived into thinking that all Jews had rejected Christ, just the majority. After all the apostles were with him as were many other followers. We will not dwell on the issue, but often times the common folk of God are much more in tune with Him than the leadership. Pastor/leader do not take that as an insult but only as a warning to not reject the common persons insight out of hand. Often it has been observed that the common folk know what is good and practical while the leadership is off in their "Ivory tower" running things with all their grand ideas.

Yes, you may have your degrees, yes you may have a ton of experience, and yes you may know it all, but realize that these folks that pay your check have been around the block a time or two on a more practical level than you and may have picked up some life experience that you have not had the privilage of picking up yet.

I might just mention one illustration that I have mentioned before. A church had just replaced their entire leadership over a few months with young men who seemed to have some great ideas. Indeed many of their ideas were great from what I understand but one was not so great. There was a high-rise in power rates and a sharp decline in church income due to economic pressures in the area. The church had a hot water heating system in the church sanctuary. The system took heated water, mixed it with cold water and then circulated the water through pipes buried in the cement slab floor of the building.

The leaders determined if they would shut the cold water off it would save power heating so much hot water. The old timers of the church warned them aggressively telling them it would damage the system. Not to worry, the youngsters are here and off went the cold water. The shock of the high temperature water hitting the pipes popped every connection in the system. The church was required to spend thousands digging up concrete and repairing connections.

Give the men A for "affort" but F for listening to wisdom made available to them.

I am not suggesting either that the common folk always know what is right, but we need to remember we are a "BODY" of believers, not two opposing sides in a battle for power.

35 While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? 36 As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. 37 And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. 38 And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that

wept and wailed greatly. 39 And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. 40 And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. 41 And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. 42 And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. 43 And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

"Why troublest thou the Master any further?" was the question posed by the one coming from the man's house to tell him that the daughter was dead. First off, this seems to be a rather abrupt way of telling the man his little girl was dead. Please give thought to how you tell of the death of a relative.

I stopped to visit my brother that was working on a Mercy ship years ago. As my wife and I walked down the wharf two fishermen stopped me and said "If yer goin down to see that big fat guy don't bother he dropped dead this morning." This was comment somewhat akin to that of the person coming from the ruler's home.

Christ responds immediately, "As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe." Christ knew of the pain that had most surely have gripped the man's life and He told him immediately not to be afraid but to believe. Again, we see that compassion that we have mentioned before. Christ knew the emotions of the man and wanted to calm him and relieve his pain.

A few questions come to mind from this passage.

1. Why was the girl's age given?
2. Why did Christ tell them to give her something to eat?
3. Why did He tell them she was asleep? Did He know this for a fact or was He just covering what He knew He was going to do?

Since God does not lie, it should be assumed that He knew that she was only sleeping or unconscious.

Being a diabetic, it crossed my mind that number two and three might be related - she may have been having blood sugar problems thus the Lord's command to feed her. I would not presume to place this interpretation upon the situation, but it fits well. Constable suggests that the command to feed was related to showing that Christ had raised her to normal physical life, rather than to the after death life that we will enjoy one day. This is a forced interpretation in that there is little teaching in the Word about the after life at this point in revelation, unless of course this is one of the first comments on same.

The age might have significance or it may not. It was to mark the fact that she could and was

able to walk or of age to have that ability, but if there is more significance it is not clear for us.

Constable observed "Perhaps Mark mentioned the girl's age because she was 12 and the woman whom Jesus had just healed had suffered with her affliction for 12 years (v. 25). The woman had begun living when she should have died from her incurable condition. The girl had died just when she should have begun living as a young woman. Jesus could and did deliver from both deaths."

Again we see the Lord telling the people not to tell anyone of what had happened. Another question seems to arise out of His comments. Why did He just tell the ex-demoniac to go and tell, while telling these folks not to tell?

It must relate to the location. Christ again is back in Jewish territory not the gentile area where the demoniac lived. He is not wanting for any further attention in the Jewish territories.

Just a moment of application relating to this ruler and his relationship to Christ. Christ told him not to be afraid, but only to believe. Easy for Him to say when it isn't His daughter that is laying dead might be the conclusion.

Note that some strain to tell us that we only have to believe and be saved, and I am sure this could well be one of their proof texts, but note also that believe is in opposition to be not afraid. Believe or faith is always in the context of two opposing issues. Disbelief/belief, no faith/faith etc. seems to be the context. Here we have a man afraid due to his daughters "death" being told **DO NOT BE AFRAID BUT BELIEVE**. Again the two fold issue. Belief would mean that the man was exchanging belief for fear - a turning from one to another.

In salvation believe is the statement, but it is always in contrast to the lost condition of the person. They must realize their lostness **AS WELL** as move from that adherence to lostness to adherence to faith in Christ. Repentance is the other word that has not been used thus far. Repentance is a changing of mind about something. In the lost person there must be a change of mind from Satan's realm to Christ's - repentance.

Now back to the woman who had been ill for twelve years. First just imagine twelve years of living with a malady. It is easy to feel sorry for such a woman when reading of her plight, but we ought to think of the people in our churches that we talk to every week. How about those that are living with such items of physical malady. Many people live with things like this for years upon end. We should be attuned to such ongoing problems that other people have.

In the workplace how often do we think of such things? Things like planning a going away for a man with diabetes and having everyone bring cookies and cake. How about the potluck. Do we try to plan for nutritious meals, or the fun junky stuff that we often see. Again, the desserts. Do we think of all the diabetics? Do we season the food with heavy salt for the heart patient that shouldn't have salt. Are our beverages healthy for the church folks? Full of sugar, or void of caffeine for those that should not have it for their health's sake?

How do we make plans for those with ongoing physical problems? Do we offer to assist those with problems that keep them from doing all that they should or that they want to do? How about a workday for the old folks homes - take a crew in and do painting and repairing for those old timers that can't get around to such activities.

We will not take doctors on at this point but there is a valid application to Christian doctors. Are you as tuned into your profession as you ought? Are you in it for the money or for the helping of others? This woman "SUFFERED MANY THINGS OF MANY PHYSICIANS." I could tell you modern day versions of such things but we will not belabor the point. Well maybe a little. The dentist that pulled two of my teeth before deciding to fix the one that was hurting. The dentist that worked on my lower jaw four hours even though he could not deaden it. The doctor that I trust doctors and dentists that call Christ their Lord will be doing the very best that they can to assist those that come to them for help.

The application could well go to all professions and jobs that a Christian might find themselves employed in. God is really your employer, so serve Him well!

One must wonder how well Mark knew this woman as he continues "and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse." The doctors had taken all that she had and she was growing worse. Now if that is not a cry for social medicine from the time of the Lord; a good liberal would not know what to do with one better. This is the stuff that liberals live and breathe. Okay enough social commentary.

Mark must have known the woman to know these details or possibly the Lord had more of a conversation with her than is recorded. She most likely was at the end of her options and was trying the last possible thing she could try.

25 And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, 26 And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, 27 When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. 28 For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. 29 And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. 30 And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? 31 And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? 32 And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. 33 But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. 34 And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

As usual some questions arise.

1. How did Christ know that the woman touched His garment? If He knew that power had left Him would he not know that there had been contact. He probably did not feel physical contact so assumed it was contact with His clothing. Since we have no such power to feeling leave us we probably do not know how or why He knew, only that He knew.

It is the fact that He knew and that it mattered that might be of interest. Imagine being in such a throng ("in the press" vs.30) with people jostling you around on every side being bumped and touched by many, to know one had touched in faith is probably the real key to the point. He knew that one of all those that had touched him that day did so in faith and that something had happened.

The apostle's reaction is interesting also. "In this mob how would we know who touched your garment?" might have been their logical reaction to such a question.

2. What "power" did He feel leave Him? Both Mark and Luke mention this item of information. Luke in verse 46 mentions that Christ felt "virtue" leave Him. Which is it? Virtue or Power - what was it that the Lord "felt" in this situation? Some translations use "power" and the King James uses "virtue." Power is probably the better translation since the Greek term is "dunamis" the word we get dynamite from. It is translated "virtue" three times in the New Testament and two of the times is in this parallel account. The other account is very similar in Luke 6.17 where a large group were healed with a touch of His garment. "And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases; 18 And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed. 19 And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed [them] all."

When I was a little boy my father purchased a little clock radio for me. I used to lie in bed tuning around the dial late at night. One of the stations I would tune in was in Deeeellllll Riiiiiiiiooooo, Texxxxxaas where the faith healers loved to sell their wares. The station, I was told was just across the border into Mexico where US laws did not bind the advertizing. These faith healers were constantly selling their prayer clothes that were guaaaaarrrrrrannntttteeddd to heal all your ailments.

No this is not what the Bible is talking about but it is valid information for us. The touch of cloth in faith had healing power in the time of Christ and shortly after when the gift of healing was still present in the church. We also see a similar miracle working from cloth in the book of Acts when the apostle Paul was early in his ministry. Acts 19.12 "So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them."

I would be remiss to not note that later in Paul's life he did not have this gift to heal, for he could not heal himself of his thorn, nor could he stop Timothy's stomach trouble and a couple of others mentioned in the epistles that were sick, one near to death, and he had no power over their ailments. The gift of healing was one given for the validation of the good news that the apostles were preaching and validation of God's own son living among men.

What that power was we are not told, but it was most certainly related to the power of God and His mercy.

3. Luke 8.43 mentions that the woman touched His garment - not his ankle, or leg, but His garment and she was healed. What is going on here that allows cloth to heal? Since cloth has no healing power in and of itself we need to understand that the healing was due to the special healing ability of some in the time of Christ and the apostles. We know Paul was quite a healer as well, though his ability waned toward the end of his ministry on earth. There were some that he could not heal toward the end.

There is also clarity that the woman was healed because of her faith, not by the cloth itself. It was the power of God, but it was her faith that brought that power forth to her benefit.

Many years ago I was privileged to meet a pastor in Ireland. He was with a Holiness group that believed in healing however they held a much more Biblical standard than most of the Charismatic movement today. They held that there were people who were healed but that it was not due to the power of the people involved, but rather founded squarely upon the faith of the person in need of healing.

If you want to hold to healing for today and get past the fact that Paul's gift of healing went away in his own lifetime, then at least hold to the idea that healing is due to the faith of the person in need of healing rather than someone with the supposed gift of healing.

One must wonder of this woman's life after this point. Did she go back to those lousy doctors and tell them off, did she tell them of the Lord? What might her life have become without such a malady? Happiness must have been a big part of her life knowing that she would not have to face such a thing again. A good witness for the Lord would most likely have been a part of her life as well.

4. How is it that He could know He had healed someone and not know who it was? How is it that an omniscient God did not know who it was? (Many believe that He was fully cognizant of all His deity while on earth, but this would indicate this to be faulty thinking.)

It seems obvious to some that He did this for effect rather than showing his lack of knowledge. We will discuss this a little further in the application section. Others reject the thought that Christ was fully cognizant of his attributes of deity and that He was relying on the ministry of the Holy Spirit through Him in his earthly walk. It seems that He wanted the woman to come publicly with her faith in Him. He could have continued on as though nothing had happened, yet he stopped and took time out of a life and death situation to cause the woman to make public proclamation of her faith in being healed by the Lord.

Some say that the Bible requires a new believer to make public testimony before man to his/her salvation before one can know that they are truly saved. It is not a proven fact from my viewpoint, however there seems to be strong indication that a valid faith will produce public testimony. It is similar to the thought of baptism. A valid faith in Christ will naturally lead to obedience in baptism though it is not a requirement for salvation, only an indicator of it.

I personally from my quiet to private personality tend toward not sharing my inner feelings and

thinking - not that one would believe that from reading any of my works but when I accepted the Lord I went immediately to see my girlfriend. She was with me when the pastor asked to talk with me. She asked what had happened with the pastor and I did not tell her. I did not fully understand what all had gone on, only that it was something big. It was much later that I finally shared my new faith with her.

To make a public profession a requirement of salvation is probably not a good thing for many people of quiet personality type. They will make testimony when they are ready, not in someone else's prescribed time frame.

5. Where did this woman find such confidence that if she could only touch His garment that she would be healed? Only speculation can take over on this point. She may have heard Christ sometime previous, she may have only heard of His healing powers from someone else. She may have been an Old Testament believer that realized this was the Messiah and just had faith that God would deal bountifully with her.

It is not so much the how and/or why, but the action that she took. She acted upon what she knew in her heart to be.

6. Why would the woman have been in fear and be trembling when Christ asked who it was that touched Him? Why a response of falling down before Him? Since fear is part of the context it could well be assumed that she was afraid Christ was upset with her for coming into contact with Him. The society could not have been one where a woman could touch a man in public and be accepted. In some eastern cultures today a woman cannot even be with a man not of her own family for conversation.

There may have been some understanding in her mind that this man was deserving of such honor. She knew that she had been healed - what must have been going through her mind about who this man was and what power He must have controlled to be able to have healed her with a touch of His garment.

7. Why does Mark record "telling him the truth?" Was there some falsehood in the account that we are not told of? From the texts it seems there was some commotion among the apostles and the Lord about who it was that touched Him. I rather suspect that this was Christ's way of moving the woman to declare her actions to the public. She had come to Christ in private, but He wanted her to give public acknowledgement of what had been done for her.

Both Mark and Luke mention that the Lord told the woman who it was her faith that had healed her. Note that faith brings a response of power from God. The faith moved her to touch Him but I suspect that the touching was just an act of the faith and that the faith would have brought forth the healing even though there had been no actual touch - only the faith and the attempt were needed and from there God was the One to do the rest- as always I might add.

APPLICATION:

1. Let us consider whether there were one or two demoniacs. Umm, since Matthew said there were two we should go with two and find explanation for why Mark only mentioned one.

Jameison, Fausett and Brown suggest "Though there be no discrepancy between these two statements--more than between two witnesses, one of whom testifies to something done by one person, while the other affirms that there were two--it is difficult to see how the principal details here given could apply to more than one case."

Another commentator mentioned that there were two, but that one came on behalf of both. A spokesman if you will. Mark simply reported on the spokesman and Matthew mentioned the total situation.

It could be assumed that two men met Christ at different times but that Mark only mentioned one of the meetings. Both could have described the conversation with the same one and the conversation with the other was very limited or just not recorded since there would have been duplication in the narrative.

2. Consider the reactions of people to the demoniacs. I'd guess that someone living near the graveyard was on the phone to the police constantly asking that they go out and quiet this disruptive man. The apostles may have reacted negatively to the man approaching their Lord, or they may have had compassion upon him, as did the Lord. Other people in the area may have had compassion toward the man but we are not really told.

The point being, how do you react to the undesirables of your own time. When you drive by the panhandler with his hand out wanting money? Do you have compassion? Do you have contempt? Well if you are smart compassion probably is not appropriate since the guy with the cardboard sign may well be taking in more money than you are at your job.

Having shot down my own application, what about the disabled person in the store that is slowing your activities. There are many in our society that needs our compassion and caring thoughts, if not actions.

On the other hand there is a responsibility upon the person that is in need. They should do all they can to mend their own problems before leaning on society. The woman with the illness had done all that she could with the doctors and had spent all that she had but was still willing to move forward to touch the Lord's garment. The demoniacs came to the Lord for assistance.

Many are the disasters in our country of late and it has been of great interest to see the differences in the way people react to their disaster and trying circumstances. Some sit on their Red Cross provided chairs in the warm Red Cross provided shelter eating their Red Cross provided food waiting for mother government to come give them the cash to remedy their problems, while others in other parts of the country are in the middle of cleaning up the mess with no thought to mother government.

Recently in Washington and Oregon there was localized flooding. The people were cleaning up

before the water was gone but one of the illustrious governors reportedly called FEMA and said to get out here and get us some help and to bring their checkbook with them. Many of the families had cleaned up and repaired before the FEMA trailers even showed up.

There is no reason the states couldn't give the assistance needed, but why do that when you can call on mother government and then spend your state funds on all the fluffy feel good projects that they can find.

Folks take responsibility for yourselves. Do all that you can and if there is still need turn to those that can assist. Americans are for the most part, in total despair if they don't have six Televisions, four stereos, three bedrooms over their true need and two cars in the three-car garage. People, we are so blessed in this country but we do not have to have everything equal - that is communism and we are supposed to think that form of government undesirable because it does not work.

This woman did all that she could and then some to better her situation; we ought to be doing the same for ourselves as believers.

Yes, have compassion, but be sure it is well placed with those that have real needs. There are many churches that are inundated with requests for assistance. It is difficult to determine just how to respond with so many lazy devious people in the country.

Many churches have developed "Deacon fund" policies to govern just how assistance is given out. Many refer the requester to social agencies in the area for they are often more well funded than a church and can do a lot for giving long term assistance through training and housing. Others do as much as they can while being sure to share the gospel along the way.

I set up a policy for a church a few years ago that will be included at the end of this file to give you a starting place if you would like to develop a policy for your church.

Some might suggest that we are called to assist those in need not evaluate their sincerity, but the Bible also calls us to be good stewards and to reject dishonesty. Common sense should reign not a blanket "Help everyone that comes" policy. It is the excess of assistance that is available that has fueled the current "Homeless" generation. They can live as their lazy choice allows while getting all they need from the system.

3. It has been said that pigs are one of the most intelligent animals. This might be the comment of a pig loving pet owner, but they do seem to be quite intelligent. It crossed my mind that the demons were in the man but he did not kill himself, yet the demons entered the swine and they had enough sense to kill themselves to escape the torment. Of course this is not true. The demons most assuredly could have caused the men to kill themselves, but that would not have fit into the scheme of what the Devil was doing at this point in time.

This also gives weight to the thought that this was a planned confrontation with the Lord by the Devil. He had failed when he was trying to tempt Christ, but now he seems to be testing His

powers. It is possible that the addition of the swine killing themselves is to give us insight into what was going on here. Indeed, verse seven lays a fair groundwork to indicate this might even have been the Devil himself speaking to the Lord. "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God?"

That declaration is so impressive to me. These demons knew exactly whom it was they were dealing with even though the Jewish leaders knew nothing of Him. The demons had full recognition of Christ and most probably knew that their goose was cooking. Indeed, is this not irony? The beings that were tormenting these poor men are worried about their own coming torment - as well they ought to be.

There may be further evidence that the one speaking to Christ was the Devil. Normally when Christ spoke in healing etc. the action was instant, yet here Christ told the demons to leave, but the conversation followed instead of the immediate leaving. In Mark 1.25 Christ spoke and the spirit tore the person and came out.

4. It seems from the text that the people in Gadara were more interested in their dead pigs than in their personal salvation. They totally ignored the fact that the demoniacs had been freed from the demons control, they totally ignored the Lord's power over demons, they totally ignored it all to worry about their dead pigs.

Their spiritual condition need not be discussed since it is so obvious. They were totally consumed by the material and were blind to the spiritual. Rather like the Lord telling of there being two masters, and the fact that you cannot serve both.

Need we apply this to our own day of materialism and wealth in America? I think that is obvious as well. People are so tied up in the material wants, needs and getting of some more stuff that they have no time to even consider anything outside of the material.

They worry only about what toy they will purchase next and how they will pay for it. The American value system is warped at best. We value what a toy costs more than whether it is worth that price. People are paying more for a car than we paid for our house - well what we finance our house for. People are buying RVs that cost many times what our house cost originally yet they are not satisfied, they are trading in those same RVs for newer, bigger and better ones.

Churches are putting building programs ahead of educating their people on the things of the Lord. A friend attends a large church. He noticed that there was a real lack of solid doctrine being taught in the church. He approached the staff about an idea he had. He had arranged to rent a building near the church to put on some classes relating to doctrine. He told the staff that he would cover the cost of the building etc. and would teach the classes.

The church was already using off campus buildings for different programs yet they refused him permission to do the classes. They told him that they would have a new building up in a year or so and then he could do the classes. My friend being much like myself asked if that was not

putting edification ahead of edification. His time with the staff member was terminated.

Spiritual edification of the saints should take precedence over anything a church does. Building buildings is not what we are called to do; we are called to go teaching and edifying. Buildings are only a tool of the trade that we are called to, not the call we are to fulfill.

In our personal lives we are often way off base. We should be focused upon the spiritual well being of our families and ourselves rather than on entertaining the family with the latest toys and ploys of Satan.

It is so easy to become sidetracked with the material world; that is why the Bible is so clear on what we must do. We must choose just which world we are going to lay up stores in. Either we lay up reward in heaven or we lay it up here. Either we have eternal joy of how we served God or we have 70-80 years of joy over the toys that we have acquired.

One of the signs of physical/mental maturity is when you can wait for reward. In child-hood we will choose the lesser reward that is given immediately over a larger reward conferred later. Is that not what Christians are doing today. Going for the immediate reward, rather than waiting for the larger, longer lasting reward in eternity. As the physical being must mature, so must the spiritual.

5. A brief discussion of demon possession would be in order. Most of this activity was in the time of Christ and the apostles. Much of the activity of demons is centered on thwarting the program of God during Christ's time and the time of the very early church was the most central to God's program thus far.

The Devil was actively attempting to do damage to God's plan even though he was quite ineffective. Today there is little of this sort of activity - in my mind because much of the world is living like the Devil, even many Christians. He does not have to worry too much about the world going downhill because it is doing that on its own.

There are areas however where missionaries tell us that the Devil is quite active. Anywhere that the Word is being preached and responded to is an area where he will be trying to set his work to BUSY mode.

In Haiti for example the Devil is very busy trying to bring down the church that is growing there. In remote areas where the Word is becoming effective is another area of his interest.

I might add that part of the confusion is the overreaction of the Charismatic movement in calling everything that is wrong a demon. Many of the fantastic stories coming out of the mission fields also are open to question as to validity.

As to demon possession, a believer cannot be possessed. There are some big name authors that have accepted that believers can be possessed, but they have little to no Biblical basis for their belief. If we are the temple of the Holy Spirit and He lives within it seems rather foolish to

believe that the demons can enter in.

My theology has more detail in the "Angelology" section if you would like further information. Also most any systematic theology will also have further information in the same section.

Indeed, this passage may well be a proof text that demons cannot indwell a believer, in that the Lord cast them out before the man believed and was on proper ground with God.

6. Constable observes, "There is only one letter difference between Jesus' command here and the one Peter uttered when he restored Dorcas to life (Acts 9:40). Peter said, "Tabitha kum!" This shows that Jesus continued to exercise His power through Peter after His ascension (cf. Acts 1:1-2)." This statement does disservice to the ministry of the Holy Spirit through the gifts to the early church. It is not a wise decision to attribute the healing power to a member of the Trinity that is not involved and not give indication to the member that is involved. It was the gift of the Spirit that allowed Peter to heal, not Jesus doing it through Peter. Minor point - it is still God that is doing the healing, but we might as well be precise when we handle God's Word.

Indeed, the fact that Constable gives credit to the Lord's own power as opposed to the power of the Holy Spirit that was with Christ during his ministry may show lack of understanding of the dynamics of the situation. Many believe that all that Christ did on earth was done under the power and guidance of the Spirit, not by his own innate powers of deity.

Gill seems to follow Constable in his belief that Christ was operating under His own powers and knowledge when he states of the woman touching Christ's garment, "As soon as ever the woman had touched his garments, and had a cure, Christ, who knew all things in his Spirit, or divine nature, that dwelt in him, knew what was done, that the woman had touched him, and was healed thereby; though, as not without his knowledge, so neither without his will, and entirely by his power:"

7. Verse seven has a note of interest. "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, [thou] Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not." Who was speaking at this point, the man or the demon spokesman? If it were the demon spokesman why would he want a promise based on God? He rejects God's power over his kind, he like the Devil, if it were not the Devil himself would not put stock in God nor a sworn statement. The Devil holds himself as superior to God so why would he or one of his own worry about it?

Probably because they knew who Christ was, and that if He swore by God His own integrity would demand that He abide by it. This is of interest but does not really answer the question of who it was that spoke the words.

Verse 8 holds our answer. "For he said unto him, Come out of the man, [thou] unclean spirit." Christ was speaking to the Devil or one of his workers and Christ knew the condition of the one He was speaking to - "unclean spirit."

8. When Christ asked the demoniac his name Gill follows the thought that Christ was using His

omniscience while on earth when he says of the question, "Which question Christ put, not for his own sake; for he was not ignorant of his name, nor of the number of the unclean spirits which were in the man;"

Does this not make Christ a fraud in part, to ask a question that He already knows the answer to only for the purpose of transferring information to others. Had He known, is it not dishonest to ask a question as if the information is not known? It seems that to hold such belief is to diminish the veracity of Christ.

Gill does the same thing in the account of the woman healed by touching His garment. "Turned him about in the press, and said, who touched my clothes? that is, turned himself towards the woman behind him, though the press was so large about him, and asked who touched his clothes; not for his own sake, who knew very well who had done it; but that the cure might be known to others:" He even clarifies it further when he states, "though he himself wanted no such signs, by which to discover her. Christ, as God, being omniscient, knew who she was, and where she was;"

If this be true we see the Lord to be found in manipulation of truth. Is this the thought that we ought to gain from these texts? Was the Lord indicating one thing to portray another? A missionary was once asked why he told half truths to the government of the country in which he was ministering. He was telling the government he was living there due to his business, while in truth he was there to evangelize and teach the new converts.

He used similar thinking that the Lord told half-truths so it should be okay for him to lie to the government. If we have to accuse the Lord Jesus of a lack of truth to give cover for our own sin we are in very uncertain spiritual condition.

9. It is of note that the demons had power over the lives of the swine yet did not seem to have power of life and death over the man they indwelt. This may be a New Testament confirmation of the account of Job. Job was a righteous man, but the Devil wanted to trouble him to see if he would not turn against God. God allowed the Devil PERMISSION to trouble Job but was limited to how far he could go. It would be inconceivable that God would allow the Devil to terminate a human being, it would seem that there is certainly limitation upon the Devil and what he can do to humans.

10. In years past we developed a real taste for Chugwater Chili. It is a mix that you add to water and fixins to make great chili. The company is in a tiny town in Wyoming called Chugwater. It is said that the town received its name from the sound that buffalo made when they ran off a cliff and fell to the clay banks of the river that ran through the town. Chug, was the sound and Chug is now the name. Supposedly the Indians would drive the buffalo toward the cliff and to their death to get their meat and hides.

Now I do not know the truth of the above but one must wonder at the mess and the sound of the couple thousand pigs running off a cliff and falling to their deaths below. It cannot have been a very pretty site. One must also wonder at the days after and the thoughts of the people in the area at such a sight, smell and knowing the account of this Christ that brought such a site to pass.

You would think that there would have been some that would have wondered at the situation and come to Christ either by word of testimony from the ex demoniac or by going to follow the Lord to hear His teaching. Needless to say, there must have been effects long after the Lord left the scene.

This also reminds me of a dead whale that washed up on the Oregon coast years ago. The government knew they couldn't leave it to rot and smell up the beach -- after all what would the tourists think and what would those that owned homes in the area say.

After long thought they decided to blow the carcass up with dynamite. The moment I heard that this was on their minds I was conjecturing what all sorts of mischief they were going to unleash upon the area. Evidently there were none in the government official camp that thought through to the logical end of such action. The charges planted the whale contemplated its coming dispersal into the atmosphere, the public watched, the television cameras were at the ready. When the blast occurred the whale was indeed dispersed but in fairly large chunks and it went flying way further than anyone would have guessed. Reporters were ducking and the large portions of rotting flesh being served up by the government were crushing cars. I am not sure the public appreciated this government free giveaway.

I am not sure what one should make of the situation with the dead pile of pigs but one should consider all portions of Scripture and their possible application. One must wonder of the "afterglow" if you will of Christ's meeting with the demoniac. We know that he published the good news well, but one must wonder of other things that may have gone on after the fact.

There were also the demons that were free to go about their life's work after being freed from the swine. What havoc did they unleash upon the public and what other victims became troubled by their presence.

11. The fact that many came to the Lord wanting Him to vacate the area should move one to wonder just why. This poor demoniac has just been loosed from his turmoil and torment, yet the people wanted the cause of such joy to leave the country.

Might it be that there were other herds of swine that were in danger of drowning instead of frying? Might these unfriendly folks be the owners of some of these other herds? Certainly one that could heal a demoniac would be welcomed but for some reason He was not. The economical issue may well be the reason.

12. Gill relates of the woman who was healed, "Eusebius relates, that it was reported, that this woman was of Caesarea Philippi, where her house was to be seen; where were extant some wonderful monuments of the benefits conferred upon her by Christ; as that at the door of her house was an effigy of a woman in brass, set upon an high stone on her bended knees, and arms stretched out like a supplicant; and opposite to her, another effigy of a man, of the same metal, standing, and decently clothed in a tunic, and his hand stretched out to the woman; at whose feet, upon the pillar, a strange form of a plant arose, reaching up to the border of the brazen tunic, which is a remedy against all diseases; and he says it remained to his times, and was then to be

seen: and Theophylact says, in the times of Julian the apostate it was broke to pieces." He then declares her to have been from Capernaum though the passage does not really tell us that either.

It is of note to understand how important these people were to history even though the doubter wonders if Jesus even existed.

13. It is to be considered what sort of life this twelve-year old girl might have lived. Knowing that she had been dead and had been raised by Jesus Christ Himself. Imagine living a life knowing these things and going through that early church persecution, knowing that what she was persecuted for was truly real and valid.

What a witness she must have been - what a witness we should be as well - having been dead and raised by the work of Christ on the cross. We are no different than this young girl.

It is a wonder that some of these people did not become great people in society. Today someone that is injured and makes some amount of recovery is a celebrity. Modern day miracles of science and medicine in most cases according to our liberal media. Heaven forbid God be involved in such things even though often the people involved give attribution to God the media glosses over the comments and relegates the miraculous to science.

14. Verse 36 mentions that Christ and only "Peter, and James, and John the brother of James." went to the house. Now, why Christ chose to do this we are not told, but he did separate out some from the group of apostles for specific things.

What can we learn from this? Two things. First of all if a pastor chooses to disciple some in the church, do not be dismayed, accept that he is fulfilling his leading from the Lord to make disciples as we all should be doing. Do not be jealous but be busy about making your own disciples.

Second, as a layperson in a church or maybe as a lesser known pastor or person, do not be concerned about those that are better known or better recognized. God has made each one of us to be His servants wherever He decides to place us.

Some years ago a pastor friend of mine asked me if I knew a particular pastor in our area. I told him yes, I knew him, that we had attended his church a number of times. He further questioned as to the size of the church. I related that when the pastor was on the platform, his wife was at the organ, another woman was at the piano and there was a young single man leading the songs it left us (the wife and yours truly) for the congregation. I also related that there were often 3-4 others for morning worship.

My friend sat with quite a smile on his face. When questioned of the smile he said, "Well I met that man at a pastor's conference and the way he talked he pastored a huge church. A competition between God's shepherds is unwarranted and probably is sin as well. Be satisfied with who and what God has made you and do not look to what others are doing and what you are not doing. It is God that does the work, not us.

15. Barnes mentions that many have thought this passage of the demoniacs is to be questioned. His response may be of interest to some.

"Infidels have objected to this whole narrative. They have said that this was a wanton and unauthorized violation of private rights in the destruction of property. They have said that the account of devils going into swine, and destroying them, was ridiculous. In regard to these objections, the narrative is easily vindicated.

"1st. If Christ, as the Bible declares, be Divine as well as human--God as well as man--then he had an original right to that and all other property, and might dispose of it as he pleased, Ps 50:10-12. If God had destroyed them by pestilence, or by lightning, or by an inundation or earthquake, neither the owners, nor any one else, would have had reason to complain. No one now feels that he has a right to murmur if God destroys a thousand times the amount of this property, by overturning a city by an earthquake. Why, then, should complaints be brought against him if he should do the same thing in another way?

"2nd. If this property was held by the Jews, it was a violation of their law, and it was right that they should suffer the loss;--if by the Gentiles, it was known also to be a violation of the law of the people among whom they lived; a temptation and a snare to them; and an abomination in their sight; and it was proper that the nuisance should be removed.

"3rd. The cure of two men, one of whom was probably a man of distinction and property, was of far more consequence than the amount of property destroyed. To restore a deranged man now, of family and standing, would be an act for which property could not compensate, and which could not be measured in value by any pecuniary consideration. But,

"4th. Jesus was not at all answerable for this destruction of property. He did not command, he only suffered or permitted the devils to go into the swine. He commanded them merely to come out of the man. They originated the purpose of destroying the property, doubtless for the sake of doing as much mischief as possible, and of destroying the effect of the miracle of Christ. In this they seem to have had most disastrous success; and they only are responsible.

"5th. If it should be said that Christ permitted this, when he might have prevented it, we reply, that the difficulty does not stop there. He permits all the evil that exists, when he might prevent it. He permits men to do much evil, when he might prevent it. He permits one bad man to injure the person and property of another bad man. He permits the bad to injure the good. He often permits a wicked man to fire a city, or to plunder a dwelling, or to rob a traveler, destroying property of many times the amount that was lost at Gadara. Why is it any more absurd to suffer a wicked spirit to do injury, than a wicked man? or to suffer a legion of devils to destroy a herd of swine, than for legions of men to desolate nations, and cover fields and towns with ruin and slaughter?"

PROPOSED DEACON'S FUND POLICY

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In that the Scripture is very clear that we are to be in the custom of assisting other believers in need, and in that the Scripture is very clear that we are to be in the custom of assisting widows and orphans, and in that the Scripture is clear that we are to be in the custom of assisting strangers, we hereby institute this policy to assist us in this ministry to those in need. (See footnote at end of policy for references.)

Each person seeking assistance will be interviewed by two of our deacons/elders and their concurrence will result in help. There is no need to INVESTIGATE a request for help other than to talk with the person involved to gain a sense that the need is valid. (We will trust God to guide us in our decisions and allow Him to deal with those that misuse our ministry.)

1. The fund shall be financed by an offering taken in the mission's bowl after the Lord's table service each month.
2. The fund shall be dispersed under the guidance of the deacons.
3. The funds will be distributed by gift certificate as much as possible, or by cash/check if the need is not available via certificates.
4. A grocery closet will be maintained at the church via the donations of the membership. It will contain sealed goods that can be stored for extended periods of time.
5. If the fund is depleted, and a seemingly valid case exists, the deacon and pastor may go before the church for a special offering/general fund expenditure for the assistance.
6. A list of social service agencies will be maintained and a copy of that list shall be given to each person requesting assistance. (It is assumed by this policy that much of our tax money goes to support social services, so we should make use of those services for the assistance of those in need.)
7. A total value for each assistance shall not exceed \$50. (Groceries need only be approximated.)
8. The above is not to say that every person that requests assistance is to be helped. It shall be at the discretion of those talking with the person that may or may not determine to extend help from the church family.
9. If there is a choice between church family members and those outside the church, then the church family's needs should be met first.
10. In keeping with James 2:15, I Jo. 3:17-18, and II Thess. 3:6-15 we feel that there is a different relationship between the church and the church member that is in need than between the church and a nonmember. We therefore set forth the following guidelines for the church member in need.

a. It is assumed that most of the needs will be met via the church membership before there is need to go to the deacon's fund. All should feel a responsibility to voluntarily assist in any manner that they can. (Some possible examples: Repair people assist in repairing items needed by the family, doctors/ dentists /other professionals giving minor services, etc.)

b. If there are needs over and above that which is forthcoming from the membership the deacon's fund should assist as possible. Within II Thess. 3:6-15 is the responsibility for the church to assure that the need is real. This is usually quite obvious, but if the obvious dims into a habit, there should be intervention by the pastor/deacons. The person that is failing to do all that they can to resolve their situation should be counseled. If there is no change then the pastor should be brought in to institute steps toward church discipline.

c. If the need is real and the deacons fund cannot relieve the need, then it should be considered by the pastor and deacons whether the need should be brought before the church for action by the congregation. This step might be eliminated if the congregation were to vote a sum of money be set aside to be given at the discretion and unanimous agreement of the pastor and deacons.

(II Thess. 3:6-15 "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. 7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; 8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: 9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. 10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. 11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. 12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. 13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. 14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. 15 Yet count [him] not as an enemy, but admonish [him] as a brother.")

FOOTNOTE:

Heb. 13:2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Acts 6:1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. I Tim 5:3 Honour widows that are widows indeed. 4 But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. James 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, [and] to keep himself unspotted from the world. Matt 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw

we thee an hungered, and fed [thee]? or thirsty , and gave [thee] drink? 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took [thee] in? or naked, and clothed [thee]? 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done [it] unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done [it] unto me.

RESOURCE LIST FOR FURTHER ASSISTANCE:

Insert here any nearby social service centers.

Nave's topical Bible references for further study:

De 15:7-18; Le 25:35-43; Ps 41:1, 112:9; Pr 3:27,28, 11:25, 22:9, 25:21,22, 28:27; Isa 58:6,7,10,11; Eze 18:5,7-9; Mt 5:42, 19:21, 25:35-45; Mr 9:41, 10:21; Lu 3:11, 11:41; Ac 6:1-4, 11:29,30; Ro 15:25-27; 1Co 13:3, 16:1-3; 2Co 8:1-15,24, 9:1-15; Ga 2:10; Php 4:10-18; 1Ti 5:8,16, 6:18; Heb 6:10, 13:16; Jas 2:15,16; 1Jo 3:17.

MARK CHAPTER SIX

Mar 6:1 And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him. 2 And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. 4 But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. 5 And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. 6 And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

Again we see that miracles were based on the belief of the people, not the one doing the healing. He marveled at their UNBELIEF!

He has left a country where they did not want Him and now He is not well received in his own area. This is not an uncommon occurrence today. Not that I compare myself to a prophet or the Lord but when I moved back to my hometown and started a new job my employer had calls from the townspeople who they did not want me in their house to do the repairs on their appliances and televisions. In my case they knew what I was like when a teenager and they wanted no part of me.

These folks knew Jesus as a carpenter and just knew that He had nothing to say to them spiritually.

This is true of young people leaving for college and returning to town as a pastor. There will be those that will not accept him as a preacher. They think of the person as a young person growing up. In my hometown there was a lawyer (son of a lawyer as well) that they called Eddy for his growing up years - well his grown years - well his senior years. He was always Eddy the son of the lawyer even to his old age.

People in your hometown remember you as what you were, they often miss the fact that you have grown into an adult and that you might have changed. When the Lord called me to go off to Bible College I told one of my friends that I was going to be a preacher. His reaction was shock, then laughter at how ridiculous an idea it was. He remembered me as the one that he played in the foxhole with over in the vacant lot that was overgrown with weeds and perfect for kids playing war.

The folks in the synagogue knew Christ as a child, they knew His folks and His family. Where in the world did He get all this new teaching?

"From whence hath this man these things?" was the people's comment about his teachings. This is of great note. Those in the Synagogue would have been the more spiritual, the mature and those that knew the Old Testament, yet they did not recognize His message - the message from

His own lips was not recognizable when compared to their belief from the Old Testament. That says a lot about how they understood the Old Testament - they did not.

They were offended at the teaching or more specifically by Him personally. The word translated "at" is normally translated "in" thus they were offended by everything that He was. Wonder if the disciples told him to "Not take it personally?" His very being seems to have offended them. The offense is in the passive tense. It was not an offense that was put on or made up, it was just His very presence and speech that was a total offence to their being. Rather hard not to take that personally :-)

We spoke at a large country church while on deputation and there was a potluck after the service. They insisted on the guests going first. We went looking for a place to sit with our full plates and found seats quite easily in the large fellowship hall. As others filled their plates and sat down it was easily evident that there was something very wrong with us. The entire congregation filled their plates and sat down - at least a table and a half away from us. We sat at the table alone until the pastor and his wife came through the serving line last - they saw us sitting alone and came to our rescue.

I do not know if it was something I said, something they smelled, or if they just did not like strangers.

It is hard not to take something like that personally, but remember Jesus and his action - He just continued on with his mission.

It may be of interest to the reader to note the acceptance of preaching from outside speakers. Is their message from the Word? Is it accepted by the people? Are they in tune with the true Word or are they in tune with their interpretation of the Word. Many churches have been listening to the same old stuff based on man's opinion for so long they oft times miss a message from the Word because they don't recognize it as truth.

When in Bible College I found it of interest that the man with the solid Bible message gained little interest among the students. One morning a flamboyant man stood to speak, he read a part of a verse as a "Jumping off point" for his message. The jumping off point was followed with story upon story upon story upon story. Very interesting but there was no point to all of his stories and nothing from Scripture save the jumping off point.

As I was leaving chapel people were all atwitter about the great message, the great preaching etc. When I sat down in my next class the buzz was along the same lines. Several students turned to me when one of them asked what I thought of the message. I asked them to tell me what the message was, what it contained, what point was there and what Bible message they heard or maybe they could tell me how it impacted their life. The quiet was answer enough. I did not hear one more word about the message except from the young man who asked of my opinion - "You know Stan I think you are right."

We learn from the Word of God and we should hear of it in the Lord's services.

Verse four speaks of the honor a prophet has "A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house." Note that there are three areas, country, kin, and own house.

A man of God will have no honor in his country, among his family, nor among his own house. I can understand the country and extended family, but in your own house? Is this a statement that the prophet will not find honor in his own family? This seems to be true, though not in a negative sense. A father that is famous is just dad to the family, they have no focus on his outside activities.

I doubt that my children see me as preacher, I'm just dad and that is the way it should be. In fact most men do not talk of their outside accomplishments and their family may not even know what they have done for God. It is God that is the focus, not our accomplishments.

I have written before of my father and his disability, or being crippled in the terminology of the forties. He was paralyzed from the waist down and shuffled from point to point on two canes. He often gave a one legged man, that was crippled in my mind, when he was returning to work. I always felt sorry for this "crippled" man not ever thinking that my own father was also crippled. He was just dad to me.

As to extended family accepting the prophet often they do not understand the person's commitment to God, they do not understand the person's refusal to involve themselves in sinful practices, in ungodly conduct and as a result they are outsiders and have no respect within the family.

Not that this is a big problem, we should not be respected by lost people for they do not understand our thinking or our commitment. Added to this fact many Christians that are of limited commitment do not understand why anyone would take their Christianity so seriously.

If honor among man is your goal, you will not gain it by following God, but you may find that one day God will certainly honor you for your efforts and that is the honor that we all should see as our goal. Not that we seek honor, but that we seek to serve God and when found faithful He extends honor.

7 And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits; 8 And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse: 9 But be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats. 10 And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. 11 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city.

Okay, now I think many women would be irate to be sent out without a suitcase or two or three -

well many men as well. Christ told the apostles to go forth and take nothing with them. Humm, I wonder if he means I cannot take my hand-held computer with me. NOTHING but a staff - the staff was to assist in walking. They were to take no comforts, but the necessary staff to assist in those long walks.

No cash, no barter items, no Capital One cards, go with nothing not even a Macdonald's salad for supper. But my pocket pc and ipod are totally needed!

They were to stay in homes that were opened to them and then move on to other places.

Now comes that passage that the Jehovah Witnesses have made famous, if they reject your message then "shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them." Many a time Jehovah Witnesses have had to shake their feet, even if standing on a clean sidewalk to show that they have been rejected. They have taken this as a sign of martyrdom, they have been rejected, however the Lord spoke of the message being rejected - "not receive you, nor hear you" indicates the Word was rejected and along with it the person.

This passage does not tell us that missionaries should go to the field without support, without equipment, or without a change of clothes. It was a specific sending of the apostles. Now there might be a principle here that we should take note of.

The thought of the passage was that they had no need of these things that others would take care of them in their mission. Thus a modern day missionary should rely upon the gifts of others and the support of others for their ministry. It is right and proper for us to care for missionaries and to house them, feed them and encourage them if they have need. This might mean we ought to offer them housing until they move on to their next place of meeting as the passage implies.

The passage does not teach that the missionary should be destitute and poor though for his spiritual sake that might be a good thing as it would be for all of us. I think that frugal is good, that conservative in appearance is good and that we all should also consider how our spending appears to others.

The passage also shows to us the great need of the world. Christ sent them out to preach the gospel while doing miracles. The miracles were a sign of their true message and the validity of Christ.

We all have this same command in Matthew 28.19 "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

12 And they went out, and preached that men should repent. 13 And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them."

Be sure to understand the context of this command to repent. It is in the context of the Old Testament economy, not the cross prepared New Testament economy. To the Jew, the

repentance was obviously including turning to God the same as John's (author of the gospel) "belief" also included a turning from the old life to God. The Jew did not have to believe in God, he already did that, he just needed to turn from his sin - repenting of his evil life.

We also see an addition to the healing that was going on, the apostles were anointing with oil along with the healing. This looks forward to the doctrine that James sets forth, the anointing of the sick by the church leadership, not some famous charismatic healer that roams the country looking to increase his/her bottom line. James mentions, James 5.14ff "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: 15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. 16 Confess [your] faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

At this point Matthew interjects a lengthy addition to the sending of the apostles. Matthew 9.16-42 details a number of items including the thought that a city rejecting the message would be worse off in the judgment than Sodom and Gomorrah.

This maybe taken as the fact that those cities are more sinful than Sodom and Gomorrah, though this may not be the case. Sodom and Gomorrah were in the Old Testament economy and did not have the benefit of knowing of the miracles and of Christ, nor had they heard the message of John the Baptist. There is a clear excess of knowledge given to these New Testament cities and they will be held accountable for the knowledge that they were given.

14 And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. 15 Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. 16 But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead.

It is of note from the context that Herod heard of Christ due to the work of the apostles going out and around preaching. One might wonder if this is true of our preaching today. Are we stirring the thoughts of the political leaders? Are we causing them alarm over our message? Herod misinterpreted the stir in his realm, but do our leaders even hear a stir from our witness to the world?

It is also of note that Christ had been about his ministry for some time by now and Herod is just now hearing of His work and ministry. Was Herod being protected from hearing of the Lord's work or was he just too busy with the affairs of state?

Either way he was remiss in knowing what was going on in his land. A leader must know of the lay of his land to rule properly. I fear today in America this is true of our own leaders. Some call it being out of touch with the common man but I would call it not knowing what is going on in reality. These people get so tied up in what they think is important and loose sight of all that is important to their people.

Herod was one of three sons of Herod the great. One ruled over Galilee and Perea while this one

ruled over Galilee. This Herod was Antipas while the one ruling over Judea was Archelaus Matt. 2.22. Their dear old dad was the one that killed all the babies when Christ was born.

Gill gives us a more complete look at the family, "And though he is here called a "tetrarch", he is in Mar_6:14 called a king: the reason of his being styled a "tetrarch" was this; his father Herod divided his large kingdom into four parts, and bequeathed them to his sons, which was confirmed by the Roman senate: Archelaus reigned in Judea in his stead; upon whose decease, that part was put under the care of a Roman governor; who, when John the Baptist began to preach, was Pontius Pilate; this same Herod here spoken of, being "tetrarch" of Galilee, which was the part assigned him; and his brother Philip "tetrarch" of Ituraea, and of the region of Trachonitis; and Lysanias, "tetrarch" of Abilene, Luk_3:1 the word "tetrarch": signifying one that has the "fourth" part of government: and in Munster's Hebrew Gospel, he is called "one of the four princes"; and in the Arabic version, "a prince of the fourth part"; and in the Persic, a "governor of the fourth part of the kingdom". The "time" referred to, was after the death of John the Baptist; and when Christ had been for a good while, and in many places, preaching and working miracles; the particular instant which respect is had unto, is the sending forth of the twelve disciples to preach and work miracles; and which might serve the more to spread the fame of Christ, and which reached the court of Herod; who, it is said here, heard of the fame of Jesus: what a wonderful preacher he was, and what mighty things were done by him."

The Net Bible notes "Herod was technically not a king, but a tetrarch, a ruler with rank and authority lower than a king. A tetrarch ruled only with the approval of the Roman authorities. This was roughly equivalent to being governor of a region. In the New Testament, Herod, who ruled over Galilee, is called a king (Mat. 14:9; Mar. 6:14-29), reflecting popular usage rather than an official title."

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown put Herod's feelings thusly "The murdered prophet haunted his guilty breast like a specter, and seemed to him alive again and clothed with unearthly powers, in the person of Jesus."

Speculation is the root of all rumors. The king heard of Christ, did not understand who He was, and assumed He was the reincarnation of one whom he had beheaded.

We see the spiritual makeup of Herod quite easily. He seems to have believed in nothing based on the Bible, but only on the speculations and wisdom of his day.

We were honored to pastor a tiny church southwest of Denver years ago. We had an older couple that assisted in the ministry and a young mother with two children. The mother was from the hippie generation and lived in a quaint little log home way back in the hills. Her brother came to visit her and came to church one morning. The older man was teaching the Sunday School class and we read this passage. The brother lit up like a roman candle and blurted out loud I've always believed in reincarnation and now I have Biblical proof of it.

We took the rest of the class showing him that this was not a proof text for reincarnation, even though Herod was in agreement with the young man. As much as some might want reincarnation to be true, it is not, and there is no Biblical text to show otherwise.

There is a little side information about John the Baptist here. Herod thought Christ was John because of the great works that were happening. John must have been doing some miracles or else the gossip mill was running very much overtime about him. We do not have indication that there were miracles though John 10.41 may indicate that there were none. "And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true."

It would seem from what we know of Herod that he may even have been protecting John to some extent. He must have had a great admiration for someone that could turn so many people into the wilderness to be baptized in a dirty river.

Even with such admiration Herod was not willing to turn from his sin, indeed his sin is what caused him to kill the man who he respected. His sin wanted John beheaded and so it came to pass.

This is not a great picture of Herod. Herod means "hero like" but we do not seem to see that side of the man in either his failure to protect John's life nor in his fear of what Christ seemed to be doing.

Many there are today that go to church, may admire the pastor, may even enjoy the stirring sermons as long as they relate to someone else. Many church members are there only for the financial and social benefit.

My brother, a contractor, and I were raised in a Christian church but neither of us were saved by its ministry. Later when we were both married he joined the local Methodist church. I had been saved and living for the Lord for a number of years at this point and wondered aloud of his joining that particular church. Knowing his Christian church background it was rather odd.

When I asked him of the decision his answer was "Well, all the business people in town belong there." Financial and social advantage brought him to church membership rather than any desire of spiritual benefit or thought of God.

It is feared that many in our evangelical/fundamental churches today are members only for their personal advantage be it social, financial, or physical good. A desire to serve God in a particular body of believers is the only reason to ever join the membership of a church. What the people can do for you should never enter into your mind while making such a decision. You are becoming a part of that body of believers to serve as part of that body rather than to be served by it.

Some churches only exist to serve the social interests of the congregation. This is not the purpose of a church and a church for that purpose is not really a church.

Another issue must be the fear and concern Herod had over his part in the death of John. There must have been a great guilt built into his mindset at this time in his life. His life must have been rather terrible down deep inside when he took time to consider his actions and lifestyle.

Again many believers share a close affinity with Herod. They are plagued by guilt over the actions of the past. They may have done some terrible things to others, or they might have just done terrible things by way of their own personal actions. When they consider their life, often people allow guilt to master them. Not that they should not feel guilty, but the point of being a Christian is to leave that guilt at the cross when you have realized your sin and seek forgiveness. Many lay their guilt at the cross and seek forgiveness but immediately take up the guilt, put it back on their shoulder and walk away from God to suffer in mental misery.

There is indication that Herod had an interest, if not real interest in Christ in that Luke 9.9 mentions of Herod "And he sought to see him." The word "see" relates to knowing someone or perceive and the word "sought" or in some translations "desired" relates to seeking or possibly plotting - planning deliberately would be the thought. This is not a simple, "Oh that is interesting, I'd like to see him." But rather the idea of I will seek Him out to get to know Him.

Whether Herod acted on his desire we do not know. Matthew Henry suggests that Herod wanted to see if Jesus looked like John the Baptist. This is possible but more is suggested by the words used. Herod found himself meeting Christ when Jesus was being judged prior to the crucifixion. Pilate sent Christ before Herod. Herod, it is clear wanted to know Christ, but not for spiritual reasons, but for "entertainment" reasons it would seem.

Luk 23:6 "When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilaean. 7 And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. 8 And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. 9 Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing. 10 And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. 11 And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. 12 And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves."

At least verse twelve proves that Christ was a peace-maker - not that this peace gave the two men real peace.

17 For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. 18 For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. 19 Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: 20 For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. 21 And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; 22 And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. 23 And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. 24 And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. 25 And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked,

saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist. 26 And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. 27 And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, 28 And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. 29 And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

I would like to point out a few items for application sake. First in verse 20 we gain insight into Herod's feelings toward John the Baptist. 20 "For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly."

It doesn't seem that Herod was a believer, though he could have been, but we see a lost man's respect for a Godly man. Two items. Know that ungodly people respect godly men on some plain. Second know that this should be true today however I see little respect for godly men today. Some possible reasons for today's disrespect might be:

a. There is nothing in the life of the believer to respect. They live like the lost, they talk like the lost, they act like the lost, they watch the same trashy television/movies as the lost and they are for all practical purposes the same as the lost except that they call themselves Christian.

This observation on the part of the world then is blanket applied to all Christians no matter what their life might be like.

b. The American lost person is much more depraved than the lost of Christ's time. Probably not since Herod beheaded John because of a pretty woman - at least we are not to that level as yet in America - yet.

c. Know that the lost watch the believer, and that they keep those thoughts to themselves for their own consideration. My father was in the hospital a lot toward the end of his life. My pastor never went to see my father - uhh officially, yet every time he was in the hospital he happened into my father's room. Over time this had a profound effect on my Father. He mentioned once in a passing way that he thought the pastor was an awfully nice man. My father gave few compliments so I took that as being a great compliment for the pastor.

The pastor never was pushy, just tried to be a friend. I truly believe that his plowing in my father's life was the reason that on his deathbed he finally spoke to me of spiritual things in an open way.

Being a good Christian has its moments and we need to live as if every moment were one of those that make a change in someone's life.

d. Know that you can have a relationship with a lost person, even in power, if you keep your stand where it ought to be and speak truth even when it would be easier not to speak. John pointed out Herod's sin, not that he probably needed to, but to have access to Herod and not point

out sin would have been remiss on John's part.

e. Truth affects different folks in different ways. Herod did not seem to be bothered by John's truth, yet his wife wanted to kill John over it. This might indicate that Herod knew it was truth and was trying to ignore it, but his wife wanted revenge for having to listen to the truth.

So today some will listen and others will attempt to cause you trouble.

f. Note the commitment to keeping his word on the part of Herod. Beheading a man who was just is not something that would be easy, yet Herod followed through to keep his name clean - willing to murder for his name's sake.

I am glad that we do not have men in power in America that would kill to keep their name clear of slander, but it would be very nice to see men in power even worry about what their name is like to the world or even to the voters. It seems they will do anything and everything to be in power and stay there.

When I was a teenager the local policeman (there was one on duty at a time) caught me speeding. He met me at the judge's office and I was correctly fined. All through the process I was kicking myself for my stupidity, not for my own name, but for my father's name. He had always held his name as important to him, indeed that was about all he had in life. I knew my name was going to be in the paper and I knew he would be embarrassed knowing that his son was a lawbreaker.

At that time in mid-Nebraska a speeder was not held with high regard, indeed it was a sign of poor parenting if your children found themselves in trouble.

Oh for the days when there were some standards to life among the lost - among the believers.

Today there is no standard since with humanism you do what you feel is right for you, thus there is no standard that exists. It is fairly clear how long a society will last with that ethic.

It was reported this week that Christian youth are heavily involved in Wicca a "religion" that teaches that there are no rules - humanism mixed with Devil worship might be the source. Wicca is a mother earth belief that has no rules to life, nothing is right or wrong. Naturally young Christians like this because they have not been taught truth in the church nor seemingly at home or anywhere else.

One should wonder at the control that this woman had over Herod. His wife certainly was not in subjection to her husband. Yes, she is an ungodly woman and she has little to do with a Christian woman, but she certainly is a bad example of how to be a wife. Christian wives ought to take a long look at this conniving woman and vow never to be anything like Herodious.

I fear many Christian wives are doing similar things on a much less dangerous plain. They know what they want and they move and shake in the background to get their way when they know their husband would not approve if she had been up front with him. Wives your place under the authority of your husband is God's placement, God's will and God's desire for you. Be at peace with your husband and do not put undo pressure upon him. Up front talk/requests are much

better than behind the scenes twisting and moving.

On the other hand men, take a serious look at Herod and the undue pressure he allowed his wife to place upon him. Not only did she plot against him, but she used his own sexual lust to do it. You must be master of yourself first and then your wife. Do not allow your desire to cloud your judgment. You are the head of your house so be sure to act like it by example of controlling yourself first then your family.

Now just one more thought before we move on. You are Herodious sitting in your palace minding your own business and someone walks in with a head in a charger. Now, what does etiquette require of you at that moment in time? Just how do you do your queenly thing when looking at the head of someone else severed from his body? What do you say? Thank you seems rather cold. "Oh I'm sorry, I didn't mean it." Would be a lie since you requested it. Just how did Herodious react. Might there have been remorse somewhere along the line? Might there have been sick feelings? What a cold cold woman she must have been - gentlemen be thankful for the wife of your youth!

30 And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. 31 And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. 32 And they departed into a desert place by ship privately. 33 And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him. 34 And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.

The party of the Lord was weary and hungry so Christ attempted to take them away for a break. The apostles and the Lord purposed to get away from it all but the people who followed wanted further teaching. This is not uncommon in ministry.

The weary pastor attempts to get away from the ministry for a moment and it just follows along behind him. Many pastors just leave town and today probably need to leave their cell phone at home. A break is needed and the minister should never feel guilty about taking one now and then if needed. Some do not need it for long periods while others may need it more often.

The point of this section is more along the lines communicated by "was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things." He had compassion on those that needed teaching. Oh pastor how you need to wake up to the need of your people. Sheep need food, not the Gospel. Church is for the sheep not the wolves and outsiders.

Many pastors think that the church assembly is where the lost should be saved. Wake up and look at the Bible you preach from. The church is made up of believers and you are there to edify them, not save all the lost that ought not be there. Use your precious little time with your congregation to teach them the Word, not the feel good fluff of modern day preachers.

Teach them doctrine, get your theology books out and preach it - that is food, that is meat, that is what your people need. They will starve with the feel good stuff of sermons given in many churches today.

Christians are not stupid and pastors need to wake up to that fact. Many of my generation have stopped going to church due to the terrible music, the pride in talent, and the lack of preaching from the Word. If those are not enough they see the hypocrisy in the leadership that are protecting their jobs rather than ministering to their people. There is little fellowship to be found in churches unless you belong to the in group, there are few activities for the poor and little to do unless you know the in crowd.

We visited a church a number of years ago that seemed rather fit to our needs. We attended the Sunday school class and were even more excited until they announced the months social activity. Bowling followed by pizza. We could barely feed ourselves much less go bowling and out for pizza. Without money there is no fellowship in many churches.

The church is where we fellowship, fast, pray and are built up in the faith. How many churches can you name that fulfill those standards. Is it any wonder the older generation sits home watching some preacher on TV or just stay home and look into the Word together?

A pastor awhile back mentioned church discipline and the putting out of the church of one that was in public sin. As we left church I asked my wife just what there was in "Church" today that would be missed by one under discipline. What thing missed would drive them back to the church? I have yet to find an answer. Indeed, I have jotted down a number of reasons why the church is rather irrelevant in our society. If you do not like flouncy music, fluff and stuff from the pulpit and cold shoulders from the people why bother going?

35 And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed: 36 Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.

Further consider the "compassion" mentioned. I personally see pastors on the Internet that do not understand this concept of loving the people, hurting with them and allowing that compassion to move you to assist the folks.

I recently read a thread relating to "should a pastor own a motorcycle." Of course today there is no real question that it is okay. There is no testimony problem, and the pastor has every right to own one, but this pastor wanted to be sure it would not offend some. He was told a number of times by other pastors that it was nobodies business but his. Some stated that if someone in their church objected he would not care what they thought.

These are not the thoughts of a man who has compassion upon his flock of sheep, it portrays the self-centeredness of a man who could care less about what his flock thinks. And those same men probably wonder why the flock does not follow his instruction in the pulpit. If he does not care what I think why should I care what he thinks might be the mindset.

Now this situation just does not fit into my analytical, organized mind. Why would anyone go out into the desert to hear a preacher without taking water and food, maybe some shade, a mp3 player in case the guy is boring, sun screen, a coke or two, and maybe a bag of chips for between meals. Well yes, a folding chair and umbrella - what do you think I am unorganized or something?

Here we have a multitude of folks out in the desert with no food listening to a preacher. The preaching has gone long - not something we are accustomed to, since we are always out by 12:15 even if the preacher is long-winded. The apostles realize the situation and want the Lord to send them away so that they can find food.

37 He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? 38 He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes.

Ah at least there was someone that was anticipating the need for food in the crowd. Someone had some bread and fish. Not exactly a value meal at McDonalds but better than nothing.

39 And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. 40 And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.

Can you envision this in a crowd of Christians today? Well I do not want to sit with that person, and I certainly am not going to be split up from my friends. Why should I have to sit with that man, when I could sit with this good looking guy over here. Oh the sun is too bright on my skin over there, I need to be in this group.

Some how they overcame all their problems and divided into groups as they were requested to do. (Wonder if they had to line up and count 1-2-3-4-5- and then divide --- well maybe not.

41 And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. 42 And they did all eat, and were filled. 43 And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. 44 And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men. 45 And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people. 46 And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.

Christ blessed the meal and the disciples passed it out and there was excess after feeding the 5000 men plus the women and children that might have been present. If the men/women/children ratio was as today there might have been 10000 women and a ton of kids. (Most churches have more women than men these days.)

Of the many things that stand out to me from my childhood Sunday school days it was sitting in Mrs. Wickencamp's class listening to this miracle recounted.

I do not remember too many lessons from those days but the feeding of the 5000 has always been

stuck in my mind.

I would suspect that this might well be why I have found it so easy to trust in the Lord for our supply when in the ministry. I have found that He always supplies the need. Now this does not mean He supplies according to the schedule I give Him, but in His time He has always supplied. More to the point than "when in ministry" He has always supplied the needs no matter where or when they come along, in or out of the ministry.

I remember vividly a few years after I was saved but not yet living for the Lord I was in some tight financial circumstances. I recall often starting to worry about the money that was needed and calling myself up short by reminding myself that God will supply - and He did even with me walking in my own way yet to find any commitment in my life toward Him. Note that from this end of my life that was presumptuous on my part and that He on His part had no obligation to comply with my "trust" in Him; but He did and that was part of the drawing of the Spirit of this self centered individual to His ministry/life.

Sitting here an illustration was needed in my mind, but just one does not come to mind, but a flood of times when God supplied the needs. So many times He asked us to make moves from one home to another or one state to another. The quickness or slowness of the supply was always of interest to us. When moving from the mid-west to the West coast we needed to sell many items to finance the trip, knowing that God would see to the selling and well He did, except the refrigerator. We could make the trip without selling the frig but it was almost new and we did not want to just give it away though we were ready to do just that.

The night before we were to load the trailer someone we did not know called and asked if it were still available. They bought it and picked it up that evening. Now if I had been thinking about it anyone knows we needed the unit until the night before we loaded so why would God sell it before then. He supplies and knows the when of the need. Now as to the excess bread and fish, He also often does that just to show us His love. Indeed that move went quite well except that I could not find work when we arrived in Oregon. We had the funds to make ends meet so we would go out looking for work in the morning and then do family things in the afternoon and evening.

This went on for some time and we soon realized that we were having a nice family vacation on the side. Again, I make this sound smooth and happy in hindsight, knowing that all worked out well, but the worry wart that raged within - do not assume this calmness of heart was present in that moment. I share this to those that might be in a time of need and be fretting over the situation. God knows the need better than you do, just know that you are doing His will and allow Him to abide by His own timetable - your timetable probably would not work well. Worry is the natural thing to do but it is oh so unnecessary.

No selling a refrigerator and giving us some good family time was not the feeding of thousands, but if He can feed the thousands He most certainly feed the need that you might have.

What a miracle!

He sent the people away and then told the disciples to go to Bethsaida while He went into the mountain to pray. There might be application for pastors in there somewhere. A terribly hard day of ministering and the next thing they do is take a day off. Christ went to pray.

Time off is not wrong, but maybe the prayer would be a good activity for some of it. Often after a day's ministry and seeing the need of people prayer is the only thing that comes to mind to do. There is little else you can do after presenting truth to people. Pray that the Spirit will be able to use it in their life. I trust this is an integrated part of every pastor's life. No matter how great you are in the pulpit, it will be worthless unless the Spirit is involved in the listener's life.

Can you hear the grumbling in the boat? Ya, last time we did this at least He was with us to calm the waters, but now we are out here alone and not making much headway and He is back there where it is quiet and ... oh woe is we!

47 And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. 48 And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.

Yep, we are working like slaves and He is out for a walk! Can you not hear it? At least today's Christians would be having a huge pity party.

When in the Navy we were at sea when we ran into a Typhoon. We had to head right into it to stay afloat; as we battled the headwinds we lost ground. We were in the storm for about 24 hours and when we exited the storm we were actually eighteen miles behind where we started. Headwinds were not fun to row against for the disciples. Kind of like asking kids to walk to camp rather than ride the bus.

Christ could have made it simpler and asked them to stay where they were on land that night but no He had to send them off to a long night of rowing against the wind.

Not bad enough that they are struggling against the wind and waves, but He is going to walk on over to Bethsaida and let them struggle. ("he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.")

Well the natural question is why was He going to pass them by? Since we are not told we cannot say for sure. The application might run along the line of when you are in deep trouble, He is only an arm stretch away, we need not worry for He is there and He is going to help if there is need over and above our own abilities.

It might be assumed that the Lord had some other business that needed caring for and He was on His way to do it. We might also remember that when we are in trouble that He might be helping someone in more trouble than we. Can you imagine the troubles that God is taking care of in any given moment of the day or night? You may not be the only fish in the tank you know - we often think that we are the only one that needs His loving care.

Several translations show the same thought as the King James - He was going to pass them by.

Why did He intend to pass them by? Easy as why did the chicken cross the road. They both wanted to get to the other side. Why stop and row with the mumblesome apostles when you can have a nice quiet walk.

Mark is the only one that mentions this. Over and above what I mentioned, it may well have been Mark's impression that is mentioned not Christ's motive, though I think both concur. It is of interest that John mentions that the boat was immediately at the other side and Matthew and Mark do not.

Mark adds the comment about them not considering the miracle of the loaves, indicating that this may have been a miracle to get their attention.

Why was He going to pass by. I suspect He wanted to arrive in a short time. Even when He went with them they were there instantly. I hate to bring up His humanity, but He had had a long day and may just have wanted to get some rest, but took the opportunity to teach along the way. Matthew mentions the forth watch which would indicate very far into the night. Day was from sunup to sunset while the night was divided into four sections. The fourth watch would have been the hours before sunup.

49 But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: 50 For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. 51 And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. 52 For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened. 53 And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore. 54 And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him, 55 And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was. 56 And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.

A number of items:

a. They thought He was a spirit. Did spirits appear in this manner in Christ's day? Do they appear in this manner today? There is no evidence that would prove that spirits can be seen today, indeed they are spirits - not visible to the physical world. I assume that the apostles were simply reacting in the manner of the day with the false thinking of the day, that spirits could be seen.

This is not Scriptural proof that the spirit world can be seen in this physical world. If we could see spirits, then we could see God for He is everywhere.

b. Another miracle occurred. The wind ceased which amazed them. Now these are the

gentlemen who just picked up the excess of the fishes/loaves, these are the gentlemen who witnessed the demoniac delivered, and these are the gentlemen who had witnessed miracle after miracle, yet "they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered."

Do you witness miracles in your life and still become amazed at the works of God. Probably we all do, we know what He can do, but just stand in awe of His works. However, I am not sure this is what Mark was getting at. Couple this quote with the fact that their hearts were hardened and you come to the idea that they were blown away by this miracle - the others had been observed, but had not sunk into their reality. They had not yet grasped the total concept of who and what Christ was.

c. "For they considered not the miracle of the loaves:" Now, let us see here. They saw the little pittance of food that was available, they started passing it out and there was enough to feed thousands of people. They then have to go through the area picking up the leftovers to stick in the microwave the next day, and picked up baskets full of food. Now, what is there not to consider? How do you go through what they went through that day and not consider the ramifications of what had happened. Did they think this was normal everyday occurrence in Israel? How did they not consider this? I have no answer at this point in time.

Christ is known as well as His works. People start thronging Him immediately. We see that they sought to "touch if it were but the border of his garment" which may be from word passing along of the woman who was healed in this manner. News traveled fast even without the local televisions covering the story and without telephones.

People know of Christ and they knew of the miracles that were associated with Him. Imagine yourself with terminal cancer and you heard of one that could perform miracles of healing. A visit might well come to mind.

It is of no small note that the general public gave more heed to the Lord's abilities than the apostles. They were shocked at the miracles even now after observing many of them, yet the public had only heard of them and were thronging Him.

It could be argued that all too often the world sees more in the spiritual abilities of God than His own people. Not that the lost necessarily see God in a correct light, but they often view Him as the omnipotent powerful being He is while Christians often trim Him down to fit into their little weak box so that they can live their lives as they will.

APPLICATION:

1. In verse 3 we read "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary," Constable relates that the Jews of this time normally called the son by the father's name or in this case it would be recorded the son of Joseph. Constable suggests by this terminology "son of Mary" they were insulting the Lord by questioning His father, indeed suggesting that His father was not known and that He was illegitimate.

When detractors strike out at you, ignore them as best you can and continue on with your ministry as the Lord did. It is very difficult to ignore someone saying wrong about you or your family, but it is just that - someone saying things. If you have lived your life well before the world most will understand that it is falsehood and to be ignored. Those that listen would probably listen to anything brought against you so nothing you can say will probably change their mind.

It is God that we answer to not the human beings that seem to bother us most.

2. There is such a contrast in this section of belief and unbelief. The people in Christ's hometown rejected Him because they knew Him from childhood and the apostles rejected Him because they did not know Him, while the public seemed quite accepting of Him based upon his miracles.

It seems to me that there were many that followed Him to hear the teaching while others to receive the healing. His teaching was indeed new, different and powerful. Why would people not flock to hear Him. In the matter of course, those that were healed might well have become listeners as well.

Even today there is so much unbelief, yet there are some that are interested and listen to belief. It is the few that respond that we preach to the many for. If we do not preach to the many, the few will not hear, nor will they turn to the Lord.

Verse 6 mentions "And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching." Christ Himself marveled because of the unbelief, yet He continued preaching the message that they needed to hear.

The term translated "marveled" can be translated "wonder" and by implication admire or admiration. The unbelief where He was known was not seemingly anticipated, but He marveled at it. One might suspect that He found their unbelief something to be admired in that they were sticking to their unbelief in spite of the miracles and wonder of others. They did not believe, and they were not about to make out like they did to their benefit.

Honesty is to be admired in the lost while it should be expected in the saved.

3. Mark mentions "but to go shod with sandals: and, said he, put not on two coats." While Matthew 9.10 mentions "no wallet for your journey neither two coats nor shoes, nor staff:" One seems to say no shoes while the other seems to say shoes. So which is it? Most suggest that Matthew was listing the no spare items while common sense would suggest they wear shoes.

When you come to seeming contradictions in the Word it is always good to read the context first, then consider the different perspective. These two items will normally take care of seeming contradictions.

The real point of contradictions is that there are no contradictions in the Bible or it is not the

Bible that we believe in. God's word is truth, thus there is no error, no contradictions, and no area that is not true. With this basis then contradictions become questions to be answered with study.

4. The idea of no extra stuff to carry was to speak of the immediacy of the message as well as the provision of God for His servants. If they had need the people were to provide that need via God's leading.

Not too many pastors or missionaries living that one out today are there. Some of course take their message wherever God leads with what provision they have. Most missionary organizations follow this concept - well not really - most require you have all your outgoing expenses, all your stuff crated for shipping, your retirement program set up and being funded and well everything else that might be needed in this life.

When I read missionary prayer letters and missionary speakers I really wonder if they have read the gospels. The Lord spoke these words to the twelve of course and that is where it ends for most people. However we take that same "Great" commission that was given to the twelve and apply it to ourselves, but we do not apply the rest of the story to ourselves - "Oh that was only for the apostles." Well maybe the great commission was to ONLY the twelve as well - NOT!

Yes, God wants us to do all that we can for provision, but just what is it that we NEED? Consider what you really need to go about the Lord's business. If He can provide and He has called then consider making your move and rely upon Him that sends.

When we were called to live on a very minimal missionary support we knew that it was going to be up to God to supply the difference between what we would receive and what we would need to live. There were times when the need seemed to be bigger than the provision, however there was never a time we did not eat. There was a time when we lived on eggs. A dear friend of the ministry donated cases and cases of eggs and we literally ate eggs three meals a day for a month or two. That was God's provision and for it we were terribly thankful.

It was not what do you want for supper, it was how do you want your eggs? God does not call us to live high on the hog He expects us to live on what He provides, be it bacon or eggs and not necessarily both at the same time.

It was around this same time when we accepted the interim pastor-ship of a small church. The head deacon asked us to stay for a business meeting. One of the topics for discussion was my salary.

When discussing my coming as interim one of the board, a doctor, asked what pay I was expecting. I told him honestly that we were there to serve and that pay did not enter my mind in the discussion. He quickly quipped, "Well then we won't pay you anything!" To which I replied, "That would be fine with me."

In the congregational meeting there was little discussion. The deacon stated, "The board wants to

give Stan \$1000 per month for serving us." He then called for a vote that was unanimous. That was two and a half times our support level, which we seldom received. We had been averaging well under our level of support so this salary was almost three times our monthly income.

When I told the deacon that was too much that half that would be more than adequate he said that it was settled. From eating eggs three times a day to having an excess of income - God provides in HIS way, not ours and we can enjoy the experience along the way without expense.

5. The shaking off of dust was typical of Jews coming back into Jewish territory from a Gentile territory. It was a symbolic gesture to let everyone know they were back on holy ground.

In the case of the disciples it was to signify that the message had been rejected and that these people were Christ rejecters. Today we tend to want those Christ rejecters to come into the church to be entertained with everyone else. Christ set forth a principle here of separation from the lost, not fraternization.

Lost people are against all that we stand for, they are against our Lord, they are against the principles that we live by. Why would we want them in our churches to be part of our worship services?

In a word if your church is seeker friendly it is full of lost people who are against all that your church should be doing. This ought not to be so.

6. The disciples were to live with someone in the town where they were ministering. This speaks to the hospitality of the saints. Today we need a healthy dose of this. Missionaries often have to fend for themselves between meetings when they are out on the road. An established missionary has supporters that will house them but new missionaries often have no contacts or friends where they can stay between meetings so are left to their own devices.

When on deputation I found that most of my meetings were in the mid-west and I was on the West Coast. When I left for my first month plus of meetings I had no idea where I was going to spend time between meetings because none of the pastors that scheduled me offered housing.

I left home planning to camp out in rest and camp areas. This really did not bother me other than a verse that kept coming forward in my mind. I Timothy 3.2 "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;"

One must wonder where this "hospitality" requirement has gone in today's church. Yes, times have changed. Yes, we must be careful, but we must also abide by the teachings of Scripture that tell us to be hospitable.

If you are not going to make arrangements for speakers in homes, be sure to accommodate them within the church in some manner. In most churches there is a little room that could house a bed and a chair for the itinerant speaker to spend his time.

7. We need to make a point of clarification relating to the sending of the twelve. Matthew specifies that they were to go to the house of Israel and not to the Gentiles nor to the Samaritans. "...go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans:" yet Luke and Mark leave out this point.

The leaving out of the point leads one to wonder at the purpose of this omission. We know that all three writers were inspired by the same Holy Spirit thus we can know it was not something done to deceive nor to mislead. Since all three were writing to different audiences we must assume that the readers had the information they needed. The omission seems to speak to the idea that these principles were for all that would go to the lost. Matthew knew that they were sent to the Jews but Mark and Luke knew that the lost of all nations needed this message. It is also possible that Mark and Luke were not aware of this specific command of the Lord to go only to the house of Israel.

This also gives credence to the idea that Christ and His message was at first to the Jews alone and that only after they had rejected Him did He turn his message toward the Gentiles.

8. Christ sent the twelve out two by two. The purpose of the coupling was not given but one might surmise that it was for mutual support and encouragement. When visiting door to door years ago we found that often one person could speak with the stranger better than the other. There was a mutual desire, but often one would come forth as the one the stranger would relate to.

Often there is also a matter of two thinking better than one. Often when my wife and I witness to someone she will come up with texts to back up what I am saying or vice versa.

Having someone with you in ministry is always an asset. The pastor is fortunate that has someone to minister with him whether an assistant or a layman.

There is also the matter of safety. The roads were not all that safe and there is always safety in numbers. Today we have a society that is full of dishonest evil people and having two will give witness if something goes wrong. We are to be careful of situations that could draw criticism upon Christ and His church.

9. The term translated "power" in verse seven is not the dynamite type power, but rather an authority over. It is a general term relating to having power over something. It is not the explosive power, but the authority to blow as in the one that has their finger over the button. The apostles did not have the power or force to drive out the spirits, but they had the authority to command them to leave. The thought seems to be that the power they had was power to call for action from the Spirit that empowered them.

We have the authority to follow the Lord and to do great things for Him, but it is not through our force or power, but through the authority we are given by him to go forth preaching and making disciples.

10. In speaking of the sorrow that Herod had over Salome's request Constable observes. "The only other time Mark used the Greek word *perilupos*, translated "very sorry" or "greatly distressed," was in 14:34 where it describes Jesus' agony in Gethsemane."

This speaks to the great remorse that believers often come to when they have made a terrible mistake. We often act or decide things on the spur of the moment as did Herod, and we often regret that act/decision just as quickly.

This is good. The act or decision is not good, but the remorse is something that should follow for the believer. If it does not follow there is something spiritually wrong with the person's life.

Remorse is the natural response to doing wrong even if it is spur of the moment wrong.

The point is that we must live with that decision or the consequences of the act. We cannot just ignore our wrong, we must accept the consequences and move on the best we can. God expects us to be accountable for how we live our lives.

This might relate to a wrong that we have done to a fellow church member or family member. The wrong is done, the next item of action is doing the right thing. One must not ignore the responsibility to care for the injustice. It is your responsibility, not the one that you have wronged.

Many are the parishioner/pastor that has spoken with a sharp tongue and left the resulting cut bleeding not caring for the wound. Husbands and wives, you might want to take this responsibility as well. Do not wait for time to heal the wound, care for it as you ought.

11. There might be interest in why the people were seated in sections. Constable relates that some feel Christ was just following the thought of teachers of His day lining up the people in rows so that they were somewhat organized and could learn. Others suggest that it was a division to illustrate the Israelites around the tabernacle when they were camped. Neither have any real validity from the passage.

There is a simple organizational thought. It would have made it easier to know which folks had been fed and which had not, as well as it would have made it easier for the apostles to move in and out among the people to feed them. Constable correctly observes that the later is probably a poor picture of the Israelites since most of Christ's listeners were probably not believers.

It is not overly conceivable that they could have fed that many people as they pass hotdogs down the row at the ball games. There would have been havoc had they just started passing food around.

The simple act of organizing the folks into groups would be comforting for the masses. They would have been reassured that everyone was going to be fed. The calmness of the crowd is of near miraculous proportions in and of itself. Masses of hungry folks sitting around late in the day miles from provision could have made for an ugly crowd if they knew there was food up there in

front.

Maybe even more to the point might be the fact that with this organization the crowd could personally view this miracle. They could know that ALL were fed not just those around them.

Several authors mention that the people were as garden beds spread out before Christ, a nice picture to compliment the thought of the fields being white unto harvest. Christ's central thought and ministry was to bring the harvest in.

12. The fact that the apostles SERVED the people should not be missed. Often church leadership views themselves as LEADERS and none other. This ought not to be so. Church leaders are servants first and they lead by example not by motivation, force or coercion.

Leaders serve Christ as His underling and ought to serve their congregations as well. Anyone that is more than a servant is not doing well for himself, his congregation nor his Lord.

These men were to go on to change the world with their message and ministry, yet they were also servants of the people. Do not miss that message no matter your position in the church.

13. The walking on water has a lot of questions to me. Why did He not just go with them - He wanted to teach them. Okay then why did he WALK on the water rather than skim the surface - skimming would be unnatural. Okay then why did He not will Himself to the other side - hummm, we probably will never know other than to be assured that He had a specific purpose in the training of the apostles.

This is just another time when God limited Himself to work with man. He could have done this in many other ways, but He chose to walk to teach his disciples as He willed.

God limited Himself in time to create man, He limited Himself to manhood to save man and He has limited Himself to a glorified body to associate with man.

14. Matthew 14.28ff shows the incident when Peter went out upon the water to be with the Lord but started sinking. Constable raises the question of why Mark did not record this if Peter was the source of Mark's information. He answers this by suggesting that Peter in his humility did not relate this to Mark. It may be more to the point that Peter was embarrassed by his lack of faith and did not want others to know - many are the explanations possible, but the fact remains that we do not know because we are not told.

It could and should be suggested that Peter did not give Mark his information, and that Mark did not record it because he did not know it. It could also be suggested that the Spirit just did not move Mark to record what he knew from whatever source.

It might be suggested that Constable, and others, find little indicators as this to back their assumption that Peter influenced the book of Mark which is not really factual but assumptive.

15. In verse three the term "carpenter" is used of the Lord. He was man; He labored with his back and hands; He thought those base thoughts of how do I accomplish this job; He sweat from His labor; His back hurt from the labor; It hurt terribly when a splinter slid under His fingernail; His hands were sore from the tools wearing on the skin; and He suffered all those other hardships that we all suffer when we labor at our jobs.

He knows what it is like to have to get up in the morning at five and to get on the bike and go out for a ride to gain exercise. He knew what it was like to eat breakfast knowing a long day of labor was ahead. He knew the joy of breaking for lunch. He knew the joy of stopping work for supper. He knew the joy of finishing a job and knowing it was done right. He knew the hardship of getting up on His one day off and going to synagogue instead of sleeping in.

He was as we, He worked for a living. He had a trade. He labored for his hire as all of us ought to labor. We have no free pass due to the desire to stay home and take it easy.

Not only did He know these things as man on earth, but I am sure that he remembers them well when we are on the way to work wondering if He knows what He is putting us through as His children. Definitely He knows our trials and our hard times because He knew them Himself in the past.

For months I had a pity party all for myself having to go into a dead end low paying job day after day. The boredom was great and the labor was hard. One day I realized no matter what I was doing, janitoring or preaching His Word, I was doing His will and His work and that I should rejoice in either. As I began praying each morning that He would bless my labors for Him my pity party seemed more and more ridiculous and my life became much more meaningful.

We tend to focus on the negative of our lives and make ourselves miserable instead of focusing on God and His work in our lives.

Standing waiting for Target to open this morning I looked out at the freeway and all the traffic; all those thousands of people headed off to work or where ever they were headed. As I watched I realized how fortunate I was to be able to retire and be free to go out for a cup of coffee and study for an hour or two instead of going into work. God has truly been good to me in this respect. I never dreamed when in ministry that I would ever be able to retire and spend my time as I wished yet that eight years at the janitor endeavor (and later as maintenance supervisor) prepared the way to this time of writing and ministry through the web.

He truly knows what He is doing when He leads us into those seemingly dead ends. Just enjoy them for He has something for you to gain through the experience.

16. It is said that a man who does not teach his son a trade teaches him robbery. Maybe not at the back end of a gun but living off of others is the same thing as robbery.

I fear our society or more specifically government has taught millions robbery through the social "safety nets" that social services have set up across the nation. We have generational welfare

families because the system taught each new generation how to live within the system to give the system basis for their work.

Society is right to take care of those that have need, but society has also trained millions to milk the system for every free dollar that they can. The system has created a generation of "you owe me folks" that seek equality with the taxpayers they live off of.

The presidential campaign reeks of future communism. The candidates promise more and more for the common man on the backs of the rich and famous. We condemned that in Russia, Cuba and China yet we are racing toward it in our own country under a different name. When will the American public realize we are becoming Russia by the day?

Work is honorable and right in the eyes of the Lord.

MARK CHAPTER SEVEN

At this point John adds a lengthy portion. It contains a rebuke of the people by the Lord in that those that had eaten of His miracle were seeking Him for food not spiritual blessing. John mentions in 6.26 "Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves and were filled. Work not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you:" He continues to reveal who He is and what His purpose is.

They sought an earthly king and He was only claiming to be God. They either took Him for a nut case or something spiritual that they did not want any part of. Not unlike many Christians today, wanting things of this world rather than things of the next.

Christ declaring Himself to be from heaven in the middle of the synagogue at Capernaum would not have set well with the Jews.

All right, in this passage we have the Biblical basis for what your mother always told you - "Go wash your hands before you eat. This imperative was tattooed across our brains when we were kids and now we know why.

7:1 Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. 2 And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault. 3 For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash [their] hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. 4 And [when they come] from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, [as] the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.

Mark 6.53 mentions that they were in Gennesaret. Gennesaret is a town on the northwest coast of the Sea of Galilee.

The term translated "Pharisees" is a transliteration of the Greek term meaning separatist and "scribe" comes from the term from which we gain our word Grammar. Scribe is the word used for a secretary. Thus we see the Pharisees and their scribes coming to the Lord. I would guess that the scribes were a group to be avoided as well as the Pharisees. We are not told how many were there nor if each of the Pharisees had a scribe of their own or what the ratio might have been.

A little speculation might lead one to think they might have been an organized group of some sort that may even have had their own power of sorts and may even have had their own agenda, or may have been following the Pharisees agenda.

Rather reminds me of myself though I am both rolled into one. I am my own scribe but I bring my computer with me to set things down for myself. This makes for a better relationship since I cannot argue with myself. Well come to think of it I do that as well.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia follows the Scribes from the Old Testament where they were students and teachers of the Law, into the New Testament where they seemed to be similar in nature. They were the ones that taught the Law. Easton's Bible Dictionary states that they were a part of the Pharisees thus a close tie would have been theirs as well as a sharing of agendas.

The Pharisees were full of themselves and were heavy into their interpretations of the Word. In fact their interpretations became their word and they followed the teaching from their word rather than the Word itself. Somewhat akin to the person who determines that smoking is wrong, but fails to give a Biblical principle to back up their teaching - they just proclaim their teaching that it is wrong.

In the case of the Pharisees they had their laws of purification, which were loosely based on the Word. They came to confront the Lord based on their teaching rather than upon the Word. This is not uncommon in our own day.

Years ago I was confronted for my "spiritual" problems. When I asked what they were I was told that I wore cowboy boots and sweaters to church rather than wearing normal shoes and a suit. Since I could not afford a suit and the boots were what I had in my life - only pair of footwear - I really cracked up at their confrontation. So serious were these men who were so concerned with my spiritual condition - I would guess that the Pharisees were just as concerned, though we already know they conspired to have him dead so this could well be part of their conspiracy.

Now note that these were not just any Pharisees; they were the ones from Jerusalem. When I worked at J.C. Penney the district manager would come sailing into town. Normally we had a few days warning so that we could get the store into shape. They were coming on serious business and so were the Pharisees.

Matthew Henry has a section relating to the washings of the Pharisees which might be of interest at this point.

"Now in this passage we may observe.

"I. What the tradition of the elders was: by it all were enjoined to wash their hands before meat; a cleanly custom, and no harm in it; and yet as such to be over-nice in it discovers too great a care about the body, which is of the earth; but they placed religion in it, and would not leave it indifferent, as it was in its own nature; people were at their liberty to do it or not to do it; but they interposed their authority, and commanded all to do it upon pain of excommunication; this they kept up as a tradition of the elders. The Papists pretend to a zeal for the authority and antiquity of the church and its canons, and talk much of councils and fathers, when really it is nothing but a zeal for their own wealth, interest, and dominion, that governs them; and so it was with the Pharisees.

"We have here an account of the practice of the Pharisees and all the Jews, Mar_7:3, Mar_7:4. 1. They washed their hands oft; they washed them, pugme[̄]; the critics find a great deal of work

about that word, some making it to denote the frequency of their washing (so we render it); others think it signifies the pains they took in washing their hands; they washed with great care, they washed their hands to their wrists (so some); they lifted up their hands when they were wet, that the water might run to their elbows. 2. They particularly washed before they ate bread; that is, before they sat down to a solemn meal; for that was the rule; they must be sure to wash before they ate the bread on which they begged a blessing. "Whosoever eats the bread over which they recite the benediction, Blessed be he that produceth bread, must wash his hands before and after," or else he was thought to be defiled. 3. They took special care, when they came in from the markets, to wash their hands; from the judgment-halls, so some; it signifies any place of concourse where there were people of all sorts, and, it might be supposed, some heathen or Jews under a ceremonial pollution, by coming near to whom they thought themselves polluted; saying, Stand by thyself, come not near me, I am holier than thou, Isa_65:5. They say, The rule of the rabbies was - That, if they washed their hands well in the morning, the first thing they did, it would serve for all day, provided they kept alone; but, if they went into company, they must not, at their return, either eat or pray till they had washed their hands; thus the elders gained a reputation among the people for sanctity, and thus they exercised and kept up an authority over their consciences. 4. They added to this the washing of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels, which they suspected had been made use of by heathens, or persons polluted; nay, and the very tables on which they ate their meat. There were many cases in which, by the law of Moses, washings were appointed; but they added to them, and enforced the observation of their own impositions as much as of God's institutions."

The verb used here is passive indicating that something outside of the Pharisees was at work bringing them into the situation. This might be that the Sanhedrim sent them or if not sent they were probably there due to their common effort to kill the Lord.

It would seem that they were driven by something or someone to their meeting with Christ. Their destiny with the Lord that they rejected was set by the coldness of their own hearts, those hearts that had heard of and possibly even witnessed some of the miracles done for their benefit.

Just a side note, the term translated "elder" is the Greek term that is used of the term elder in the church later in the New Testament epistles - someone that is a leader, and one that proclaims traditions. This would indicate that the elder in the church has some amount of clout when it comes to how the church is to be run; however that power is to be used in line with the teachings of Scripture, not the idea of elders as seems to be the case here.

The Elders and Pharisees seemed to have interpreted the Scriptures and made application and instituted application rather than Scriptural principles. Not that anyone does this today.

As you read this passage one must wonder if one or more of the elders were obsessive-compulsive in the area of keeping clean. What a life they must have lived to be constantly ruled by such laws and observances. (An obsessive-compulsive is a person who constantly cleans or washes due to a compulsion to do so. They might wash their hands numerous times before feeling that they are clean.)

As an introduction to the next portion I would like to go back to the 1950's and the church of that time. The fundamental churches were full of godly men who were doing their very best to teach the Word of God and they taught some "societal" principles. They saw the 40's change into the 50's and that meant the plain and common look of cars and fashion was changing. Things started looking sharper and classier in the 50's and these men saw the "new" look of women's fashion and makeup as something that was not proper for the Christian woman.

They felt that Christians ought to be different than the world and so we should, and they took the Biblical principles of not being of the world and not looking like a hooker and taught that makeup, ear rings etc. were wrong for the Christian woman.

Personally I do not feel that this is a bad principle even in our own day. A woman's beauty as it was given by God, not Max Factor.

The problem that came in the 50's is that the "application" became the teaching rather than the Scripture. Many women accepted this teaching, but many of the teenagers did not. The women knew that the application was just that, application from the Word; however the teens often missed this connection and saw it as a dumb rule.

My sister-in-law often tells of wearing ear-rings to church and at the door the pastor asked her when she was going to start wearing them in her nose. Not the way to win friends and influence people, nor Christian youth that feel you are teaching rules rather than the Bible.

I might add that most modern pastors/teachers miss the point since I constantly hear them railing against the preachers of the 50's and their list of rules. No, it was not a list of rules, but principles from the Word of God. Today we have the result of a generation of ignoring the Scripture because they don't like the "rules."

Today we have a Christian society that cannot be distinguished from the world because we look like, act like, and for all practical purposes are the world - we just call our worldly lifestyle "Christian."

5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? 6 He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with [their] lips, but their heart is far from me. 7 Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching [for] doctrines the commandments of men. 8 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, [as] the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. 9 And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. 10 For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: 11 But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, [It is] Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; [he shall be free]. 12 And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; 13 Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

The term translated "tradition" in verse five means "transmission" or as it is used a precept or tradition handed down. Standing at the singing/playing of the Hallelujah chorus is something that is handed down to us from years past as a tradition.

Mark correctly records their question - it was based on the precepts handed down from the elders, and in all likelihood from elders that were long gone from the scene.

We won't dwell on the accusations of the contemporary music group of today and their saying that "Traditional worship" is traditional - it is to some extent but traditions are not wrong - only if they are based on incorrect information. The elders of Israel had left the Word and were following the interpretation.

Traditional worship is usually and hopefully based on good Scriptural principles and good sound lyrics for the hymns. If the style does not fit into those parameters then it is tradition in the bad sense. If the music and methods are correct and true, then it is a tradition in a good sense.

The contemporary crowd do not realize it but they are stuck in tradition as well, they are all doing it the same way and little has changed from the beginning of the movement as to lyrics and method - as to method most anything goes but for the most part it is quite similar from church to church - traditional contemporary you might say.

In verse six Christ uses the term "hypocrite" which means an actor or one that assumes a role other than who they really are. These folks are on the surface honoring God but underneath are as corrupt as can be. No, that doesn't sound like any Christians today does it?

Next time you are sitting in church listening so piously to the message, where is your mind, where are your thoughts leading you? Our own piety would probably be questioned by the Lord at times as He did the Jews and rightly so.

Imagine the Jewish leaders and their feelings at this moment. They are there to spring their trap on him and take His life and he sees them and tells them they are hypocrites - they are there to cause His death yet ask questions that appear to be honest inquiries. They are hypocrites on multiple levels. They are there to cause his death but are innocent in their approach, they are supposed to be spiritual, yet they are lost and walking against the law, and they purport to follow the law, yet they follow the laws of man – a triple threat they were.

We have a little hint of the qualities of Scripture in this verse. "Written" is a passive perfect indicating something that was done from outside of the Word's writing to cause its coming into existence and that the setting down of the Word was completed (that portion of it) in the past and that it will endure into the future to completion.

A little information on the perfect tense of the Greek language: "The basic thought of the perfect tense is that the progress of an action has been completed and the results of the action are continuing on, in full effect. In other words, the progress of the action has reached its culmination and the finished results are now in existence." From:

http://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/nouns1.htm

Now, it is of interest that The Old Testament has this clearly appointed pedigree, yet the King James only folks would argue that the Hebrew is not to be trusted but that the King James version is the only one that is to be trusted. Christ Himself told us in Mark that the Old Testament or at the very least this prophet was at His own time set and continuing on into the future as written, not to change - it was complete at the time of writing and not open for discussion or editing by people under the auspices of King James.

Christ sums it up quite well by using Isaiah 29.13 to rebuke the listener. We see in Matthew 15.8-9 "This people honoureth me with their lips; But their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men."

Now the term translated "corban" means treasury or the place where the gift boxes were contained. It was also that which a person set aside for God and His future reception. The Jews were telling their parents that all they had was dedicated to God thus when mom and dad had a need they had nothing to give them or assist them with. Neat trick if you can do it but I rather think that God knew of their little ploy and Christ smacks them up along side the head with it as the proof of their hypocrisy.

Not only does He call them hypocrites, but he adds to the end of His comments to them "and many such like things do ye." Rather well put them in their place and most likely added to their severe dislike for Him. Oh well, I'm sure the Lord was disappointed - NOT! He knew them and their hearts and informed them just in case they didn't know themselves as He did.

There is a principle for life hidden in the account relating to caring for your father and mother. The Jewish leaders knew it was right and proper to assist their parents for they were avoiding taking care of their responsibility by attributing all they had to "corban."

As your parents age, you need to begin to look toward the day that they have needs that they cannot take care of themselves. With people living longer lives it is even more important.

Not all will need care, but many may. Years ago we lived across the street from a couple that was in their 90's and still living on their own. He mowed the lawn, and was even known to get on the roof for repairs. On the other hand many are in a care home by their 70's.

The point - care for their needs as they come along. Even if they are in a care facility you have a responsibility to visit them and see to their emotional needs for family. My wife did nursing home care for a time and many families would set their parents up in a care home and that was the last they would see them. Out of site and out of mind. Not much different than these leaders that have basically told their parents that they were out of luck.

14 And when he had called all the people [unto him], he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one [of you], and understand: 15 There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can

defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. 16 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. 17 And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable. 18 And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, [it] cannot defile him; 19 Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? 20 And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: 23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

The Lord gives what is termed a parable. He tells the crowd that what you take in does not defile but that which comes out of the mouth defiles. His explanation to the apostles was plain and clear. If you eat anything it will not defile because it goes through the digestive system, however the utterings of the mouth and the musings of the mind produce many things one of which is evil. This seems, in my mind at least, to be another slam at the Jewish leaders. They worry seriously about unclean vessels and hands, yet they seem not to worry about the emanations of their heart - cutting off the parents.

The mindset of the leaders must have been really set in stone by this time. Not only were they hypocrites but they are evil speakers/livers. We must not be too hard on them because throughout church history we have had leaders both political and religious that were bent on the same lifestyle bringing shame to the God that they purported to serve.

The apostles still do not follow the parables for they ask the Lord for the meaning of this one as well.

It is of import to note that this was labeled a parable thus it must be interpreted as such. If you took this literally you could come to the conclusion that all the alcohol, food and whatever that you want to eat/drink would be okay and it would not harm you. You could also come to the conclusion that poison could not hurt you. This is not what Christ was saying, He spoke in general terms, a comparison of the mouth and the heart, not a detailed medical study on the digestive system.

There is a truth here that the body actually purifies that which enters the mouth. The body takes out and uses that which is good for the body and the rest is waste. The heart has no such purification process. If there is good there good will come forth, if there is evil there it will come forth.

This may be an indicator of the life of a person - if evil is coming from his heart and mouth then you know what is inside. If good is the result then there probably has been a work of the Spirit within. I would guess that for many years people would have figured me for lost - I was a swearing sailor for many years after I was saved. I had no discipling, nor training of any sort. The pastor led me to the Lord and I was off to the Navy with no idea of what the Christian life was about.

When I finally, many years later, started going to church and learning of the Christian life I took care of the heart and the emanations of my mouth finally caught up with my spiritual character. There needs to be a tie between the soul and spirit in purifying the life.

Robertson ties this passage to Peter and his experience in Acts 10.14-16. This assumes that Peter is guiding Mark's thoughts and writing in a major way which has never been proven, but widely assumed. I will leave that study to others that I trust will add some proof to their suppositions. Peter MAY have influenced Mark but then again, maybe he did not. The two passages do compliment one another in your Bible study, but do not make too much of Peter's having made it so.

Vincent correctly draws the principle from the two passages that "Christ asserts that Levitical uncleanness, such as eating with unwashed hands, is of small importance compared with moral uncleanness" In short the washing of vessels and hands might be a good thing, but the moral cleanliness is much more important and to be minded. If you want to do both, then feel free, but be sure if you do the lesser to be sure to do the other.

24 And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know [it]: but he could not be hid. 25 For a [certain] woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet: 26 The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. 27 But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast [it] unto the dogs. 28 And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. 29 And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. 30 And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

Before looking into this passage a quick note about the swine herders in the account of the demoniac is needed. There is a lot of discussion about whether the swine herders might have been Jewish. I recently was in a discussion on an Internet forum on the subject. One man entering into the thread quite late stated flatly that this was an area of ten gentile cities. No proof, only a statement as if it were fact and all that were involved should take it as truth.

This account may give indication that in fact Christ was in Gadara to reach Jews. In our present account a gentile comes seeking help for her daughter and Christ rejects her plea due to the fact that the children should first be filled, speaking of the Jews. Unless He was being untruthful with the woman this would indicate that he was not in Gadara to reach Gentiles.

Matthew records an even colder welcome to this Gentile woman in 15.23 Where it says "But he answered her not a word." It goes on to state clearly "But he answered and said, I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This is even a clearer statement of His intention in ministry.

The apostles ask Christ to send the woman away because she was causing such a stir. Such compassion they did show to one in need. Gill gives the apostles some latitude by saying that

they wanted Christ to grant her wish so that she would leave, though the text does not seem to grant such latitude.

The woman's answer changes Christ's mind. Matthew mentions that it was her faith not the words presented though her words depicted that faith clearly. By speaking of herself as a dog of the masters she was placing herself under the umbrella of faith the same as the Jewish people. The Old Testament saint came by faith the same as we. They responded in faith to the revelation that they had.

The Old Testament set forth a method by which a Gentile could come to the Jewish fold and become for all practical purposes a Jew. The sad part of this provision was that the Jews saw their God as "THEIR'S" and did not share Him with others. This is not unlike the church of our own day and the lack of missionary work at present.

Let me give a thought in relation to this account of the dog under the table. We recently became possessed by a little puppy that was given to us by a woman who could no longer care for him. He has taken over the house, it is his and he allows us to remain only to feed and play with his royal being. He was not in the house but a few days when he found the accidental dropping of a piece of food.

It was only a short time before we found a puppy intertwined in our feet and ankles looking for such tiny morsels as might fall. Christ's illustration for the woman was so very vivid to any dog owner. Her reply also seems to hint of coming from one that knew the actions of dogs.

Mark mentions that the daughter was vexed with an unclean spirit while Matthew mentions that it was a devil or demon.

Just a little hint as to the power of the Lord - He willed the demon be removed and it was so.

Tyre and Sidon are on the coast of Israel. Tyre is northwest of the Sea of Galilee and Sidon is about twenty miles north of Tyre. Tyre is also an area between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean on some maps while other maps label this area as Phoenicia. Robertson terms the woman as Greek by religion, Syrian by tongue and Phoenician by nationality/race.

Barnes points out that "Greek" probably is a more general term for all non-Jews. To the Jew there were Jews and Greeks. The woman may have been loosely a follower of the Greek religious thought, yet it would seem that she was in the process of change in her dealings with Christ and her faith in Him.

The verb relating to the demon having left the daughter is a perfect tense indicating that it was a done deal and all was well with the daughter. When the mother arrived home she found the demon gone, again a perfect tense, and the daughter lying in bed. Presumably from the fatigue of having had the demon in control of her life. "Laid" is a perfect passive, which would suggest that she was there due to some force from outside. Fatigue would fit the situation.

What a wonderful day that must have been for the mother, to have brought about the healing of her child and probably from the tone of the text have found spiritual change in her life.

31 And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. 32 And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. 33 And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; 34 And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. 35 And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. 36 And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published [it]; 37 And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

The American Standard Version as well as others show Him leaving Tyre and going through Sidon and to the Sea of Galilee by way of Decapolis. Now, Decapolis is to the southwest and southeast of the Sea so His route is of interest. The majority is on the east of Jordan. It is a group of ten towns and their surrounding areas.

Evidently He was trying to avoid crowds or at least the Jewish leadership so was not traveling the normal point to point route. It is also possible that he was ministering as he went since Sidon is north of Tyre.

From the map the most logical route would have been to travel south from Sidon past the towns and then east into Decapolis then north to the Sea of Galilee. To have gone east from Sidon would have taken Him out of the way to get to the Sea via Decapolis. Robertson agrees that Christ approached the Sea from the southwest when he makes note that Christ avoided the area east of the Sea due to the ruler over that area.

Further information that may relate comes from Matthew when he mentions that Christ went up into the mountain after the trip in Matt. 15.29. Mt Tabor is just southwest of the Sea.

Christ encounters another in need of His miracle power.

One might assume that the speech impediment might have been due to the deafness and this might well be so. The deaf have a hard time learning to speak due to the lack of being able to hear how words are formed. The text mentions that the man spoke plainly thus there was a double miracle. There was the miracle of healing his hearing and the other miracle in allowing him to be able to speak normally. A deaf person that begins to hear must learn to speak plainly, it is not automatic.

The people asked Christ to touch the man, evidently knowing that this was a possibility with the Lord's healing abilities. Indeed, we know that Christ could speak or will someone healed but in this case He chose to go through another method. He chose to take the man aside and then touch him in two different ways.

It is of interest that Christ spoke to one of the Trinity during this healing. It is recorded "And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened." Gill and Matthew Henry understand this to have been the Father, however I would lean toward it being the Spirit the power behind the miracles of the Lord.

Wesley takes it completely different - that it was not a request but that "This was a word of SOVEREIGN AUTHORITY, not an address to God for power to heal: such an address was needless; for Christ had a perpetual fund of power residing in himself, to work all miracles whenever he pleased, even to the raising the dead, Joh_5:21, Joh_5:26."

Robertson mentions that "Ephphatha" was an Aramaic word brought into the Greek that related to being unbarred. It has the idea of be opened thoroughly and it is a passive indicating that the opening would come from without.

It mentions that He again wanted little notoriety over the occurrence. Verse 36 tells us "And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it;"

It would seem from the wording that Christ spoke to them more than once indicating a length of time that He was around the man and his acquaintances.

We have no further information relating to this incident since Mark is the only one to record it for us.

Now to the part that everyone is looking for an answer for. Well relax as there will be no answer here either. Why Christ touched the man's ears and touched his tongue after spitting on His finger is unknown to me as well as all others that read the passage. We just are not told so we are left to speculation.

If I were to speculate it was a form of nonverbal communication. This man was brought to the Lord for healing even though the man had no faith, nor knowledge of the person he was taken too. Now Christ knew this and so He would have wanted to put the man at ease. How would you put a man at ease, by gestures that were non-threatening. By touching his ears before there was hearing would have drawn the man's attention to something relating to his ears and might have softened the shock of hearing sound all of a sudden. Why touch his tongue? Which man's tongue was touched. My guess would be that Christ spit and touched His own tongue. This might have signified to the man that Christ was getting rid of something distasteful from the tongue such as the impediment.

Some feel that saliva was thought to have had medicinal effects in this time of history. One commentary mentioned that cultic healers used saliva in their incantations. I suspect it was just how Christ communicated with the man to the man's benefit.

Some feel Christ took the man aside as something secretive, yet if Christ knew of this man's uneasiness He may have taken him aside just as a calming effect.

Just as an aside, we tried a new church recently and the special music was introduced. The pastor stepped to a boom box stereo and turned it on. A heavy set teen was at the front by then. As the music began the girl began to sign. Now the first thing that struck me was that no one or at least few in the congregation knew signing so there was absolutely no edification. Further, as the music got to rockin and the girl got to swayin, I noticed I could not make out the words to the music due to the loudness of the loud instruments.

Result of the "special music" - we were treated to seeing an overweight young woman swaying to a rock beat in the middle of worship. Edification? Not so much. Now I trust that this might sharpen the pastor's resolve to create a music policy for his church that states that he will clear all music performed in the church.

One last point to the section - the man was deaf and dumb so most likely knew little of Christ or what/who He was. He probably did not know much, if anything about Judaism either. Why make such points? Because many of the phony "Faith Healers" when they cannot heal someone suggest that the person did not have enough faith to be healed. This is not so. In this case there most likely was no faith on the part of the man.

Healing in the time of Christ due to the gift of healing was a gift, not dependent upon the faith of the person healed but simply the power of God manifested through the gift. In James it mentions prayer in relation to healing. Again it seems that the faith is on the part of others praying for the sick. The one healed does not necessarily need to have the faith. James 5.14-16 "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: 15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. 16 Confess [your] faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

We have seen much of the Lord's work and of His travels to reach others with His message. We have seen His compassion for the plight of others. We have seen His power presented before multitudes, yet He is still not seen as the one that He truly is, the Lamb of God present to take away the sins of the world. He presented Himself and all the people were interested in was the hype and show of the miracles that could benefit them.

It is sure that the apostles and some of the followers were learning of Him, but as to recognizing Him as the supreme sacrifice, no they did not. They had no concept that He was there to die, that He was there to suffer. They were still looking for Him to make political hay and set the Jews free of their oppressors.

MARK CHAPTER EIGHT

8:1 In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them, 2 I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: 3 And if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far. 4 And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? 5 And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. 6 And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. 7 And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. 8 So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. 9 And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.

Okay now those of you that chomp at the bit when the preacher goes five minutes over time to quit, take special note. These folks listened for three days! Even at the Bible conferences they used to have they would let you go eat from time to time. Well McDonald's was not quite prolific back then as they are now.

The people had listened to the Lord for three days. We might assume that they took sleep breaks but how many of us would listen that long without a meal? Really, is there anything interesting enough to keep our attention that long without food? We have a hard time giving three hours to the Lord during a week much less three days. I'm sure it would make a difference if it was Christ Himself speaking, but rather suspect we would complain bitterly if he went past latte time.

This account is different than the feeding that we have already seen in Mark. There is a chart that will show this quite clearly.

Mark 6.41ff

Mark 8.1ff

Had come from "His own country (6.1) Southern coast of Sea of Galilee (7.31)

5 loaves - 2 fishes 7 loaves - few small fishes

12 baskets left over bread/fish 7 baskets of meat

5000 ate 4000 ate

Into a ship for Bethsaida Into a ship for "parts of Dalmanutha"

There is one item of interest. In 8.19 and 20 Jesus used two different terms for basket. The baskets in the first miracle relates to a wicker basket. We are not told the size. The baskets in the second miracle are reed baskets and may have been somewhat smaller since they can relate to a lunch basket. There does not seem to be any real significance other than maybe volume. Christ was probably just speaking of the baskets used rather than meaning some general term.

Bethsaida is on the northeast coast of the Sea of Galilee while Dalmanutha is of uncertain location but most believe it to be on the west coast of the Sea of Galilee in the area of Tiberias. It is also called "Magadan" according to Robertson (Matthew 15.39) In fact Magadon is on some

maps just to the north of Tiberias.

Just a note about the term translated "fasting" might be appropriate. It is not the term that relates to fasting for religious reasons. It is simply a term that relates to going without eating. This is the only time the word is used in the New Testament that I found.

Again we see that the Lord looked upon the people with compassion. He could have been disgusted with them for not bringing their ice chest filled with food,, or their McDonald's coupons so that they could go get something to eat. He felt pity for them and their situation and wanted to relieve their problem.

I may have mentioned this account before, but bear with me. We had a missionary family for a Sunday's services. They got up early and drove several hundred miles to make Sunday school. The couple was involved in all services that day so their time with their children was limited.

Having been on deputation for several years I knew some of the rigors of that life and sensed that this family was terribly limited on funds. I also knew that our church always gave their gifts to missionaries by check.

There had been no time for supper so I also knew the kids were going to be hungry and sensed that there would be no food for the trim home. I went to the grocery store next door and picked up a bunch of snackies and sandwich materials with some pop. I handed the missionary the bags as he climbed into the van and I could see the kids eyes light up with excitement.

I am not saying I had the compassion of Christ but all of us should have compassion and we should be tuned into situations where we might be able to respond to that compassion by filling the needs of others.

How can we be true believers without showing compassion to those around us, whether Christian or lost? We should be ready to assist at any moment and at every opportunity.

Verse six mentions that the Lord prayed or gave thanks before feeding the people. This is our pattern for our own homes. We ought to give thanks for the food that the Lord has provided. We should take this small item from the Lord for a pattern for our homes and be sure to share with your family now and then just why you do it. He is our example and it is our place to follow Him.

Of interest might be the fact that Christ gave the food to the disciples to serve the crowd. He could just as easily given it to twelve from the crowd to distribute, but He chose to have the disciples to serve. Possibly another step in their training one might well assume. Certainly to be used of God one must be able to serve. Many miss this point and feel they should be able to minister to the church rather than serve - the two are one.

The service of the Lord is not only an honor but our duty to Him that has done so much for us. To serve is to do that which the bond slave is to do - the desire of the master.

Recently someone on a forum asked pastors what days they took off and one of the replies was that he took Tuesday off because he was not the type of man he would thrust upon his wife for a day. The clear implication was that Sunday put him into a mood other than feeling right and proper.

Christ said that He would build His church and we know that He is the Master thus why would the servant take on the pressure of responsibility for what takes place on Sunday morning? He is not the Master, he is not the boss, he is the servant of almighty God and God is the one that is responsible for how Sunday goes or does not go.

Too many men take upon themselves too much when they consider their ministry. If there is growth it is of the Lord, if there is loss it is of the Lord, it is up to the servant to minister to the people whether many or few. The responsibility of the servant is to show up and do as good a job as possible, and it is up to the master to bless that work according to His desires and plans in the lives of the people.

8:10 And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha. 11 And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. 12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.

It is recorded that the Pharisees came questioning Him, but Mark records that there was temptation for the Lord. They sought a sign, He could have called lightening from the sky to singe their whiskers, but He refrained from doing so and simply sighed and responded that there would be no sign for them.

It is not clear what sort of a sign the men wanted. They had heard of His miracles and most likely had witnessed some of them personally yet they wanted more evidence of who He was. The Lord's reaction would indicate that they had all the information that they needed to know who He was. He was not shy about doing miracles to those that needed further information about His being, so not giving the sign would indicate that He knew they had all the information that they needed to make their decision about Him.

The fact that He told them He would give them no sign further enhances this line of thought. He did further miracles in His ministry, just not for this generation of Pharisees.

The term translated "sign" is used of something that distinguishes one from others, it is a token, or a sign that they are who they say they are. The Pharisees were looking for a political Messiah, thus they probably were not interested in miracles or claims of being God, but most likely wanted some sign that He was the political Messiah that they were waiting for. They wanted some indication that He was not one of the many "wanna bes" that most likely were around the countryside.

On the other hand they wanted a "sign from heaven" which would indicate something on the

spectacular side. I'm not sure how much more spectacular than walking on water, multiplying food, healing the sick, controlling demonic activity etc. you can get but they wanted it.

Not unlike many human beings that keep wanting more and more indication of God's existence and power. It boils down to the questioning of God and His revelation to the person. Man today has the Word of God that they can read, they have the testimony of many martyrs through the last 2000 years as well as the testimony of millions of believers that have walked with them. Yet they want more from God to convince them that He is real and that He truly exists.

Many years ago my wife and I met a young intellectual type that questioned everything. His idea of eternity was that as you go out into space and go fast enough time will slow down. This was the crux of one of Einstein's theories. Eternity then was the fact that if you went fast enough you could stop and turn around and see yourself coming. Now, I would never trust my after life to such thinking but he did.

As we talked about spiritual things he would ask a question and we would show him Scripture. He would argue, we would show him Scripture. He realized that what the Word was telling him was the truth yet he just kept plowing forward with his skepticism and would not stop. After a couple of hours he buried his head in his hands, let out a huge sigh and said "You have me totally confused." I told him it was not the wife and me, but the Lord and His Word.

The response to our time together was him asking me to read and comment on one of his philosophical books. He saw the power of God that evening and still wanted some further sign before he would admit his need of something outside of himself. He never accepted the Lord that we know of, but I am sure if he is still lost the Lord will have some questions for him one day.

Also of interest is the fact that the Pharisees seemed to know that the sign should come from heaven. Or more to the point maybe they were challenging the Lord about His claim to be God. There might have been some sarcasm in their request.

Robertson observed, and most likely very correctly, that the Pharisees may have been taking jabs at the Lord when requesting a sign from heaven. They may have been intimating that His miracles were due to natural causes rather than divine or maybe even that they were by the power of the Devil as He was accused of elsewhere in the New Testament.

The Pharisees were not and would not be satisfied with the signs already done, and Christ told them even further that there would be no further sign. Why continue to give signs if they are just going to reject the information and want more.

Just a thought to dwell on about the God that you serve. God loves all His creation, but will not allow man to reject Him forever - the Scripture mentions that He hardens their hearts after a certain time of rejection.

Recall that Christ has shown compassion a couple of times in this book. This same person that

had compassion is the one that was required by His character and nature to tell these men that were loved that there would be no sign for them.

Yes, God loves His creatures, yes, God has compassion, but He also is just and must act justly and righteously. Might there be another attribute of God mixed in there amongst the love and justice, between the compassion and righteousness. Not that the items can be mixed but there might be some attribute of frustration with His creatures, or attribute of sorrow over the loss of the respect/love from His creations?

Mark records that "he sighed deeply" indicating that in His human side at the very least there was angst over the situation and in my opinion that angst may well have been the response of the divine as well.

Christ via the Holy Spirit basically announced judgment upon these men and their inability to accept Him for what He was. He pronounced their ultimate eternal punishment at that point though it was not spoken of in those terms.

Some might wonder at the idea that "this generation" will have no sign. What does the term "generation" refer to, the entire generation? No, for we know some of them became disciples and followers, thus we must take it to mean something else. The most logical would be to take it to mean the lost of that generation, and indeed Matthew shows this to be a correct assumption. Matthew 16.4 "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas."

Christ spoke to the lost Christ rejecters of His own time. He also added that there would be the sign of Jonas - the coming death, burial and resurrection was to be the only further sign to that unrighteous group of people and we know from the Gospel record that they rejected that sign as well. Thus, Christ was correct in that there was no further sign for them at the time of His speaking to them.

13 And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side. 14 Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf. 15 And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. 16 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread. 17 And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened? 18 Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?

8:19 When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. 20 And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven. 21 And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?

Oh my what frustration there must have been for Christ, to have called these men, to have taught these men and demonstrated His power to these men and yet they have no idea of His power, capabilities or being. They have seen him feed two crowds on two different occasions with very

little food and they think He is talking about bread.

Even though they have no understanding or perception, He thought they should at least have remembered what He had done in the previous two occasions of feeding thousands of people.

A word about perception and understanding might be appropriate. Understanding is having knowledge and grasping the meaning of that knowledge. Perception would relate to gaining that knowledge or perceiving it. You can perceive something but not understand it. You can see the complexities of life and perceive that knowledge, but not necessarily understand it.

This may be part of the problem with the demons and angels. They may see and perceive the facts of what is going on in the universe, but not understand it all. They may not understand the complexities of the human mind and experience.

This may also relate somewhat to lost people. They may read the Word, they may hear the Word and they may have proper perception, but not understand it.

Do believers truly understand all that they perceive? They also read and hear the Word, but often do not understand it to the point of changing their lives. Knowing facts does not make one a useful believer. If you do not understand what you have perceived you will not be following that which you have perceived.

Much of what is learned in churches today seems to be the perceived knowledge but little understanding of how it all relates to the Christian life. We were sinner, now we are redeemed. A simple truth perceived by all, but few understand that there is a change that is supposed to happen between the two. Many believers today remain lifestyle wise as they were before redemption.

This may be the reason the church seems to be just like the world - yes that is my perception AND understanding.

Now to the point of the Lord's comment. 15 "And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod."

Thayer mentions of "leaven" "metaphorically of inveterate mental and moral corruption, viewed in its tendency to infect others." The Lord tells them that the Pharisees and King Herod are corrupt and that they are to be avoided lest they be corrupted.

How do you suppose that would settle with pastors today if someone started telling congregations that their leadership was corrupt. It hurts to say it but many of today's leaders are corrupt. They are self-absorbed men/women that are seeking worldly blessing and riches not caring who they hurt nor what they do to gain their worldly riches and attention.

Many men are way more interested in the pay package offered than the ministry possibilities that

God has set before them. Men are turning down churches because there is not enough money offered while others are jealous when their friends get a bigger and better pay package than they were able to dig up.

Is it too "spiritual" to ask God where He would have you serve? Is it too "spiritual" to allow God to supply the need that is lacking in the pay package - or more to the point, learn to live on less?

I know the rhetoric that is forthcoming from the preceding radical statements. It has all been said before in forums, Internet boards and board rooms - we are called to be responsible, we are responsible to provide for our families - we are called to serve God at His pleasure as bond slaves. Nowhere in the Scripture are we told that we are to be rich, to be famous, or to be some super preacher that commands a high price. We are called to servant hood - if God makes you all of those things then that is His business and you are responsible to be a good steward of what He has given you.

"Beware" has to do with seeing with the eye and discerning - open your eyes and be very careful of what you see. This is a warning that the church has not listened to in our day. They have been looking for their "thing" and jumping from church to church till they find what they like, not necessarily where God might want them to serve. Self-serving seems to be the mind-set of most in the church today.

Nausea is the result when I hear people telling me that they just are not being ministered to. If you are a mature believer you are to be ministering to, not being ministered to. God has gifted each one of us to minister to the body of Christ. He has not gifted a handful to minister to the congregation.

While on the subject the gifts of the Spirit are clearly listed in the New Testament and they do not include the gift of swing, nor the gift of sway, nor the gift of tape deck running, nor the gift of bounce, nor the gift of I will be the loudest, nor the gift of swoon, nor the gift of repeating of words - music is to make sense not put everyone in a trance. We are present to worship the LIVING God, not meditate ourselves into oblivion for fifty-five minutes a week.

Rant complete.

8:22 And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. 23 And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. 24 And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. 25 After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. 26 And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

And we have an illustration for the apostles. We spoke of a couple of items in the previous section - to perceive and understand. This blind man perceived when Christ first touched his eyes, but only after the second touch did he have proper understanding. Christ was almost sick in his humor when teaching His disciples.

This was not a miracle gone bad, it was a two step process to show the disciples that there was perception and that there was understanding.

So what is the spitting in the eyes all about. Again in that day spit was thought to have medicinal value. We are not told by the commentaries just how this was thought to be true, only that it was the thought of the day. Whether this is related to the question or not we do not know. I suspect that it was as with the deaf and dumb man - something drawing his attention to what Christ was doing or about to do.

Christ again was on the secretive side taking the man away from the crowd and telling him to tell no one. As a semi Calvinist, I often wonder at some of the miracles. Were these individuals just a few that were not run of the mill people that God was bestowing His grace upon - people that had responded to revelation to the point that they needed further revelation to come to a full knowledge of God. I suspect this might be the case. No other explanation has come to mind for the numerous occurrences of individual grace and attention.

Bethsaida was on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Most of Christ's travels can be mapped out and have been by many authors over the years. Normally his ministry on earth is broken up into the geographical areas where He worked. These divisions can be seen in the outlines presented and there are charts available on maps to show His movements if anyone is interested in seeing the many trips that are mentioned in the Gospels.

The term translated "spit" is simply spit. There is nothing unique about this word nor its meaning. It is used of spitting in the face in the Septuagint and John uses the same word when Christ spit on the ground and made clay to anoint another blind man's eyes (John 9.6).

The fact that Christ did not want the man to tell anyone, not even to go to town so that others might notice that he could see, pictures just how quiet He wanted to keep his ministry at the time.

He most likely knew of the time of His betrayal and knew that if the Jews found opportunity that they would cause trouble for him. His crucifixion was to occur at a precise time in history and He did not want the Jews interfering in that correct and precise moment. One can only imagine the conflict going on in the spiritual plain. The Devil knowing his time was short, and God knowing that His plan would not be compromised.

The utter audacity and foolishness of the Devil has always caused me to wonder at his aspirations to usurp Almighty God his creator. How could a created being find it within himself to think that he could overturn the plans of his Creator? It does not make a lot of sense but then some of the things men do are on a plain of similar ignorance in my mind.

When a pastor begins to take over a church and set himself up as dictator instead of allowing Christ to be the Head. When a man begins setting himself up as dictator of his family instead of allowing Christ to be the Head. When a wife begins setting herself up as ruler of the house instead of her husband and Christ. Maybe we are not so different than the Devil in the arrogance, audacity and foolishness department.

8:27 And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? 28 And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets. 29 And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. 30 And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

Caesarea Philippi is north and a little east of the Sea of Galilee. Not a short walk across town. I would guess it to have been about a twenty mile trek from the looks of the maps. There are two towns named Caesarea, one of which is identified as Caesarea of Philippi. There are also small villages around that Caesarea, thus it is the general area around Caesarea Philippi that Christ was visiting. Gill mentions "...into the towns Caesarea Philippi; in the jurisdiction of Philip, tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis; for this Caesarea was rebuilt by him and called so in honour of Tiberius Caesar; and the towns and villages adjacent to it are here intended:"

Christ asked the apostles two questions. First he wondered at the public's perception of Him and then of the apostles' perception.

"Whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets."

Mark 6.14 was an account of Herod and his thinking about Christ. The two accounts are very similar and one might wonder if the apostles knew of Herod's thinking or if it was just the common thinking of the people and they were tuned into how the people were reacting to the Lord. "And king Herod heard [of him]; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. 15 Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets."

The thinking of the people was that He was a spook. He was someone raised from the dead even though they did not know who He was. To be able to do these miracles He had to be from the spirit world.

This should give us some indication of the common man's thoughts on the afterlife. There must have been a prevailing view that the dead continued on in existence and further that they could return to this life with miraculous powers.

One might wonder if this was the common mindset, if they did not wonder at the why of this spook's entrance into their time and space.

I might mention that this may be part of the feeling of some of the early church's false doctrine which suggested that Christ was a spook and that he left no footprints. The false doctrine is seen to be false in the teaching of Paul in his letter to the Colossians and his refutation of the Gnostics.

My thoughts off the top would be that if the disciples had followed Christ over so many dusty roads would not they have seen that He left no footprints and do you not think that one of them

would have mentioned this in one of their books? You would think so.

"But whom say ye that I am?" Oh this is the question that is important, not what the people say, but what do you say. This is a personal question for you my select followers.

Oh how important this is for the reader as well. It is your answer to this question that will forever seal your position in either heaven or hell. It does not matter what your mother thought, nor what your father thought, nor your boy/girl friend/spouse thought, it is what you do with Christ personally that will be the basis for your judgment. Only you can answer this question and only you will be held responsible for this question.

Is this the Christ, the Lamb of God that came to die for your sins or is He just another fake that was trying to make a buck. If the latter He failed miserably for He died with no fortune and He lived with none either.

"And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ." Peter's declaration was right on the money though we do not know if he had bought that concept yet or not. "Christ" is the Greek word "christos" which means anointed one. Gill mentions "the Messiah that was long ago promised and so often prophesied of in the books of Moses and the prophets; and whom the Jews have so much and long expected." Matthew 16.16 adds "son of the living God." Why Mark dropped this full statement is not clear. To Matthew's Jewish readers the full phrase would have had much more meaning than for Mark's readers. The reader of Mark's book would be simply interested in the Messiah, the one that would conquer all for His people.

"And he charged them that they should tell no man of him." Christ has been telling different people to keep quiet about Him for some time now, but here he charges the apostles to keep it mum. The word translated "charged" is a strong word relating to forbid or censure, He really did not want them to speak to others about Him.

Now, this is not a verse that we in this time should apply to ourselves. We are charged with taking the Gospel to the world, not to keep His saving grace quiet and secure within the walls of the church. We are to declare the Gospel! Yet, at this time in Christ's life He needed the apostles to be quiet about Him.

Again, this likely relates to the need of time control. He knew that the time of the Passover was the time of his betrayal and death, and He did not want that timing to be upset.

8:31 And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. 33 But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

Christ begins to inform the apostles of the coming doom and gloom. Peter rebukes Him for such talk but Christ knows the verbal rebuke comes from the Devil in that Peter has not grasped that

Christ is the Messiah, but that He is a suffering Messiah, not a political one. Peter, like the rest of the Jews, thought that Messiah was going to take care of all the ills of this life, and they did not grasp that He was here to deal with much graver problems than the world can offer. He was here to deal with the need of man for the perfect sacrifice to shed His blood for all believers of all times.

Christ mentioned that he must suffer rejection of the elders, chief priests and the scribes. The Jewish leadership in other words would totally reject Him and His work on the behalf of Israel.

Here we see his first mention of being raised in three days. There is much discussion as to what three days might mean. Some think it means only a few hours, others see it as three 24-hour days. There is a study on my web site if anyone would like to study this further. I hold to a three 24-hour period position.

He tells the apostles of his coming rejection, death, and resurrection. Now, that would have been heavy stuff for them to hear and evaluate. They saw Him as the political Messiah and He is telling them He will be rejected and that he will die, but then He just mentions that little part of the resurrection. Rejection they would have understood, and death they could have understood, but being raised from the dead might have been difficult to digest.

The main discussion is whether Christ was speaking to Peter or looking past him to the Devil in his doubting. Some would hold that he spoke of Peter as being the Devil while others would suggest that Christ spoke to the Devil's attempt to stop Him via his own apostle.

Peter, in essence, doubted Christ and His message by rejecting it and trying to stop Him from speaking of the subject. This is the one that had just given a strong declaration of who Christ was and now he is trying to quiet His comments about the coming days.

How often do church goers try to quiet their pastor and his telling of the truth? How often have pastors left the truth. One of the "SEEKER SENSITIVE" churches that was in the forefront of the movement for decades has just gone through a four year evaluation to see if they had been successful. Their evaluation said no they had not been effective in the purpose of the church - edification of the saints.

They concluded that they were going to begin teaching a more complete and in depth curriculum to attempt to mature the saints. They had concluded that their congregation was full of mature people that wanted depth to their spiritual lives.

The sad part is it took them four years of effort to come to that conclusion. Their detractors had been saying that for decades and could have told them that if a few moments had they listened.

Go placed the completed Word of God in our hands to bring us to maturity. He has equiped the congregation with people to assist in the edification yet so often churches opt for what is easier and that is quieter, something that will not upset the masses and bring people in.

8:34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. 36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? 37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? 38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

This is most likely a part of Christ's response to the reaction of Peter. Christ called all together and declared several truths.

A. Anyone that will deny himself is to take up his cross and follow Christ. If you deny yourself you automatically are burdened with problems, losses and missed opportunities for friendships, reward and wealth. This seems to be in Christ's mind a cross to bear. Nothing about suffering death with Him or anything that spiritual, just taking upon oneself the burden of doing without.

When we went off to Bible College we did so with no money and no prospects of finances supplied. In my young Christian life I was under the impression that Christ meant what He said in the Gospels about denying yourself, trusting in Him for supply and all those out-of-date items that we do not talk about anymore in our churches.

We arrived far from home with no job, no place to live and little money to find an apartment. It is odd. God did supply the need. I found a job within a day or two, and that was after we had found an apartment in fairly short order. No, we had no frills, our life was on the order of poverty, but we had what we needed and God provided at just the right time.

Most of our married life we have most likely qualified for a number of welfare programs but were never on any of them because God was providing nicely without the help of government. Actually looking back on those days I am not sure I could consider it a cross. Christ died on one of those for me, why should I not do all I can for Him? Simple philosophy of life I suppose, but it seems to have worked for me and my house.

Consider denying yourself for His gain. That is what it is - giving Him the gain that you could have had. A simple method of trying to repay the debt that you owe.

Many are the illustrations of Christ's simple request - J. Hudson Taylor, William Carey, and other early missionaries. Pick up one of their life stories and give it a read and see what some have done for their Lord. Deny yourself, it can only produce eternal gain for both you and your Lord.

B. If you save your life you will lose it. In short if you choose to serve yourself you will save your life for your own living, for your own purposes and your own gain, but in truth you will lose the joy of having served the Lord your God.

Indeed, there may be an even more serious part to this. John 15 seems to show that God removes

unproductive believers from this life. Add to that the lack of rewards at the judgment seat of Christ and you will have a good picture of the possible loss.

C. If you lose your life you shall have it. On the other side of things if you lose your life or give it back to the one that bought it for service you will have a life worth having.

After a long life of service I have often looked back and wondered what I might have done with my life if the Lord had not called me to his work. I am left with a complete blank. I was a near high school dropout, drinking and swearing like a sailor which I was, going nowhere very quickly.

Had God not stepped into my life I probably would have done nothing with my life. He has done what He wanted to do with my life and that is adequate for me.

D. And what price is the soul, can you buy it back with your worldly profits, seems to be the thought. If you lose your life you will certainly never be able to beg, barter or buy it back again.

My father-in-law was a godly man but in the end when he faced terminal cancer he realized that he could have done so much more for the Lord and the regrets were great. From the prognosis on he was witnessing to every friend and family that entered his room. He had lived a good life before the Lord but he knew he could have done better. Do not face this sort of regret in the end, begin now to serve the Lord as you ought.

E. If you gain the world you may well lose your soul. This does not mean that you will lose your eternal destination, but you will lose your life here on earth. Your history, your worth, your meaning to the Lord will be of total loss. You may be rich, you may be popular and you may have great meaning for the world but to God you will be lose.

Yesterday they announced that Senator Kennedy had a malignant brain tumor. I began to pray for the man on the spot, but had no idea of how to pray for him. Most likely not a believer, he has committed his entire life to pleasure and politics - serving his fellow man. He has great worth to the world as evidenced by the outpouring of concern by fellow congressmen and the media.

My when I am that age I trust this is not true of me for it would prove to all that are witness that I have served other than my Lord Jesus Christ all my life. Serving man is noble, but what is it on the grand stage of God's plan and decree? Nothing but lose.

This is not meant to detract from Senator Kennedy's accomplishments for they are many. But it is to say, even though I disagreed with most of what he stood for and what he did, he was a powerful man for the world and indeed devoted to those things most meaningful to him.

F. If you are ashamed of Christ and His in this generation then He will be ashamed of you when He comes.

One must wonder at just what spiritual condition one might be in to find himself ashamed of Christ. How far must one backslide to find an association with Him to be distasteful?

This generation is our job, our task, our responsibility to evangelize, just how well are we doing? Are we speaking to our own generation about the Lord? Are we vocal for the one that died for our sins?

On the other hand picture yourself when He comes - you have brought Him to be ashamed of you by your actions in this life. How will you handle that one? Will there be any answer that you can give Him? Who or what will you blame or will you be up front and admit that it was your self-service that was the problem?

He also marked His own generation as adulterous and sinful. One must wonder what He would call our present generation. We take all of His generation and shove it into every home on a cable or a wire and call it television and the Internet. It is available in nearly every room to any that can throw a power switch.

I personally am appalled at some of the television shows believers watch. Shows that are full of terrible language, shows that are filled with terrible violence and shows full of terrible subject matter. I have no idea how people relate those viewing habits to Philippians 4.8-9 "8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things [are] honest, whatsoever things [are] just, whatsoever things [are] pure, whatsoever things [are] lovely, whatsoever things [are] of good report; if [there be] any virtue, and if [there be] any praise, think on these things. 9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."

Our focus in this life should be Him and His desires, plans and work, not our own pleasures to satisfy self.

As an overall application of this last passage I would like to relate a question asked of me once. I was interviewing for a position in a large church in CA and one of the board members asked me the question "How do you live your life to gain the reward that you want in eternity?"

I must say that the question shocked me due to the fact that I had never considered the idea of "doing" here for "reward" there. I thought for a few moments to see if I was missing something then answered along the lines that I had never considered how I should live in relation to rewards, nor had I considered what rewards I might gain, much less in relation to what I have or have not done in this life.

I related that Christ died on the cross for me so anything and everything I can do in this life could never make up for that sacrifice made on my behalf. As to rewards I told him that I had never considered what I might gain. Being in heaven with the Lord is enough for me and that due not one whit with what I have done.

Doing for the Lord should be our goal, our life and our gain, everything else that comes along is

just so much more grace from Him that died for us.

MARK CHAPTER NINE

9:1 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

This passage has puzzled many due to the fact that most that feel the kingdom is yet future wonder why He would declare that some would see it come before their death.

The answer is located, as is usual, within the direct context. The next thing that occurs is the transfiguration. This must be the kingdom coming in power some declare, however this is not necessarily a good explanation. Only three people saw it, so how could this be the kingdom coming? Actually He did not declare how many and three fits well "some of them" and may well be the answer to the question.

Some could well suggest that this was the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came to inaugurate the beginning of the church. Of course others, the amillennialists, would declare these positions incorrect and declare themselves correct within their own position. Their position, the teaching that the kingdom is going on now and has been since 70 A.D., would place the coming at the 70 A.D. point when the temple was destroyed. This is a possible position, but to declare that the kingdom is going on now is to deny Scripture. Many passages in the Old Testament describe occurrences in the Kingdom and this day and age certainly does not fit into our own day.

Add to that the fact that Revelation speaks of the Devil being bound for the 1000 years of the kingdom and one must wonder at their position. How can anyone look our corrupt and evil world and suggest that the Devil is bound? Rev. 20.4-7 "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and [I saw] the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received [his] mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This [is] the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy [is] he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. 7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,"

It also amazes me to hear those that suggest 70 A.D. is what was spoken of in the Old Testament as the coming of the kingdom - the Old Testament speaks of a glorious return, not the destruction of the temple and the further subjection of the Jewish people. Ezekiel speaks of the raising of dry bones and the flesh returning to the bones which pictures the returning of Israel, not its destruction. Ezek. 37.4 "Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. 5 Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: 6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I [am] the LORD." That just does not sound like the destruction of Jerusalem.

It would seem that the transfiguration was looking forward to the coming of Christ in the future when He would come to set up His kingdom on the earth for 1000 years.

9:2 And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. 9:3 And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. 9:4 And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. 9:5 And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. 9:6 For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. 9:7 And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. 9:8 And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves. 9:9 And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. 9:10 And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.

"Transfigured" is the Greek word "metamorphoo" meaning transformed. It is the word we gain our word metamorphosis from. It is the idea of a complete change. This verb is in the passive thus this was a change that came from without Christ. This is not something that He did under His own power, but it was done to Him from the outside. The change was complete, it was from one thing into another.

Luke gives a slightly different view of the occurrence. Luke 9.28 "And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. 29 And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment [was] white [and] glistening." Luke goes on to say that the three disciples were asleep and they awoke to this transformed Christ.

Can you imagine the shock of the apostles when they woke to such a site? One might wonder if Christ knew this was going to occur. Since He singled out the three to go with Him it might well be that He did. Take them with you to experience something super special and they go to sleep on Him - about par for mankind.

Not only was his being transformed, but even His garments. Some might suggest that the change was due to the glory of God shining forth as with Moses in the cleft of the rock and this is a distinct possibility. However the use of the word transformed in Mark seems to call for something more than just the reflection of some glory.

Luke contains a small phrase that is of great importance to the whole situation that we have at hand. 9.31 "Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem."

Two things to consider - the fact that the three spoke of His coming crucifixion, and second, that HE would accomplish the deed. This goes to the passage in John 10.15 "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep." This idea is related in other

passages as well --Christ took it upon Himself to die for the lost of all generations. It was His doing, and His timing and all was under His control. Yes, of course the Father and Spirit were involved, but the point is that God controlled the situation, not the Jewish leaders, not the Roman leaders, and not one of the human race had any control over these occurrences.

Back to the first item, why did Moses and Elijah come to speak with Christ at this time or at any time? What did they speak to Him about? What items of discussion were available?

It crossed my mind that in the pre-incarnate days Christ and the duo might have been "friends" or close in some manner. Since Christ was the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament Moses may have had a special relationship with the Lord. I have no idea what kind of relationships we will have with the Lord but it seems that some people are closer to God in a special way due to their close relationship in this life, but there is no teaching on the subject in the Word.

We might remember that Elijah was translated without death (II Kings 2.11) and Moses, though he died, was buried by God. We also know that there was a great angelic fight over the body of Moses (Jude 1.9), thus these two men were very special to the Lord even before this time. Enoch was also translated (Gen. 5.24) by God but he is not mentioned here. The reasoning is left to the Lord since we are just not told the why of this meeting.

There is the possibility that the discussion of Christ's coming death (Luke 9.32) may well have related to Elijah and Moses and their interest in the complete work of salvation that Christ was committed to conclude. The pair would have known that their salvation was not yet complete in reality even though it was complete in God's mind and plan.

These two that appeared with the Lord both had special items relating to their death, as would Christ. Whether there is a direct link between the three is not stated nor should it be assumed.

Gill suggests that this meeting was to show the apostles that Christ was there to put an end to the Law and the prophets. That His coming death was the completeness that the Old Testament saints were awaiting in Sheol (Luke 16.23).

The Bible Knowledge Commentary on Matthew 17.3 mentions the possible thought that Those present were representative of the categories of people who will make up the kingdom. Moses represented those that have believed and died, Elijah represents those that believe and do not die but are raptured, and the Apostles represent the living. It is also pointed out that Christ will be as Himself, the glorified Christ.

There is one obvious question - how did the apostles know it was Elajah and Moses, were they told or did they know or did they guess/assume due to the thinking of the Jews that the two would appear one day? Several commentaries mention that the Jewish leaders taught that the two would appear one day. If this were true it would be likely that the apostles knew it and this would have been quite a sign to them of the importance of the Lord.

Just a side note to the transfiguration, since the apostles were asleep (Luke 9.32) it is quite

possible that this was at night. Imagine waking to the brilliance of glory in the midst of blackness! We can understand why Peter was a little rattled at the time of his hoof in mouth disease.

Continuing with the passage, we see that Christ must have asked Peter something for Peter answered. Peter states that it is "good" that the disciples were there. The term relates to valuable or virtuous and seems a little more than just Good. A cup of coffee is good, but a Starbucks coffee is valuable - at least they think so from the prices that they charge.

9:5 And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. 9:6 For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid.

Now we get to Peter's hoof and mouth disease. He blurts out that they should build three tabernacles for the trio and it is mentioned that he was "sore afraid." Strong states that this word means scared out of one's wits. They were in a world of hurt to know what was going on.

Luke may give us a little insight into Peter. Luke mentions that Elijah and Moses were moving away from the Lord. It might be that Peter wanted to make shelter for them all for the night thinking that the two were going to have to go quite a way to find shelter. This may have been the thinking/speaking of a man who had compassion.

Many suggest that Peter's comment was inappropriate and this is probably noted due to the Gospel writer's comments about him not knowing what he said or that he didn't know what to say. Note should be made that there is no rebuke of Peter nor his offer thus we might assume that it was a natural reaction to the situation. His comment may have been off the mark due to his misunderstanding of the situation, but I am not convinced that it was inappropriate.

There are some differences between the accounts.

9:7 And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.

Matthew mentions when the others do not 17.6-8 "they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them and said, Arise, and be not afraid."

Luke 9.34 mentions "and they feared as they entered into the cloud." Yet all three accounts mention the cloud overshadowed them. I would assume that the cloud came and enveloped them. The coming would be the overshadowing while the enveloping would be the entering.

The "voice" that came from the cloud is the word we gain "phone" from.

All three mention that God told them to hear His son, while Matthew adds "beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" and Luke 9.35 mentions "my Son, my chosen;"

9:8 And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

Evidently Elijah and Moses were still there when the cloud came and then they suddenly disappeared as God spoke his Message to the three apostle.

It seems the sequence of events is that the two Old Testament saints appeared to the Lord, the apostles woke up, the cloud came, the apostles feared, Christ calmed their fears, God spoke and the two Old Testament saints disappeared.

9:9 And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. 9:10 And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.

They see Christ in glory or great brightness, they see Elijah and Moses, and they hear God speaking from a cloud and they spend their time wondering about what Christ meant about being raised from the dead. As humans we don't seem to be able to focus on the important, but get lost in the detail.

Even today one might wonder at someone saying that he is going to be raised from the dead. The apostles indeed would have wondered at such a statement from the Lord. They would have been wondering but you would think that seeing Christ in the glorious way that they did that they would have wondered at that as well.

In the next verse we see confirmation that the Jews were looking for Elijah to appear. These three apostles were the only witnesses of that occurrence. One might wonder if they had an real grasp of the significance of all of this and that they alone had seen what the Jews were looking for.

It is quite possible that this was the sign that the Jews asked the Lord about in our previous studies. If it was, then the apostles alone saw the sign and then only three of them.

Verse 9 mentions that the Lord charged the three not to tell anyone of the transfiguration until he had been raised from the dead. "And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead." That would have been difficult for the three to rub shoulders with the other disciples and not speak of the occurrence.

There are times in ministry and in the congregation that not speaking of something is the required format of life. Be sure that you honor this requirement. If you do not you will most likely cause yourself much trouble and probably others along with you.

Silence is the only way to go - talking is never an alternative to not speaking of something that is to be kept quiet.

9:11 And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?

9:12 And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought. 9:13 But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

It seems that this is still just the three apostles that had witnessed the transfiguration. Gill agrees with this assessment.

This passage states clearly that The Jews believed that Elias would come and Christ confirms that it was a correct belief on the part of the Jews, but also reveals that Elias had already arrived on the scene and the Jews had treated him in some manner.

Gill mentions that the Latin Vulgate Bible adds Pharisees to the mix by translating it scribes and Pharisees. I wouldn't wonder if the term "scribe" wasn't a broad term for all of the leadership since they were so closely related to one another.

Is Elias Elijah? Is Christ speaking of the transfiguration? It would seem that this is not the case since it looks as if Elias had arrived in the past at some point.

Is Elias speaking here of John the Baptist? Is Elias speaking of the Lord Himself? Let us see if we can determine this.

Gill lists a number of Jewish scholars that mention that Elias would come before the Messiah. Christ seems to be speaking to this belief and it would indicate that He was speaking of John the Baptist.

Some indicate that they feel that the transfiguration appearance was the appearing of Elias, though the Jews had nothing to do with that so how could they have treated him in a poor manner as verse thirteen mentions? "and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him."

Indeed, this may have been in the apostles mind as they spoke to Christ, but He makes it clear that the transfiguration had nothing to do with it.

Here is a prime example of the need to look at all the gospel records to gain the full accounting of facts. Matthew makes it clear that Christ was speaking of John the Baptist. Matthew 17:12 "But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. 13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist."

This would indicate that the three apostles did in fact think that the appearance of Elias/Elijah at the transfiguration was the appearance that the Jews were looking for. It also indicates that Peter's offer to build tabernacles might well have been based on his belief that the two Old testament saints were not going to be leaving.

This conversation brings to mind two previous discussions in Mark. One is when Herod was trying to figure out who Christ was when He heard of his fame. Mark 6.14 "And king Herod heard [of him]; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. 15 Others said, That it is Elias . And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. 16 But when Herod heard [thereof], he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead."

The other comes when Christ asked Peter who people thought that He was. Mark 8.28 "And they answered, John the Baptist: but some [say], Elias ; and others, One of the prophets. 29 And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ."

This makes one wonder, with all of this information and all this commotion about who different ones were, how the Jews could possibly have missed the implications of John the Baptist and Jesus. It seems to me that only their blindness could have allowed them to have missed all this that had been laid out so clearly before them. This blindness came from God Himself. We know that Christ spoke in parables to keep the Jews from understanding. I personally would add that the blindness may well have been brought to the Jews even more completely by the Father as He did unto Pharaoh. (Romans 9.17 "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh , Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. 18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will [have mercy], and whom he will he hardeneth.")

Another passage that makes it clear that God has repercussions for those that reject him is Romans 1.20. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, [even] his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified [him] not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. 24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. 26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in [their] knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; 29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, 30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: 32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

The clear implication of these passages is that if a man turns against God, at some point God will turn the man's heart even further from God and that there will be no cure for the turning. The application of this is related to the lost when they die. They are clearly without excuse and they clearly will reap that which they have sown. Their final destiny is far from God and of their own choice.

When someone dies and the relatives mourn the loss, if they question the eternal state of the person you can, in clear conscience tell them that God gives choices in life and each person must choose their own way to walk. If they are in heaven it is because of a clear choice for God. If they are not in heaven it is also because of a clear choice against God.

It is not our place to assume that we can tell if a person was a child of God or not, it is their own choice and unless they made that choice known we cannot know what it was nor their placement in eternity.

This, in my mind, allows us to have peace after the loss of a loved one. We need not worry whether we lived correctly before them, we need not worry whether we witnessed clearly enough to them, and we need not worry about their eternal destination. It was between the person and God. There was little we could have done or say that would have changed things - it is simply a decision the person made when confronted with the revelation of God in nature and to any revelation that they might have received in life.

Their decision, not God's, not yours - THEIR DECISION.

9:14 And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. 9:15 And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him. 9:16 And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them? 9:17 And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; 9:18 And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. 19 He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me. 20 And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. 21 And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. 22 And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. 23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. 24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. 25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. 26 And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. 27 But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.

We see in Christ confronting the Scribes a concern for His apostles as well as a watchfulness

over them. He confronted those that questioned them to head off any problems that the questioners might have wanted to raise. Christ was showing a protective stance over His own.

Pastors and teachers, this would be a good standard to set for yourselves in relation to your people. They need some watching over and concern. Your protectiveness is a part of your ministry. Be sure that you have a concern and protective attitude. If you do not there might be something missing in your ministry.

Recently I read a post on an Internet forum from a pastor that had been at his new church for three months. He was already looking for a way out and wanting people to give reason to move on.

He had wanted to change some things in the church and presented his changes to the board. They said okay and he instituted the changes. People did not like the changes and were complaining. He was afraid that he was in the wrong church.

He was more interested in changing what was working for the church rather than being interested in watching over the flock that God had placed him over. His concerns were for his own style of church rather than the peoples wellfair.

In verse fifteen it mentions that the people were amazed. Some suggest that they were surprised that He came to the aid of the disciples since the Scribes were getting the better of them. In the first place there is no indication that there was a dispute going on, nor that the scribes were getting the better of the apostles.

The amazement might, but we have no real indication of it, be that Christ had an afterglow of sorts from the transfiguration much as Moses did when he came down from Sinai when God passed him by. This was my first thought though it would be pure speculation.

Since Christ had been trying to remain out of the limelight it may have been that the people were just surprised to see Him in public.

16 "And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?"

If there was a dispute it was probably over why the apostles could not heal the person. The Scribes undoubtedly knew of the miracles of the Lord as well as probable miracles of the disciples when Christ sent them out. Indeed, they might even, forgive me for questioning their motives, have brought the problem man to them when the Lord was not around to test them, or try to cause problems for them or the Lord. Now, I just never question other peoples motives - well not all the time - well, yes most of the time, but the Scribes just ache for our doubt don't you think?

17 "And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;"

Whether this man was a Scribe or whether he was just one seeking assistance with his child we are not told. It would seem easiest to see him as just one that came to seek help with his child, though it is not out of the realm of possibility that the Scribes brought him with them. (The preposition "of" is related to origin thus one from the multitude.)

Luke 9.38-39 mentions the fact that this was the man's only child, one most precious to his father to be sure.

This man was answering Christ's question as to why the Scribes were asking questions of the disciples. This is why we might suspect that he was a plant of some sort, though I would doubt he was a knowing participant if he was a part of the Scribe's plan.

The father now expands upon the condition of his son. Matthew mentions that he was, as Robertson has it an "epileptic" but Mark's record just concentrates on the spirit that was present. (The King James uses the term lunatic) "dumb spirit" is the comment of the father.

Matthew records that the father knelt indicating that the man had some understanding of the importance of Christ - He was one to be honored when making a request.

The church has lost something in the area of prayer. In all of the churches that I have attended over the near fifty years that I have been regular I have only been in one church where people prayed on their knees. If you study the term worship in the Bible you will find that often it is used in the context of someone kneeling or prostrate.

This is God that we are approaching and it is due respect that we owe Him. Yes, He will allow you to approach Him in any manner you wish but in my mind you show Him what level of respect that you give by your appearance, actions, words and position.

Just read through the throne scene accounts in the Bible, this is the scene right now before God and how do we approach His throne. Revelation speaks of the elders throwing their crowns before Him. Is that the approach you have in your church? (Rev. 4.24 "And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. 25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, [Thou] dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. 26 And [the spirit] cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. 27 But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.")

I must wonder at some of the "worship" that I see today. People on stage swinging and swaying and waving their hands in the air as if to try to get a disinterested God's attention. This is not the action shown in the Word, but rather God's people on their knees before their God. Even Christ is shown to be in a prostrate position when going to the Father in prayer. Matthew 26.39 mentions Him on His face.

Now let us move on to the unfortunate person who is being tormented. The word translated "teareth" is a much stronger than our idea of tear. It is a word that relates to smashing into small pieces or shatter. More the idea of a Corel dinner dish that shatters into minute shards and some larger pieces. "Gnashing" or grinding of teeth is the idea. In fact Robertson mentions of the word "Old word for making a shrill cry or squeak." It actually relates to the sound that this makes rather than the action itself.

"Pineth" relates to a wasting away or drying up. Barnes mentions "haggard, and emaciated" in relation to this word. This devil was causing great physical trouble for the man's son. In later verses we see even more description of the son's condition.

The disciples were asked to bring the devil out or cast him out. This word differs from the one in verse twenty-nine which is one related to our word exorcism though the meaning is similar.

18 "And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not."

"And they could not." Is of great interest to me. Some speak of the ease with which demons come out and they seem to do it as if on a whim in services, yet the apostles could not throw out a real devil. Would make you wonder of the validity of today's easy healing services.

Casting out demons, if there is such a thing today, is serious business and should not be taken lightly. Accounts coming from China and some of the island countries would seem to indicate that such things are still going on. Said reports seem to indicate the fact that you had better be in great spiritual shape to enter into such dealings with the spirit world.

A dozen praise songs with swinging and swaying would not seem to be proper preparation. It would be suggested that only mature and spiritual believers become involved in such things. Someone that knows the Lord very well and someone that knows the enemy.

19 "He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me."

A little disappointment with the apostles it would seem. And since he mentions the demon would only come out with fasting and praying later, we know what the disciples had not been doing.

If such preparation is needed for the disciples and the Lord it would seem good preparation for such activity today as well.

20 "And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming." 21 "And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child." 22 "And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us,

and help us.

It crossed my mind that there seems to be more detail given about this man's son than other healings and encounters. It is not clear as to why more detail, but it might be assumed that it was because there were some present that might have needed that information to really understand what was going on. Possibly there were doubters present that did not really know if this boy was really problem ridden.

It may have related to setting the father at ease though the man seems to be more emotional in the next verses than others in our studies.

23 "Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things [are] possible to him that believeth." 24 "And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

Christ declares that correction of the problem is as simple as believing. Indeed, all that relates to our association with God is based on belief. Nothing more and nothing less - simply believe.

Of course, simple belief requires, in and of itself, a turning or changes, so all you repentance buffs rest your knife sharpening arms and relax for there will be no carving up of Derickson this day.

25 "When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, [Thou] dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him." 26 "And [the spirit] cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead." 27 "But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose."

First, the demon had attempted to kill this boy thus he had power over life as did the demons that killed the swine. Not that they could kill outright, but that they could cause circumstances that would cause death.

Second the text is quite clear as to the physical toll that was taken on the boy. He was as if dead - total fatigue and exhaustion.

Some might suggest that since the cross the demons might not have such powers over people. While this might be true, the reports that have come forth from areas where the Devil is quite active might make one wonder. We are not told definitely one way or another and the book of Acts, a post cross record, has accounts of demon activity (Acts 16.16).

Mar 9:28 And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? 29 And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

We see an interesting point of information relating to demons in this passage. The apostles had

failed to cast the demon out of the boy and now they are interested in knowing why they could not. They had seen the Lord do the work quite easily and since they were His followers it would seem obvious that they could do the same, after all He had given them power over the spirits before He sent them forth earlier. Mark 6.7 "And he called [unto him] the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;"

The Lord answers them that "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting." He tells us here that there are different kinds of spirits. We have little information about this but we do know that the good angels have a hierarchy of some sort since arch angels are mentioned as well as just angels. Some evidently have either more prominence, position or power - most likely in my mind all three.

The one in the boy was one that was more powerful in some manner it would seem if it would take fasting and prayer to cast this particular one out of the boy.

The thought occurred to me that since this spirit had been present for a long time, possibly the son was just too weak of spirit and body to resist the demon any longer. We are not told of the powers of the demons nor of their characteristics. We know that there are differences of power or cunning since we know the Word tells us of God's angels having victory over other powers of the air.

Whether this "difference was related to acquired strength or positional strength we do not know. All we know is that this one required fasting and prayer to be cast out. We know from this that the apostles were not up on their personal prayer lives - ahem, how about us?

One must remember that it was the nine apostles that were not at the transfiguration that were powerless in the situation and asking the question. It is not known whether the other three would also have been powerless over the demon or not.

Now in the area of speculation can you imagine the Devil at this point? One of his demons(or himself is a possibility that has not been mentioned) has resisted the powers of the Lord's own apostles. Wow what bragging rights to thumb his nose at God and say, "Hey I told you so!"

It occurred to me that this might have been part of the Lord's sharp rebuke - a frustration of allowing the demons bragging rights, if you will, over the Lord

Just a side note, "fasting" is not present in some translation. Robertson tells us that the two best Greek manuscripts do not contain fasting. Matthew adds the idea of faith to the mix. He gives the Lord's comments of the mustard seed and tells the apostles that their failure is a lack of faith.

Now, we won't take time to study the relation of faith to prayer but it seems to be an obvious relationship in the area of faith to do the works of the Lord. I've read that the average pastor spends eight minutes a day in prayer - no wonder the church is powerless before the world. I'm sure many do much better than this and I'm sure that many church goers do much better as well, but if you see your church as weak and powerless before the world, find a soft pillow to rest your

knees on and see if you cannot change things for your Master and Lord.

Mark makes no mention of faith and Matthew makes no mention of prayer, thus both must have had an understanding that the one was closely related to the other. That would make a very interesting theological study for someone to do.

Robertson also mentions that the spirit discerned the lack of power of the disciples and refused to come out. This idea of the spirit not coming out due to the disciples lack of power is of interest. They were using the power they had but it was not enough. Possibly were they relying on their own power and not the power of the Lord? Might we be doing the same thing at times in our own ministries?

Robertson further suggests that the spirit was responding to the lack of "moral power. This is of interest to contemplate for awhile as well.

The People's New Testament notes mention of Matthew's account of Jesus telling the disciples that if they had the faith of a mustard seed they could move a mountain, that Christ may well have been pointing to Mt. Hermon.

One side note, both authors mention "it" in some translations when speaking of the demon. We know that the Devil is a person as God is a person in the spirit world. We do not know a lot about personality relating to the Devil/demon world but to use "it" to describe one is of interest. It is also probably an unfortunate choice since "him" is an alternate translation for the word in the Greek.

The point being that this is not just an "it" but a thinking rationalizing being that the disciples were dealing with - someone that could certainly determine their power or authority over him.

Now when we are in the area of spiritual warfare we should know our own limitations/possibilities due to our lack of or abundance of prayer. We should also be knowledgeable of our adversary - not some stupid spirit that we can order around at will. It is the power of faith that will cause us to be victorious, not our own self-importance and self worth or some other worldly concept.

Verse nineteen mentions the faithless generation. Thus we might note that lack of faith and the closely related prayer was the cause of the powerless disciples.

As to faith there is real faith and there is false faith. A good illustration of the two types of faith is Carey and one of his associates. They were off to the mission field and even boarded their ship, but as the ship was about to break into open water it was stopped and his associate was taken off to face charges for trying to leave his bad debts. Both going on faith, but only one faith was solidly founded on godly principles.

We all must walk by faith but faith in God and not in ourselves. Carey knew that God would

take care of him and He did though out his life. His associate forgot to live his life by God's principles and was hindered in what he wanted to do for God.

As we pray and walk with God we know His leading and have the faith that is needed for our walk with Him, however if we are not praying and not walking with Him we cannot know the peace that He can give.

Faith can indeed move mountains. Hudson Taylor took one step of faith after another until he was trusting God for the financing of hundreds of missionaries with his mission. He knew his God and he knew his God would provide.

We have some simple statements of occurrence in the next passage.

30 And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it. 31 For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. 32 But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.

It would seem that He wanted some time with the disciples to concentrate on teaching them of coming events. He tells them of His coming death and resurrection though they did not grasp what He was talking about.

Matthew mentions that they were sorry relating to their not asking Him for clarification, and Luke mentions that the real meaning was hidden from them 9.45 "...it was concealed from them, that they should not perceive it:"

It would seem that it was hidden from them, and they did not understand it and were afraid to ask Him about it. Part of the fear may have been from the situation where they could not cast out the demon. Part of it might have been that they had heard all this before and didn't understand it then. (Mark 8.31 "He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.")

This is a good illustration of the relation of a person's perception when something has been hidden from them by God or parables(as we have seen in the Gospels). It is hidden, but it is not hidden in such a way that they seek and seek till found. They do not know, they may even wonder, but they do not seek to conclusion.

Just why it was hidden is not revealed but one might surmise that had they fully understood what was coming the disciples might have removed themselves from the Lord's company. It would not be a far jump to understand that they were in danger had they known what was coming. It may relate some to the fact that if they had known that he was going to be raised from the dead that they would have talked up the subject to others to the over exposure of the truth coming in the near future.

It certainly would have messed up their concept of their Messiah that was going to be freeing them from government oppression to know that he was going to be killed and buried, even if He told them that He was going to raise from the dead it would have totally messed up their concept and expectations.

Okay he teacher caught you talking in class and is about to make you tell what you were talking about - oh, maximum embarrassment.

Mar 9:33 And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? 34 But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. 35 And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.

He asks them what they were talking about, they refuse to tell Him, so He gives application to the topic of their discussion. At least they were trying to settle this among themselves, now days we just assume that we will be first and we all work, scramble and claw toward the top not paying too much attention to others we are climbing over to get there.

Christ tells them that the principle is that they must be servants if they want to come out on top. If you want to serve Christ to the best possible, you must be a servant. Servant of Christ would be my thought, rather than serving others, though serving of others is often a part of being God's servant.

Oh the need of servants hearts in God's pulpits today. Too many are in the pulpit and in their position as dictator or at least as head honcho. Servant is not a concept that is overwhelmingly accepted today.

Matthew mentions that the disciples asked Christ who would be greatest while Mark and Luke mention them reasoning among themselves. This is not a problem, only that there were reasonings and at some point the disciples actually asked the Lord to settle the question.

Matthew mentions "In that hour" and would seem to tie the occasion to his preceding context while Mark indicates there was some time between verse 32 and 33. It would seem quite adequate to say that they ask the Lord, then later were reasoning together. This would indicate that the Lord did not answer their question.

Luke mentions "reasoning of their heart" which might indicate that there was a question, some disputing among the twelve and then some internal reasoning on the part of the twelve as they continued thinking on the subject.

Matthew alone ties the discussion to the Kingdom. Evidently they thought that they were going to be special in the kingdom but one might be more special.

This also adds weight to the thought that they were looking for an earthly kingdom immediate,

rather than later as was the plan of God.

To settle the subject He took a child and laid it out in plain, simple and understandable language.

36 And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, 37 Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

Luke adds "for he that is least among you all, the same is great." Note "is great" not will be great. Do your works here and you will be what you will be seems to be the idea. In short, do not worry about then but do now.

Matthew adds that if you humble yourself here you will be greatest in the kingdom.

Over all being accepting of a child is to be accepting of the Lord and that act relates closely with your position in the kingdom.

This whole concept of humility is a close relative of what has been mentioned of pastors/teachers in our pulpits today. Where is the humility? Pastors are to be accepting of the children, and accepting of being humble like a child. What a goal to set for one's self.

It almost seems as though John takes the Lord's words of being accepting of a child to heart and wonders aloud of someone they had seen ministering. It might well relate back to the whom will be greatest however since he seems to be looking down his nose at this one that had been ministering.

It seems from the text that John was answering a question or was responding to something the Lord had said. I probably is that he understood the Lord in his illustration of humility and serving and wondered at the man under discussion. This man was doing works in your name, but we told him to stop. The indication being "Were we correct in doing so?"

We want to see if we can find some principle for our own time here.

Mar 9:38 And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. 39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. 40 For he that is not against us is on our part.

This passage has perplexed many over the years. Just what are we supposed to make of such statements by the Lord. Are we not to speak against anyone that operates under the name/guise of the Lord Jesus Christ? How about the Mormons, the Roman church, and other isms that name the name of Christ.

Lightfoot suggests that this man may have been a disciple of John. It could also have been one of

the thousands that had followed and heard Christ. Possibly one that had seen Christ casting out demons.

The first principle might be that one must mind the context of the comments. They are in Christ's own time and there were no cults or isms as such yet. Thus this must guide our interpretation.

Second, the man mentioned was casting out demons in the Lord's name. They named Christ as their authority and they were capable of casting out the demons, which would indicate they had the power and authority in some manner.

Next we see that the Lord mentions that the one could not "lightly speak evil of Me." Thus we might apply this to the group we might want to speak against does not speak evil of Christ.

To recap, this man most likely was a disciple of the Lord that was out doing the work of the Lord. He spoke with authority, he seemed to have the power over demons and he was not speaking evil of the Lord.

From this we can surely speak out against cults and isms of our own day if they do not give evidence of miracles or works of God, or if they speak evil of Christ. Now, we have some latitude in the final item. They may uphold the name of Christ, yet if their doctrine varies from the Biblical doctrine of Christ in my mind they are speaking evil of Him.

Any group or person who detracts from the character or message of the Lord might be spoken against without causing damage to this passage. If a group says He was the brother of the devil - that seems evil to me. If a group says that He was not a man - that seems evil to me. If a group says that He was not God -that seems evil to me.

The discussion at hand may have related to the apostle's inability to cast out the demon just previously. John may have wondered at the qualifications of this man in comparison to the apostles inability to do the same thing. There may have been a lot of underlying things in the minds of the apostles relating to humility and service. Just where were they in relation to Christ if they could not cast out a demon.

Whether this was a disciple of John or whether a listener to the teachings of the Lord we do not know, but we do know that the Lord taught the apostles through the experience.

Matthew does not cover this and Luke only mentions it briefly ending with the comment "Forbid him not: for he that is not against you is for you." This seems to be in keeping with our observations from Mark.

We now launch into a rather dark section of do's and don'ts even though do's and don'ts are anathema in our church culture today. Christ mentions several things, all of which will gain the person either good or bad depending on their action. Hummm, consequences for your actions, what a novel concept and to think that the Lord had it first, not the hyper fundamentalist right of

our society.

So many today look down upon consequences as something that will hinder the full potential of the person. True, they do hinder them from reaching their full evil potential. Our society is lacking in every religious social grace there is. Ethics is an unknown in business, in life and often in church life.

Our school system has taught our newer generations that what you want is okay, just do it. No consequences, no repercussions, and no guilt if someday you find out you caused someone harm - it was their fault not yours is the attitude that they are taught.

Recently it has been revealed that many in the mortgage industry had been telling people to lie on their applications so they could get their home loans. Bad enough that the financial folks have no qualms about dishonesty, but the other side is that thousands of applicants also deemed it correct and proper to lie.

The moral fiber of America has been eaten away by the moths of immorality. And what is worst, the church seldom raises a voice of concern. Where is the moral outrage? Where is the preaching of moral principles? When church boards purposely decide to deal with the lost community with the community's standard of conduct rather than Christ's how can it stand against immorality? It cannot because it dare not draw light upon itself.

Years ago I was in a church office in a large church waiting to speak to someone and I overheard the receptionist and a member of the staff arguing very loudly about whether the church should deal with businesses with Christian standards or with worldly standards. The staffer was quite pointed in telling the woman who the church would use the world's standard and that it was church policy.

We will break this section up, but do not forget to understand it as a whole. Christ is laying some serious stuff on the apostles at this moment in time.

Mar 9:41 For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.

Good works assures the retention of rewards.

It is a bit foreign to my own thinking to be concerned about the gaining or losing of reward. I have always served the Master to the best of my ability with no thought as to what reward might or might not exist. I serve Him out of love and a response to what He has done for me, not out of fear or response to what He might yet do for me. Salvation was the gift, and servant hood was the response.

42 And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

It is clear that one that offends a child, physical death is the better result for the offender. And our Supreme Court just said that death for a child rapist is cruel and unusual punishment. Any guesses what God thinks of our judicial system?

43 And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: 44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Several points here. It is better to cut off your hand if it offends you.

1. Not responding to your own sin can result in hell. If your hand offends you cutting it off is better than to allow it to cause you to end up in hell. Now, this is not literal - if your hand is offending you don't chop it off, your insurance may not cover it. However if your hand causes you to sin, it would be better to cut it off than to allow its action to cause you to end in hell.

It would seem that God is quite serious about sin. Not like so many preachers of today that speak of missing the mark, or of disappointing God, but sin is wrong and it can cause you to go to hell. Our watered down preaching of today is a shame upon the church of our generation.

The current church is more interested in entertainment and numbers than in telling people of their sin.

Recently I read of some people's concern about the denominational VBS materials they had used this year. Several observed and agreed that it presented a very watered down Gospel. They noted that "sin" was not discussed in their materials and that they were very disappointed. Several others on the forum were rather incensed at the accusations and thought that the material did a good job.

Some are discerning and others are enablers of the system by their acceptance of the norm.

2. Hell's fire is never quenched.

A simple yet so misunderstood statement. We ran into a young man who told me that hell's fire and torment was only a temporary thing, that after you were purified you would be transferred to heaven - yea, right as if the Lord Jesus Christ did not know what He was saying.

Now a bit of irony here, my wife had a rich relative that always said that he was taking his money with him. He declared boldly that he had an asbestos coffin. Now we all know asbestos relates to an insulating material that insulates against fire, however in our text the phrase "that shall never be quenched" is the translation of one Greek word which just happens to be "asbestos" which means not to be quenched or unquenchable.

This fire is definitely not something that will go out just as you get uncomfortable; it is a fire that will continue on for your eternal existence.

Gill points out that this fire refers to the valley of Hinnom that was actually the Jerusalem city dump where the fire was continually burning to destroy the polluted animals and trash of the city. You can imagine the Lord using such a visual to illustrate His comments.

Robertson adds a little further information about the valley, "The Valley of Hinnom had been desecrated by the sacrifice of children to Moloch so that as an accursed place it was used for the city garbage where worms gnawed and fires burned. It is thus a vivid picture of eternal punishment."

I recall as a young boy, my father taking me to our city dump in a small town in the Midwest to shoot our little twenty-two rifle. I liked going out to shoot rats, but I can, to this day, remember the smell of burning garbage and furniture etc. I really disliked that end of the time with my father. I know, quality time with your son - going to the city dump to shoot rats - well in the forties that was a splurge for many families when it came to "bonding" time.

3. Hell is not annihilation. If, as we have already seen, the fire is non ending, then the existence there most likely is also non ending. Hell is not a temporary stop-off or transfer station for the lost it is a destination.

I have always played a little game with my mind relating to just who gained eternal life through the shed blood of Christ. I am almost persuaded that all gain eternal life, both the believer and the lost. He paid the price for all, all is available to all of mankind. The fact that they reject His gracious invitation to heaven is their own fault and of their own doing, not God's. If they choose to spend their eternity in hell, in darkness, in fire and in eternal torment so be it. They were given opportunity, they were given revelation, yet they rejected that revelation and chose their eternal destination.

If this be true, can we ever give witness to the Gospel without a clear understanding of hell also being given? To share the love of Christ without the knowledge of hell is to share only part of the message. Our church today is so tied up in anti theological rhetoric that they fail to teach their congregations that the loving God is also a just and vengeful God that has set the standards and will enforce them no matter if we give a Reader's Digest version of His message or not.

Accepting Christ must be based on understanding who we are in our lost condition, where we are heading due to our lost condition and that Christ can remedy both conditions through a proper understanding of Who He is and what He has done.

4. Just in case you missed it, the fire is never quenched. Need we say this? Probably not, but let no one suggest that fair warning was not given.

We have another very similar illustration. This time it is the foot that might offend. These are not to be taken literally, or the thought of really cutting your hand or foot off, but rather just the realization of just how serious sin is for the believer.

Indeed, if you cannot control your body then loosing part of it would be the more preferable. The

conclusion might be that we are able and capable of controlling our bodies and keeping them from offending us.

45 And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: 46 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

It might be of interest to understand how the hand and/or foot might be an offense. The hand might offend by reaching and/or doing something that is improper while the foot might carry you to that impropriety.

Next we see the eye mentioned and we all know how the eye can find its way into wrongdoing. Using it in the viewing of improper subject matter. I would classify most television in this area. We are to think on things that are good, but too many sit in front of the television absorbing smut at a very high level.

One might observe also that it is really the mind that is the true culprit in all of these. The hand, the foot, and the eye really have nothing to do with it other than being a helper to the minds indiscretions. They are the enablers if you will.

47 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: 48 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

49 For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. 50 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

We all know that we are to be the salt of the earth and this reference just adds to that line of thought. We are to have salt in ourselves and peace with one another. This might be one of the clearest indications that Christians should get along that the Scripture relates to us.

Not that we closely associate with false doctrine, but we ought to get along with others that name the name of Christ.

Years ago I was told by a missionary to South America that he had set up a small church in his home. The charismatic missionary in the same town rented the building next door and set up loudspeakers to transmit his wild and noisy services to the neighborhood. It was completely disruptive of the services next door.

This sort of thing is obnoxious and totally uncalled for. I would be quick to submit that there are probably similar stories of the non-charismatics actions as well. We all need to understand what the Lord was trying to do in this passage - have peace with one another and all be salt to the society that we live in.

One must remember the context of this passage. The disciples had been discussing who would be first, they then discussed one casting out demons in the Lord's name, and we remember that the Lord introduced them to the child. In this context He calls us to have salt within and unity without. Sounds like a very tall order to me for the believer.

Being first is not relevant, being salt is. Being the true follower is not relevant but unity is. Indeed, who is the true follower? Yes, we fundamentalist/evangelical folks believe we are but then so do all the others that name the name of Christ. All of us being salt is the key. All of us living in unity is the other key.

Verse forty-nine introduces us to an interesting phrase. "For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." Just what might the Lord have meant by this statement?

Fire often relates to judgment or trial but in the case of a believer, trial would be more fitting. Is there a possible answer in the fact that the salty believer will be tried by fire?

It can be observed in most of history those movements that were doing great things for the Lord have found persecution. Even today in the world motivated and committed Christians find trouble for their cause. In America we are even beginning to see this coming. Those children/teens in our public schools that would take a stand for their Lord often find themselves ridiculed if not discriminated against by zealous teachers/administrators that think the federal government has given them authority to indoctrinate in the cause of secularism.

On the other hand Barnes mentions that many take it to mean that the salt preserves those in hell so that they do not putrefy as meat would without salt.

He comes to another conclusion. "Probably the passage has no reference at all to future punishment; and the difficulty of interpreting it has arisen from supposing it to be connected with the 48th verse, or given as a "reason" for what is said in "that" verse, rather than considering it as designed to illustrate the "general design" of the passage. The main scope of the passage was not to discourse of future punishment; that is brought in incidentally. The chief object of the passage was -

"1. To teach the apostles that "other men," not "with them," might be true Christians, Mar_9:38-39.

"2. That they ought to be disposed to look favorably upon the slightest evidence that they "might be true believers," Mar_9:41.

"3. That they ought to avoid giving "offence" to such feeble and obscure Christians, Mar_9:42.

"4. That "everything" calculated to give offence, or to dishonor religion, should be removed, Mar_9:43. And,

"5. That everything which would endanger their salvation should be sacrificed; that they should "deny" themselves in every way in order to obtain eternal life. In this way they would be "preserved" to eternal life."

The context seems to be the apostles, their place in the kingdom and others doing work for

Christ. Thus we should find some understanding within that context.

He mentions that this is a difficult passage and that there are many theories as to its meaning so we may not answer your questions here either.

Verse 49 seems to speak of the sacrifice that one might make for the Lord in His service and in humbling ourselves by controlling our members. That sacrifice will be salted or shown to be properly prepared for the Lord and your offering of it to Him. (Lev. 2.13 seems to be the thinking behind what the Lord said relating to sacrifices and salt.)

Verse fifty seems to relate to the thought of unity which has been mentioned. That we that serve Him should be properly prepared and that we should have unity of mind with others that are doing His work.

And just a comment or two about the worm that we were introduced to. "Worm" means that crawly thing or a maggot. Ever hear the comment of "such a worm as I" in a hymn - this is probably the thinking of the writer.

In Isaiah's closing words in 66.22ff we read "22 For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. 23 And it shall come to pass, [that] from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. 24 And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh."

Two items should be noted here. First of all this is in the context of the new heavens and new earth yet the redeemed can look upon the lost in their torment. What an awesome line of thought this is. We will agree with God in His justice and His disposition of the lost and can agree with Him on their eternal condition.

But more to the point of our text it speaks of the same thing that Mark introduced us to - the worm that will not die.

The worm seems to relate to their life rather than their situation for the situation is described by the fire that will not be quenched.

Barnes takes a little different look at the passage and may be right when he suggests that the worm is like the worms that feed on dead bodies after a huge battle. The worms will continue on as long as there is flesh to feed upon. The failure of his illustrations seems to be in the eternal end of things and the fact that the worm seems to be a part of the person rather than something coming upon the dead person and beginning to feed.

Some mention that verse 44 and 46 are not in a lot of manuscripts and the Net Bible omits both verses, but verse 48 reiterates the thought so we miss nothing either way.

The worm is described as "their worm" thus something possessed by the person or indeed some integrated part of the person's being might be the thought in my mind. This thinking is not seen in the commentaries that I looked into. All speak of the symbolic worm and that it related to the flesh eating worms of death.

If this was the case I must wonder why the Holy Spirit through Mark included the pronoun indicating ownership or possession.

Psalm 22.6 Pictures this closer relation to the worm and it does not seem to be something eating upon the body but rather symbolic of the being. "But I [am] a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people."

Isaiah 14.11 seems to be more to the point of the commentaries. When speaking of Lucifer Isaiah mentions "Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, [and] the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee."

Also of interest is the fact that Mark is alone in his descriptiveness and mention of the worm. One might think that his descriptiveness is to bore into his readers mind as a death worm one day will and convince them of their final and ultimate end if they reject this Jesus to which he is giving witness to.

The thought of giving a cup of water in the Lord's name is of interest and should be noted. Serving Christ is not the dedication of going to deepest Africa as a missionary to reach the tribes of the jungle, but it is the giving of a cup of water. Not to detract from the thousands of committed missionaries that are doing a fine work, and are serving their Lord in far-off lands but all of us can serve Christ right where we are.

So often people get into the I'm going to be a missionary/pastor mode and they commit themselves to study to do so. Christ says giving a cup of water is important as well. While you are preparing for ministry be sure to prepare for eternity by giving water to those that you meet.

No, water is not the issue, it is the giving in Christ's name. Be sure to serve in whatever small way you can no matter who you are or what you are doing.

One item that many Bible colleges have allowed to go by the wayside is "Christian Service." When I was in college we were required to put in 15 hours or so of Christian Service. This included anything OUTSIDE of the school that we did for the Lord. If we would go door knocking for an hour that would count. We were held responsible for this service so that the school knew that we were doing it. Most of the Christian service projects had to be cleared by someone at the school.

The point was that even though we were in school preparing for the Lord's work we were out in the world doing something for Him. It is sure that if we had not been required to do the service we would have found reasons not to in our busy lives of working for a living, raising families and of course church, school and everything else in life. No matter how busy we were we found

fifteen hours a week to serve Him that we serve.

Assure your reward by serving the one that will reward you - Christ.

I've related before in my notes that while working for J.C. Penney I went a year without absence. At the end of the year the manager took all of us that had good attendance out for a nice lunch. As we were leaving I thanked the manager and said, "This is neat, to get rewarded with a great lunch for doing what we are supposed to do." He smiled recognizing my insight.

We are supposed to serve the Lord, but when we do we get rewarded for it - how great does it get?

MARK CHAPTER TEN

9:1 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

This passage has puzzled many due to the fact that most that feel the kingdom is yet future wonder why He would declare that some would see it come before their death.

The answer is located, as is usual, within the direct context. The next thing that occurs is the transfiguration. This must be the kingdom coming in power some declare, however this is not necessarily a good explanation. Only three people saw it, so how could this be the kingdom coming? Actually He did not declare how many and three fits well "some of them" and may well be the answer to the question.

Some could well suggest that this was the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came to inaugurate the beginning of the church. Of course others, the amillennialists, would declare these positions incorrect and declare themselves correct within their own position. Their position, the teaching that the kingdom is going on now and has been since 70 A.D., would place the coming at the 70 A.D. point when the temple was destroyed. This is a possible position, but to declare that the kingdom is going on now is to deny Scripture. Many passages in the Old Testament describe occurrences in the Kingdom and this day and age certainly does not fit into our own day.

Add to that the fact that Revelation speaks of the Devil being bound for the 1000 years of the kingdom and one must wonder at their position. How can anyone look our corrupt and evil world and suggest that the Devil is bound? Rev. 20.4-7 "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and [I saw] the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received [his] mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This [is] the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy [is] he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. 7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,"

It also amazes me to hear those that suggest 70 A.D. is what was spoken of in the Old Testament as the coming of the kingdom - the Old Testament speaks of a glorious return, not the destruction of the temple and the further subjection of the Jewish people. Ezekiel speaks of the raising of dry bones and the flesh returning to the bones which pictures the returning of Israel, not its destruction. Ezek. 37.4 "Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. 5 Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: 6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I [am] the LORD." That just does not sound like the destruction of Jerusalem.

It would seem that the transfiguration was looking forward to the coming of Christ in the future when He would come to set up His kingdom on the earth for 1000 years.

9:2 And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. 9:3 And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. 9:4 And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. 9:5 And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. 9:6 For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. 9:7 And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. 9:8 And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves. 9:9 And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. 9:10 And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.

"Transfigured" is the Greek word "metamorphoo" meaning transformed. It is the word we gain our word metamorphosis from. It is the idea of a complete change. This verb is in the passive thus this was a change that came from without Christ. This is not something that He did under His own power, but it was done to Him from the outside. The change was complete, it was from one thing into another.

Luke gives a slightly different view of the occurrence. Luke 9.28 "And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. 29 And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment [was] white [and] glistening." Luke goes on to say that the three disciples were asleep and they awoke to this transformed Christ.

Can you imagine the shock of the apostles when they woke to such a site? One might wonder if Christ knew this was going to occur. Since He singled out the three to go with Him it might well be that He did. Take them with you to experience something super special and they go to sleep on Him - about par for mankind.

Not only was his being transformed, but even His garments. Some might suggest that the change was due to the glory of God shinning forth as with Moses in the cleft of the rock and this is a distinct possibility. However the use of the word transformed in Mark seems to call for something more than just the reflection of some glory.

Luke contains a small phrase that is of great importance to the whole situation that we have at hand. 9.31 "Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem."

Two things to consider - the fact that the three spoke of His coming crucifixion, and second, that HE would accomplish the deed. This goes to the passage in John 10.15 "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep." This idea is related in other

passages as well --Christ took it upon Himself to die for the lost of all generations. It was His doing, and His timing and all was under His control. Yes, of course the Father and Spirit were involved, but the point is that God controlled the situation, not the Jewish leaders, not the Roman leaders, and not one of the human race had any control over these occurrences.

Back to the first item, why did Moses and Elijah come to speak with Christ at this time or at any time? What did they speak to Him about? What items of discussion were available?

It crossed my mind that in the pre-incarnate days Christ and the duo might have been "friends" or close in some manner. Since Christ was the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament Moses may have had a special relationship with the Lord. I have no idea what kind of relationships we will have with the Lord but it seems that some people are closer to God in a special way due to their close relationship in this life, but there is no teaching on the subject in the Word.

We might remember that Elijah was translated without death (II Kings 2.11) and Moses, though he died, was buried by God. We also know that there was a great angelic fight over the body of Moses (Jude 1.9), thus these two men were very special to the Lord even before this time. Enoch was also translated (Gen. 5.24) by God but he is not mentioned here. The reasoning is left to the Lord since we are just not told the why of this meeting.

There is the possibility that the discussion of Christ's coming death (Luke 9.32) may well have related to Elijah and Moses and their interest in the complete work of salvation that Christ was committed to conclude. The pair would have known that their salvation was not yet complete in reality even though it was complete in God's mind and plan.

These two that appeared with the Lord both had special items relating to their death, as would Christ. Whether there is a direct link between the three is not stated nor should it be assumed.

Gill suggests that this meeting was to show the apostles that Christ was there to put an end to the Law and the prophets. That His coming death was the completeness that the Old Testament saints were awaiting in Sheol (Luke 16.23).

The Bible Knowledge Commentary on Matthew 17.3 mentions the possible thought that Those present were representative of the categories of people who will make up the kingdom. Moses represented those that have believed and died, Elijah represents those that believe and do not die but are raptured, and the Apostles represent the living. It is also pointed out that Christ will be as Himself, the glorified Christ.

There is one obvious question - how did the apostles know it was Elajah and Moses, were they told or did they know or did they guess/assume due to the thinking of the Jews that the two would appear one day? Several commentaries mention that the Jewish leaders taught that the two would appear one day. If this were true it would be likely that the apostles knew it and this would have been quite a sign to them of the importance of the Lord.

Just a side note to the transfiguration, since the apostles were asleep (Luke 9.32) it is quite

possible that this was at night. Imagine waking to the brilliance of glory in the midst of blackness! We can understand why Peter was a little rattled at the time of his hoof in mouth disease.

Continuing with the passage, we see that Christ must have asked Peter something for Peter answered. Peter states that it is "good" that the disciples were there. The term relates to valuable or virtuous and seems a little more than just Good. A cup of coffee is good, but a Starbucks coffee is valuable - at least they think so from the prices that they charge.

9:5 And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. 9:6 For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid.

Now we get to Peter's hoof and mouth disease. He blurts out that they should build three tabernacles for the trio and it is mentioned that he was "sore afraid." Strong states that this word means scared out of one's wits. They were in a world of hurt to know what was going on.

Luke may give us a little insight into Peter. Luke mentions that Elijah and Moses were moving away from the Lord. It might be that Peter wanted to make shelter for them all for the night thinking that the two were going to have to go quite a way to find shelter. This may have been the thinking/speaking of a man who had compassion.

Many suggest that Peter's comment was inappropriate and this is probably noted due to the Gospel writer's comments about him not knowing what he said or that he didn't know what to say. Note should be made that there is no rebuke of Peter nor his offer thus we might assume that it was a natural reaction to the situation. His comment may have been off the mark due to his misunderstanding of the situation, but I am not convinced that it was inappropriate.

There are some differences between the accounts.

9:7 And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.

Matthew mentions when the others do not 17.6-8 "they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them and said, Arise, and be not afraid."

Luke 9.34 mentions "and they feared as they entered into the cloud." Yet all three accounts mention the cloud overshadowed them. I would assume that the cloud came and enveloped them. The coming would be the overshadowing while the enveloping would be the entering.

The "voice" that came from the cloud is the word we gain "phone" from.

All three mention that God told them to hear His son, while Matthew adds "beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" and Luke 9.35 mentions "my Son, my chosen;"

9:8 And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

Evidently Elijah and Moses were still there when the cloud came and then they suddenly disappeared as God spoke his Message to the three apostle.

It seems the sequence of events is that the two Old Testament saints appeared to the Lord, the apostles woke up, the cloud came, the apostles feared, Christ calmed their fears, God spoke and the two Old Testament saints disappeared.

9:9 And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. 9:10 And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.

They see Christ in glory or great brightness, they see Elijah and Moses, and they hear God speaking from a cloud and they spend their time wondering about what Christ meant about being raised from the dead. As humans we don't seem to be able to focus on the important, but get lost in the detail.

Even today one might wonder at someone saying that he is going to be raised from the dead. The apostles indeed would have wondered at such a statement from the Lord. They would have been wondering but you would think that seeing Christ in the glorious way that they did that they would have wondered at that as well.

In the next verse we see confirmation that the Jews were looking for Elijah to appear. These three apostles were the only witnesses of that occurrence. One might wonder if they had an real grasp of the significance of all of this and that they alone had seen what the Jews were looking for.

It is quite possible that this was the sign that the Jews asked the Lord about in our previous studies. If it was, then the apostles alone saw the sign and then only three of them.

Verse 9 mentions that the Lord charged the three not to tell anyone of the transfiguration until he had been raised from the dead. "And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead." That would have been difficult for the three to rub shoulders with the other disciples and not speak of the occurrence.

There are times in ministry and in the congregation that not speaking of something is the required format of life. Be sure that you honor this requirement. If you do not you will most likely cause yourself much trouble and probably others along with you.

Silence is the only way to go - talking is never an alternative to not speaking of something that is to be kept quiet.

9:11 And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?

9:12 And he answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought. 9:13 But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

It seems that this is still just the three apostles that had witnessed the transfiguration. Gill agrees with this assessment.

This passage states clearly that The Jews believed that Elias would come and Christ confirms that it was a correct belief on the part of the Jews, but also reveals that Elias had already arrived on the scene and the Jews had treated him in some manner.

Gill mentions that the Latin Vulgate Bible adds Pharisees to the mix by translating it scribes and Pharisees. I wouldn't wonder if the term "scribe" wasn't a broad term for all of the leadership since they were so closely related to one another.

Is Elias Elijah? Is Christ speaking of the transfiguration? It would seem that this is not the case since it looks as if Elias had arrived in the past at some point.

Is Elias speaking here of John the Baptist? Is Elias speaking of the Lord Himself? Let us see if we can determine this.

Gill lists a number of Jewish scholars that mention that Elias would come before the Messiah. Christ seems to be speaking to this belief and it would indicate that He was speaking of John the Baptist.

Some indicate that they feel that the transfiguration appearance was the appearing of Elias, though the Jews had nothing to do with that so how could they have treated him in a poor manner as verse thirteen mentions? "and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him."

Indeed, this may have been in the apostles mind as they spoke to Christ, but He makes it clear that the transfiguration had nothing to do with it.

Here is a prime example of the need to look at all the gospel records to gain the full accounting of facts. Matthew makes it clear that Christ was speaking of John the Baptist. Matthew 17:12 "But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. 13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist."

This would indicate that the three apostles did in fact think that the appearance of Elias/Elijah at the transfiguration was the appearance that the Jews were looking for. It also indicates that Peter's offer to build tabernacles might well have been based on his belief that the two Old testament saints were not going to be leaving.

This conversation brings to mind two previous discussions in Mark. One is when Herod was trying to figure out who Christ was when He heard of his fame. Mark 6.14 "And king Herod heard [of him]; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. 15 Others said, That it is Elias . And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. 16 But when Herod heard [thereof], he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead."

The other comes when Christ asked Peter who people thought that He was. Mark 8.28 "And they answered, John the Baptist: but some [say], Elias ; and others, One of the prophets. 29 And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ."

This makes one wonder, with all of this information and all this commotion about who different ones were, how the Jews could possibly have missed the implications of John the Baptist and Jesus. It seems to me that only their blindness could have allowed them to have missed all this that had been laid out so clearly before them. This blindness came from God Himself. We know that Christ spoke in parables to keep the Jews from understanding. I personally would add that the blindness may well have been brought to the Jews even more completely by the Father as He did unto Pharaoh. (Romans 9.17 "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh , Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. 18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will [have mercy], and whom he will he hardeneth.")

Another passage that makes it clear that God has repercussions for those that reject him is Romans 1.20. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, [even] his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified [him] not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. 24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. 26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in [their] knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; 29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, 30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: 32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

The clear implication of these passages is that if a man turns against God, at some point God will turn the man's heart even further from God and that there will be no cure for the turning. The application of this is related to the lost when they die. They are clearly without excuse and they clearly will reap that which they have sown. Their final destiny is far from God and of their own choice.

When someone dies and the relatives mourn the loss, if they question the eternal state of the person you can, in clear conscience tell them that God gives choices in life and each person must choose their own way to walk. If they are in heaven it is because of a clear choice for God. If they are not in heaven it is also because of a clear choice against God.

It is not our place to assume that we can tell if a person was a child of God or not, it is their own choice and unless they made that choice known we cannot know what it was nor their placement in eternity.

This, in my mind, allows us to have peace after the loss of a loved one. We need not worry whether we lived correctly before them, we need not worry whether we witnessed clearly enough to them, and we need not worry about their eternal destination. It was between the person and God. There was little we could have done or say that would have changed things - it is simply a decision the person made when confronted with the revelation of God in nature and to any revelation that they might have received in life.

Their decision, not God's, not yours - THEIR DECISION.

9:14 And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. 9:15 And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him. 9:16 And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them? 9:17 And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; 9:18 And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. 19 He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me. 20 And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. 21 And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. 22 And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. 23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. 24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. 25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. 26 And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. 27 But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.

We see in Christ confronting the Scribes a concern for His apostles as well as a watchfulness

over them. He confronted those that questioned them to head off any problems that the questioners might have wanted to raise. Christ was showing a protective stance over His own.

Pastors and teachers, this would be a good standard to set for yourselves in relation to your people. They need some watching over and concern. Your protectiveness is a part of your ministry. Be sure that you have a concern and protective attitude. If you do not there might be something missing in your ministry.

Recently I read a post on an Internet forum from a pastor that had been at his new church for three months. He was already looking for a way out and wanting people to give reason to move on.

He had wanted to change some things in the church and presented his changes to the board. They said okay and he instituted the changes. People did not like the changes and were complaining. He was afraid that he was in the wrong church.

He was more interested in changing what was working for the church rather than being interested in watching over the flock that God had placed him over. His concerns were for his own style of church rather than the peoples wellfair.

In verse fifteen it mentions that the people were amazed. Some suggest that they were surprised that He came to the aid of the disciples since the Scribes were getting the better of them. In the first place there is no indication that there was a dispute going on, nor that the scribes were getting the better of the apostles.

The amazement might, but we have no real indication of it, be that Christ had an afterglow of sorts from the transfiguration much as Moses did when he came down from Sinai when God passed him by. This was my first thought though it would be pure speculation.

Since Christ had been trying to remain out of the limelight it may have been that the people were just surprised to see Him in public.

16 "And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?"

If there was a dispute it was probably over why the apostles could not heal the person. The Scribes undoubtedly knew of the miracles of the Lord as well as probable miracles of the disciples when Christ sent them out. Indeed, they might even, forgive me for questioning their motives, have brought the problem man to them when the Lord was not around to test them, or try to cause problems for them or the Lord. Now, I just never question other peoples motives - well not all the time - well, yes most of the time, but the Scribes just ache for our doubt don't you think?

17 "And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;"

Whether this man was a Scribe or whether he was just one seeking assistance with his child we are not told. It would seem easiest to see him as just one that came to seek help with his child, though it is not out of the realm of possibility that the Scribes brought him with them. (The preposition "of" is related to origin thus one from the multitude.)

Luke 9.38-39 mentions the fact that this was the man's only child, one most precious to his father to be sure.

This man was answering Christ's question as to why the Scribes were asking questions of the disciples. This is why we might suspect that he was a plant of some sort, though I would doubt he was a knowing participant if he was a part of the Scribe's plan.

The father now expands upon the condition of his son. Matthew mentions that he was, as Robertson has it an "epileptic" but Mark's record just concentrates on the spirit that was present. (The King James uses the term lunatic) "dumb spirit" is the comment of the father.

Matthew records that the father knelt indicating that the man had some understanding of the importance of Christ - He was one to be honored when making a request.

The church has lost something in the area of prayer. In all of the churches that I have attended over the near fifty years that I have been regular I have only been in one church where people prayed on their knees. If you study the term worship in the Bible you will find that often it is used in the context of someone kneeling or prostrate.

This is God that we are approaching and it is due respect that we owe Him. Yes, He will allow you to approach Him in any manner you wish but in my mind you show Him what level of respect that you give by your appearance, actions, words and position.

Just read through the throne scene accounts in the Bible, this is the scene right now before God and how do we approach His throne. Revelation speaks of the elders throwing their crowns before Him. Is that the approach you have in your church? (Rev. 4.24 "And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. 25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, [Thou] dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. 26 And [the spirit] cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. 27 But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.")

I must wonder at some of the "worship" that I see today. People on stage swinging and swaying and waving their hands in the air as if to try to get a disinterested God's attention. This is not the action shown in the Word, but rather God's people on their knees before their God. Even Christ is shown to be in a prostrate position when going to the Father in prayer. Matthew 26.39 mentions Him on His face.

Now let us move on to the unfortunate person who is being tormented. The word translated "teareth" is a much stronger than our idea of tear. It is a word that relates to smashing into small pieces or shatter. More the idea of a Corel dinner dish that shatters into minute shards and some larger pieces. "Gnashing" or grinding of teeth is the idea. In fact Robertson mentions of the word "Old word for making a shrill cry or squeak." It actually relates to the sound that this makes rather than the action itself.

"Pineth" relates to a wasting away or drying up. Barnes mentions "haggard, and emaciated" in relation to this word. This devil was causing great physical trouble for the man's son. In later verses we see even more description of the son's condition.

The disciples were asked to bring the devil out or cast him out. This word differs from the one in verse twenty-nine which is one related to our word exorcism though the meaning is similar.

18 "And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not."

"And they could not." Is of great interest to me. Some speak of the ease with which demons come out and they seem to do it as if on a whim in services, yet the apostles could not throw out a real devil. Would make you wonder of the validity of today's easy healing services.

Casting out demons, if there is such a thing today, is serious business and should not be taken lightly. Accounts coming from China and some of the island countries would seem to indicate that such things are still going on. Said reports seem to indicate the fact that you had better be in great spiritual shape to enter into such dealings with the spirit world.

A dozen praise songs with swinging and swaying would not seem to be proper preparation. It would be suggested that only mature and spiritual believers become involved in such things. Someone that knows the Lord very well and someone that knows the enemy.

19 "He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me."

A little disappointment with the apostles it would seem. And since he mentions the demon would only come out with fasting and praying later, we know what the disciples had not been doing.

If such preparation is needed for the disciples and the Lord it would seem good preparation for such activity today as well.

20 "And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming." 21 "And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child." 22 "And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us,

and help us.

It crossed my mind that there seems to be more detail given about this man's son than other healings and encounters. It is not clear as to why more detail, but it might be assumed that it was because there were some present that might have needed that information to really understand what was going on. Possibly there were doubters present that did not really know if this boy was really problem ridden.

It may have related to setting the father at ease though the man seems to be more emotional in the next verses than others in our studies.

23 "Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things [are] possible to him that believeth." 24 "And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

Christ declares that correction of the problem is as simple as believing. Indeed, all that relates to our association with God is based on belief. Nothing more and nothing less - simply believe.

Of course, simple belief requires, in and of itself, a turning or changes, so all you repentance buffs rest your knife sharpening arms and relax for there will be no carving up of Derickson this day.

25 "When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, [Thou] dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him." 26 "And [the spirit] cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead." 27 "But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose."

First, the demon had attempted to kill this boy thus he had power over life as did the demons that killed the swine. Not that they could kill outright, but that they could cause circumstances that would cause death.

Second the text is quite clear as to the physical toll that was taken on the boy. He was as if dead - total fatigue and exhaustion.

Some might suggest that since the cross the demons might not have such powers over people. While this might be true, the reports that have come forth from areas where the Devil is quite active might make one wonder. We are not told definitely one way or another and the book of Acts, a post cross record, has accounts of demon activity (Acts 16.16).

Mar 9:28 And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? 29 And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

We see an interesting point of information relating to demons in this passage. The apostles had

failed to cast the demon out of the boy and now they are interested in knowing why they could not. They had seen the Lord do the work quite easily and since they were His followers it would seem obvious that they could do the same, after all He had given them power over the spirits before He sent them forth earlier. Mark 6.7 "And he called [unto him] the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits;"

The Lord answers them that "This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting." He tells us here that there are different kinds of spirits. We have little information about this but we do know that the good angels have a hierarchy of some sort since arch angels are mentioned as well as just angels. Some evidently have either more prominence, position or power - most likely in my mind all three.

The one in the boy was one that was more powerful in some manner it would seem if it would take fasting and prayer to cast this particular one out of the boy.

The thought occurred to me that since this spirit had been present for a long time, possibly the son was just too weak of spirit and body to resist the demon any longer. We are not told of the powers of the demons nor of their characteristics. We know that there are differences of power or cunning since we know the Word tells us of God's angels having victory over other powers of the air.

Whether this "difference was related to acquired strength or positional strength we do not know. All we know is that this one required fasting and prayer to be cast out. We know from this that the apostles were not up on their personal prayer lives - ahem, how about us?

One must remember that it was the nine apostles that were not at the transfiguration that were powerless in the situation and asking the question. It is not known whether the other three would also have been powerless over the demon or not.

Now in the area of speculation can you imagine the Devil at this point? One of his demons(or himself is a possibility that has not been mentioned) has resisted the powers of the Lord's own apostles. Wow what bragging rights to thumb his nose at God and say, "Hey I told you so!"

It occurred to me that this might have been part of the Lord's sharp rebuke - a frustration of allowing the demons bragging rights, if you will, over the Lord

Just a side note, "fasting" is not present in some translation. Robertson tells us that the two best Greek manuscripts do not contain fasting. Matthew adds the idea of faith to the mix. He gives the Lord's comments of the mustard seed and tells the apostles that their failure is a lack of faith.

Now, we won't take time to study the relation of faith to prayer but it seems to be an obvious relationship in the area of faith to do the works of the Lord. I've read that the average pastor spends eight minutes a day in prayer - no wonder the church is powerless before the world. I'm sure many do much better than this and I'm sure that many church goers do much better as well, but if you see your church as weak and powerless before the world, find a soft pillow to rest your

knees on and see if you cannot change things for your Master and Lord.

Mark makes no mention of faith and Matthew makes no mention of prayer, thus both must have had an understanding that the one was closely related to the other. That would make a very interesting theological study for someone to do.

Robertson also mentions that the spirit discerned the lack of power of the disciples and refused to come out. This idea of the spirit not coming out due to the disciples lack of power is of interest. They were using the power they had but it was not enough. Possibly were they relying on their own power and not the power of the Lord? Might we be doing the same thing at times in our own ministries?

Robertson further suggests that the spirit was responding to the lack of "moral power. This is of interest to contemplate for awhile as well.

The People's New Testament notes mention of Matthew's account of Jesus telling the disciples that if they had the faith of a mustard seed they could move a mountain, that Christ may well have been pointing to Mt. Hermon.

One side note, both authors mention "it" in some translations when speaking of the demon. We know that the Devil is a person as God is a person in the spirit world. We do not know a lot about personality relating to the Devil/demon world but to use "it" to describe one is of interest. It is also probably an unfortunate choice since "him" is an alternate translation for the word in the Greek.

The point being that this is not just an "it" but a thinking rationalizing being that the disciples were dealing with - someone that could certainly determine their power or authority over him.

Now when we are in the area of spiritual warfare we should know our own limitations/possibilities due to our lack of or abundance of prayer. We should also be knowledgeable of our adversary - not some stupid spirit that we can order around at will. It is the power of faith that will cause us to be victorious, not our own self-importance and self worth or some other worldly concept.

Verse nineteen mentions the faithless generation. Thus we might note that lack of faith and the closely related prayer was the cause of the powerless disciples.

As to faith there is real faith and there is false faith. A good illustration of the two types of faith is Carey and one of his associates. They were off to the mission field and even boarded their ship, but as the ship was about to break into open water it was stopped and his associate was taken off to face charges for trying to leave his bad debts. Both going on faith, but only one faith was solidly founded on godly principles.

We all must walk by faith but faith in God and not in ourselves. Carey knew that God would

take care of him and He did though out his life. His associate forgot to live his life by God's principles and was hindered in what he wanted to do for God.

As we pray and walk with God we know His leading and have the faith that is needed for our walk with Him, however if we are not praying and not walking with Him we cannot know the peace that He can give.

Faith can indeed move mountains. Hudson Taylor took one step of faith after another until he was trusting God for the financing of hundreds of missionaries with his mission. He knew his God and he knew his God would provide.

We have some simple statements of occurrence in the next passage.

30 And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it. 31 For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. 32 But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.

It would seem that He wanted some time with the disciples to concentrate on teaching them of coming events. He tells them of His coming death and resurrection though they did not grasp what He was talking about.

Matthew mentions that they were sorry relating to their not asking Him for clarification, and Luke mentions that the real meaning was hidden from them 9.45 "...it was concealed from them, that they should not perceive it:"

It would seem that it was hidden from them, and they did not understand it and were afraid to ask Him about it. Part of the fear may have been from the situation where they could not cast out the demon. Part of it might have been that they had heard all this before and didn't understand it then. (Mark 8.31 "He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.")

This is a good illustration of the relation of a person's perception when something has been hidden from them by God or parables(as we have seen in the Gospels). It is hidden, but it is not hidden in such a way that they seek and seek till found. They do not know, they may even wonder, but they do not seek to conclusion.

Just why it was hidden is not revealed but one might surmise that had they fully understood what was coming the disciples might have removed themselves from the Lord's company. It would not be a far jump to understand that they were in danger had they known what was coming. It may relate some to the fact that if they had known that he was going to be raised from the dead that they would have talked up the subject to others to the over exposure of the truth coming in the near future.

It certainly would have messed up their concept of their Messiah that was going to be freeing them from government oppression to know that he was going to be killed and buried, even if He told them that He was going to raise from the dead it would have totally messed up their concept and expectations.

Okay he teacher caught you talking in class and is about to make you tell what you were talking about - oh, maximum embarrassment.

Mar 9:33 And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? 34 But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. 35 And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.

He asks them what they were talking about, they refuse to tell Him, so He gives application to the topic of their discussion. At least they were trying to settle this among themselves, now days we just assume that we will be first and we all work, scramble and claw toward the top not paying too much attention to others we are climbing over to get there.

Christ tells them that the principle is that they must be servants if they want to come out on top. If you want to serve Christ to the best possible, you must be a servant. Servant of Christ would be my thought, rather than serving others, though serving of others is often a part of being God's servant.

Oh the need of servants hearts in God's pulpits today. Too many are in the pulpit and in their position as dictator or at least as head honcho. Servant is not a concept that is overwhelmingly accepted today.

Matthew mentions that the disciples asked Christ who would be greatest while Mark and Luke mention them reasoning among themselves. This is not a problem, only that there were reasonings and at some point the disciples actually asked the Lord to settle the question.

Matthew mentions "In that hour" and would seem to tie the occasion to his preceding context while Mark indicates there was some time between verse 32 and 33. It would seem quite adequate to say that they ask the Lord, then later were reasoning together. This would indicate that the Lord did not answer their question.

Luke mentions "reasoning of their heart" which might indicate that there was a question, some disputing among the twelve and then some internal reasoning on the part of the twelve as they continued thinking on the subject.

Matthew alone ties the discussion to the Kingdom. Evidently they thought that they were going to be special in the kingdom but one might be more special.

This also adds weight to the thought that they were looking for an earthly kingdom immediate,

rather than later as was the plan of God.

To settle the subject He took a child and laid it out in plain, simple and understandable language.

36 And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, 37 Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

Luke adds "for he that is least among you all, the same is great." Note "is great" not will be great. Do your works here and you will be what you will be seems to be the idea. In short, do not worry about then but do now.

Matthew adds that if you humble yourself here you will be greatest in the kingdom.

Over all being accepting of a child is to be accepting of the Lord and that act relates closely with your position in the kingdom.

This whole concept of humility is a close relative of what has been mentioned of pastors/teachers in our pulpits today. Where is the humility? Pastors are to be accepting of the children, and accepting of being humble like a child. What a goal to set for one's self.

It almost seems as though John takes the Lord's words of being accepting of a child to heart and wonders aloud of someone they had seen ministering. It might well relate back to the whom will be greatest however since he seems to be looking down his nose at this one that had been ministering.

It seems from the text that John was answering a question or was responding to something the Lord had said. I probably is that he understood the Lord in his illustration of humility and serving and wondered at the man under discussion. This man was doing works in your name, but we told him to stop. The indication being "Were we correct in doing so?"

We want to see if we can find some principle for our own time here.

Mar 9:38 And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. 39 But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. 40 For he that is not against us is on our part.

This passage has perplexed many over the years. Just what are we supposed to make of such statements by the Lord. Are we not to speak against anyone that operates under the name/guise of the Lord Jesus Christ? How about the Mormons, the Roman church, and other isms that name the name of Christ.

Lightfoot suggests that this man may have been a disciple of John. It could also have been one of

the thousands that had followed and heard Christ. Possibly one that had seen Christ casting out demons.

The first principle might be that one must mind the context of the comments. They are in Christ's own time and there were no cults or isms as such yet. Thus this must guide our interpretation.

Second, the man mentioned was casting out demons in the Lord's name. They named Christ as their authority and they were capable of casting out the demons, which would indicate they had the power and authority in some manner.

Next we see that the Lord mentions that the one could not "lightly speak evil of Me." Thus we might apply this to the group we might want to speak against does not speak evil of Christ.

To recap, this man most likely was a disciple of the Lord that was out doing the work of the Lord. He spoke with authority, he seemed to have the power over demons and he was not speaking evil of the Lord.

From this we can surely speak out against cults and isms of our own day if they do not give evidence of miracles or works of God, or if they speak evil of Christ. Now, we have some latitude in the final item. They may uphold the name of Christ, yet if their doctrine varies from the Biblical doctrine of Christ in my mind they are speaking evil of Him.

Any group or person who detracts from the character or message of the Lord might be spoken against without causing damage to this passage. If a group says He was the brother of the devil - that seems evil to me. If a group says that He was not a man - that seems evil to me. If a group says that He was not God -that seems evil to me.

The discussion at hand may have related to the apostle's inability to cast out the demon just previously. John may have wondered at the qualifications of this man in comparison to the apostles inability to do the same thing. There may have been a lot of underlying things in the minds of the apostles relating to humility and service. Just where were they in relation to Christ if they could not cast out a demon.

Whether this was a disciple of John or whether a listener to the teachings of the Lord we do not know, but we do know that the Lord taught the apostles through the experience.

Matthew does not cover this and Luke only mentions it briefly ending with the comment "Forbid him not: for he that is not against you is for you." This seems to be in keeping with our observations from Mark.

We now launch into a rather dark section of do's and don'ts even though do's and don'ts are anathema in our church culture today. Christ mentions several things, all of which will gain the person either good or bad depending on their action. Hummm, consequences for your actions, what a novel concept and to think that the Lord had it first, not the hyper fundamentalist right of

our society.

So many today look down upon consequences as something that will hinder the full potential of the person. True, they do hinder them from reaching their full evil potential. Our society is lacking in every religious social grace there is. Ethics is an unknown in business, in life and often in church life.

Our school system has taught our newer generations that what you want is okay, just do it. No consequences, no repercussions, and no guilt if someday you find out you caused someone harm - it was their fault not yours is the attitude that they are taught.

Recently it has been revealed that many in the mortgage industry had been telling people to lie on their applications so they could get their home loans. Bad enough that the financial folks have no qualms about dishonesty, but the other side is that thousands of applicants also deemed it correct and proper to lie.

The moral fiber of America has been eaten away by the moths of immorality. And what is worst, the church seldom raises a voice of concern. Where is the moral outrage? Where is the preaching of moral principles? When church boards purposely decide to deal with the lost community with the community's standard of conduct rather than Christ's how can it stand against immorality? It cannot because it dare not draw light upon itself.

Years ago I was in a church office in a large church waiting to speak to someone and I overheard the receptionist and a member of the staff arguing very loudly about whether the church should deal with businesses with Christian standards or with worldly standards. The staffer was quite pointed in telling the woman who the church would use the world's standard and that it was church policy.

We will break this section up, but do not forget to understand it as a whole. Christ is laying some serious stuff on the apostles at this moment in time.

Mar 9:41 For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.

Good works assures the retention of rewards.

It is a bit foreign to my own thinking to be concerned about the gaining or loosing of reward. I have always served the Master to the best of my ability with no thought as to what reward might or might not exist. I serve Him out of love and a response to what He has done for me, not out of fear or response to what He might yet do for me. Salvation was the gift, and servant hood was the response.

42 And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

It is clear that one that offends a child, physical death is the better result for the offender. And our Supreme Court just said that death for a child rapist is cruel and unusual punishment. Any guesses what God thinks of our judicial system?

43 And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: 44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Several points here. It is better to cut off your hand if it offends you.

1. Not responding to your own sin can result in hell. If your hand offends you cutting it off is better than to allow it to cause you to end up in hell. Now, this is not literal - if your hand is offending you don't chop it off, your insurance may not cover it. However if your hand causes you to sin, it would be better to cut it off than to allow its action to cause you to end in hell.

It would seem that God is quite serious about sin. Not like so many preachers of today that speak of missing the mark, or of disappointing God, but sin is wrong and it can cause you to go to hell. Our watered down preaching of today is a shame upon the church of our generation.

The current church is more interested in entertainment and numbers than in telling people of their sin.

Recently I read of some people's concern about the denominational VBS materials they had used this year. Several observed and agreed that it presented a very watered down Gospel. They noted that "sin" was not discussed in their materials and that they were very disappointed. Several others on the forum were rather incensed at the accusations and thought that the material did a good job.

Some are discerning and others are enablers of the system by their acceptance of the norm.

2. Hell's fire is never quenched.

A simple yet so misunderstood statement. We ran into a young man who told me that hell's fire and torment was only a temporary thing, that after you were purified you would be transferred to heaven - yea, right as if the Lord Jesus Christ did not know what He was saying.

Now a bit of irony here, my wife had a rich relative that always said that he was taking his money with him. He declared boldly that he had an asbestos coffin. Now we all know asbestos relates to an insulating material that insulates against fire, however in our text the phrase "that shall never be quenched" is the translation of one Greek word which just happens to be "asbestos" which means not to be quenched or unquenchable.

This fire is definitely not something that will go out just as you get uncomfortable; it is a fire that will continue on for your eternal existence.

Gill points out that this fire refers to the valley of Hinnom that was actually the Jerusalem city dump where the fire was continually burning to destroy the polluted animals and trash of the city. You can imagine the Lord using such a visual to illustrate His comments.

Robertson adds a little further information about the valley, "The Valley of Hinnom had been desecrated by the sacrifice of children to Moloch so that as an accursed place it was used for the city garbage where worms gnawed and fires burned. It is thus a vivid picture of eternal punishment."

I recall as a young boy, my father taking me to our city dump in a small town in the Midwest to shoot our little twenty-two rifle. I liked going out to shoot rats, but I can, to this day, remember the smell of burning garbage and furniture etc. I really disliked that end of the time with my father. I know, quality time with your son - going to the city dump to shoot rats - well in the forties that was a splurge for many families when it came to "bonding" time.

3. Hell is not annihilation. If, as we have already seen, the fire is non ending, then the existence there most likely is also non ending. Hell is not a temporary stop-off or transfer station for the lost it is a destination.

I have always played a little game with my mind relating to just who gained eternal life through the shed blood of Christ. I am almost persuaded that all gain eternal life, both the believer and the lost. He paid the price for all, all is available to all of mankind. The fact that they reject His gracious invitation to heaven is their own fault and of their own doing, not God's. If they choose to spend their eternity in hell, in darkness, in fire and in eternal torment so be it. They were given opportunity, they were given revelation, yet they rejected that revelation and chose their eternal destination.

If this be true, can we ever give witness to the Gospel without a clear understanding of hell also being given? To share the love of Christ without the knowledge of hell is to share only part of the message. Our church today is so tied up in anti theological rhetoric that they fail to teach their congregations that the loving God is also a just and vengeful God that has set the standards and will enforce them no matter if we give a Reader's Digest version of His message or not.

Accepting Christ must be based on understanding who we are in our lost condition, where we are heading due to our lost condition and that Christ can remedy both conditions through a proper understanding of Who He is and what He has done.

4. Just in case you missed it, the fire is never quenched. Need we say this? Probably not, but let no one suggest that fair warning was not given.

We have another very similar illustration. This time it is the foot that might offend. These are not to be taken literally, or the thought of really cutting your hand or foot off, but rather just the realization of just how serious sin is for the believer.

Indeed, if you cannot control your body then loosing part of it would be the more preferable. The

conclusion might be that we are able and capable of controlling our bodies and keeping them from offending us.

45 And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: 46 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

It might be of interest to understand how the hand and/or foot might be an offense. The hand might offend by reaching and/or doing something that is improper while the foot might carry you to that impropriety.

Next we see the eye mentioned and we all know how the eye can find its way into wrongdoing. Using it in the viewing of improper subject matter. I would classify most television in this area. We are to think on things that are good, but too many sit in front of the television absorbing smut at a very high level.

One might observe also that it is really the mind that is the true culprit in all of these. The hand, the foot, and the eye really have nothing to do with it other than being a helper to the minds indiscretions. They are the enablers if you will.

47 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: 48 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

49 For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. 50 Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

We all know that we are to be the salt of the earth and this reference just adds to that line of thought. We are to have salt in ourselves and peace with one another. This might be one of the clearest indications that Christians should get along that the Scripture relates to us.

Not that we closely associate with false doctrine, but we ought to get along with others that name the name of Christ.

Years ago I was told by a missionary to South America that he had set up a small church in his home. The charismatic missionary in the same town rented the building next door and set up loudspeakers to transmit his wild and noisy services to the neighborhood. It was completely disruptive of the services next door.

This sort of thing is obnoxious and totally uncalled for. I would be quick to submit that there are probably similar stories of the non-charismatics actions as well. We all need to understand what the Lord was trying to do in this passage - have peace with one another and all be salt to the society that we live in.

One must remember the context of this passage. The disciples had been discussing who would be first, they then discussed one casting out demons in the Lord's name, and we remember that the Lord introduced them to the child. In this context He calls us to have salt within and unity without. Sounds like a very tall order to me for the believer.

Being first is not relevant, being salt is. Being the true follower is not relevant but unity is. Indeed, who is the true follower? Yes, we fundamentalist/evangelical folks believe we are but then so do all the others that name the name of Christ. All of us being salt is the key. All of us living in unity is the other key.

Verse forty-nine introduces us to an interesting phrase. "For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." Just what might the Lord have meant by this statement?

Fire often relates to judgment or trial but in the case of a believer, trial would be more fitting. Is there a possible answer in the fact that the salty believer will be tried by fire?

It can be observed in most of history those movements that were doing great things for the Lord have found persecution. Even today in the world motivated and committed Christians find trouble for their cause. In America we are even beginning to see this coming. Those children/teens in our public schools that would take a stand for their Lord often find themselves ridiculed if not discriminated against by zealous teachers/administrators that think the federal government has given them authority to indoctrinate in the cause of secularism.

On the other hand Barnes mentions that many take it to mean that the salt preserves those in hell so that they do not putrefy as meat would without salt.

He comes to another conclusion. "Probably the passage has no reference at all to future punishment; and the difficulty of interpreting it has arisen from supposing it to be connected with the 48th verse, or given as a "reason" for what is said in "that" verse, rather than considering it as designed to illustrate the "general design" of the passage. The main scope of the passage was not to discourse of future punishment; that is brought in incidentally. The chief object of the passage was -

"1. To teach the apostles that "other men," not "with them," might be true Christians, Mar_9:38-39.

"2. That they ought to be disposed to look favorably upon the slightest evidence that they "might be true believers," Mar_9:41.

"3. That they ought to avoid giving "offence" to such feeble and obscure Christians, Mar_9:42.

"4. That "everything" calculated to give offence, or to dishonor religion, should be removed, Mar_9:43. And,

"5. That everything which would endanger their salvation should be sacrificed; that they should "deny" themselves in every way in order to obtain eternal life. In this way they would be "preserved" to eternal life."

The context seems to be the apostles, their place in the kingdom and others doing work for

Christ. Thus we should find some understanding within that context.

He mentions that this is a difficult passage and that there are many theories as to its meaning so we may not answer your questions here either.

Verse 49 seems to speak of the sacrifice that one might make for the Lord in His service and in humbling ourselves by controlling our members. That sacrifice will be salted or shown to be properly prepared for the Lord and your offering of it to Him. (Lev. 2.13 seems to be the thinking behind what the Lord said relating to sacrifices and salt.)

Verse fifty seems to relate to the thought of unity which has been mentioned. That we that serve Him should be properly prepared and that we should have unity of mind with others that are doing His work.

And just a comment or two about the worm that we were introduced to. "Worm" means that crawly thing or a maggot. Ever hear the comment of "such a worm as I" in a hymn - this is probably the thinking of the writer.

In Isaiah's closing words in 66.22ff we read "22 For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. 23 And it shall come to pass, [that] from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. 24 And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh."

Two items should be noted here. First of all this is in the context of the new heavens and new earth yet the redeemed can look upon the lost in their torment. What an awesome line of thought this is. We will agree with God in His justice and His disposition of the lost and can agree with Him on their eternal condition.

But more to the point of our text it speaks of the same thing that Mark introduced us to - the worm that will not die.

The worm seems to relate to their life rather than their situation for the situation is described by the fire that will not be quenched.

Barnes takes a little different look at the passage and may be right when he suggests that the worm is like the worms that feed on dead bodies after a huge battle. The worms will continue on as long as there is flesh to feed upon. The failure of his illustrations seems to be in the eternal end of things and the fact that the worm seems to be a part of the person rather than something coming upon the dead person and beginning to feed.

Some mention that verse 44 and 46 are not in a lot of manuscripts and the Net Bible omits both verses, but verse 48 reiterates the thought so we miss nothing either way.

The worm is described as "their worm" thus something possessed by the person or indeed some integrated part of the person's being might be the thought in my mind. This thinking is not seen in the commentaries that I looked into. All speak of the symbolic worm and that it related to the flesh eating worms of death.

If this was the case I must wonder why the Holy Spirit through Mark included the pronoun indicating ownership or possession.

Psalm 22.6 Pictures this closer relation to the worm and it does not seem to be something eating upon the body but rather symbolic of the being. "But I [am] a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people."

Isaiah 14.11 seems to be more to the point of the commentaries. When speaking of Lucifer Isaiah mentions "Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, [and] the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee."

Also of interest is the fact that Mark is alone in his descriptiveness and mention of the worm. One might think that his descriptiveness is to bore into his readers mind as a death worm one day will and convince them of their final and ultimate end if they reject this Jesus to which he is giving witness to.

The thought of giving a cup of water in the Lord's name is of interest and should be noted. Serving Christ is not the dedication of going to deepest Africa as a missionary to reach the tribes of the jungle, but it is the giving of a cup of water. Not to detract from the thousands of committed missionaries that are doing a fine work, and are serving their Lord in far-off lands but all of us can serve Christ right where we are.

So often people get into the I'm going to be a missionary/pastor mode and they commit themselves to study to do so. Christ says giving a cup of water is important as well. While you are preparing for ministry be sure to prepare for eternity by giving water to those that you meet.

No, water is not the issue, it is the giving in Christ's name. Be sure to serve in whatever small way you can no matter who you are or what you are doing.

One item that many Bible colleges have allowed to go by the wayside is "Christian Service." When I was in college we were required to put in 15 hours or so of Christian Service. This included anything OUTSIDE of the school that we did for the Lord. If we would go door knocking for an hour that would count. We were held responsible for this service so that the school knew that we were doing it. Most of the Christian service projects had to be cleared by someone at the school.

The point was that even though we were in school preparing for the Lord's work we were out in the world doing something for Him. It is sure that if we had not been required to do the service we would have found reasons not to in our busy lives of working for a living, raising families and of course church, school and everything else in life. No matter how busy we were we found

fifteen hours a week to serve Him that we serve.

Assure your reward by serving the one that will reward you - Christ.

I've related before in my notes that while working for J.C. Penney I went a year without absence. At the end of the year the manager took all of us that had good attendance out for a nice lunch. As we were leaving I thanked the manager and said, "This is neat, to get rewarded with a great lunch for doing what we are supposed to do." He smiled recognizing my insight.

We are supposed to serve the Lord, but when we do we get rewarded for it - how great does it get?

MARK CHAPTER ELEVEN

Mark 11:1 And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples, 2 And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him. 3 And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither. 4 And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him. 5 And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? 6 And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go. 7 And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him.

Mark and Luke mention only the colt in this passage though Matthew mentions the colt's mother being present and that both were to be brought to the Lord. Why Mark and Luke did not mention mom is a major problem to some that feel the Bible is full of errors. Since we know it to be the Word of God the omission must have a reason in the Lord's mind.

Since Matthew, writing to Jews of their king rejected, would add detail of the mother to be accurate for the doubters. I would guess that taking the colt from the mother would have been problematic thus it would be easier to take both. The fact that Mark and Luke mention only the colt relates to the fact that the colt was the one the Lord rode and thus the important one to mention.

Some raise question as to the disciples being told to take something that did not belong to them. It is simple enough to note that the disciples were questioned about taking the animals, yet there was no hesitation in them doing so when they told the men who they were for.

It would be easy and safe to assume the animals had been arranged for by someone prior to the disciples coming after them. It might also be suggested that this whole occasion was another miracle in that Christ knew that the animals would be there and that the disciples would have no problem taking them. It is unlikely that this was a miracle, but more to the point something that the Lord had arranged sometime prior.

Matthew and Luke make this text plain that this was the Lord declaring His kingship over Israel in fulfillment of prophecy. He was presenting Himself in the manner that was planned in the beginning. The fact that the Jewish leadership rejected Him completely did not change the outcome of the Lord's ministry, but only took the Jews out of the mix of God's plan for that particular time.

8 And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way. 9 And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: 10 Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.

"Strawed" is an old word to say "strew" or "lay on out" as a sower might straw the seed.

"Hosanna" is "an exclamation" according to Strong. Gill mentions that it relates to "save" and Thayer adds that propitious is a part of the meaning. The Net Bible's notes tell us that it means "O Lord save" which gives the full meaning of the word. It indeed is an exclamation of needing and wanting to be saved. We might remember the context of this, they were looking for a king politically and wanted Him to save them from the Roman rule that they were under.

They were looking for a king and a kingdom - the Messiah and all that they thought He would be, but how shocked they must have been when He was crucified by the Romans that He was to usurp.

Matthew Henry makes two great points. First, the Lord often depended upon others for His needs. He lived in others homes, He seemingly borrowed boats and here He has borrowed his ride. Henry continues to encourage believers to rely upon one another for needs. Not that we should become borrowers and leaches, but if one has an item another needs, be sure to make the offer in Christian love.

Secondly, Henry makes the point that all that occurred related to the Lord's meekness and humility in the activities. To be proclaimed king He could have arranged for a fine horse to ride with other horses for the apostles to make a fine entrance into Jerusalem, but He opted to come as the meek lamb to the slaughter in fulfillment of prophecy relating to the suffering servant. ("Matt. 21.4 All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, 5 Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." Isa. 53.5 "But he [was] wounded for our transgressions, [he was] bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace [was] upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. 6 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. 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.")

11 And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve. 12 And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: 13 And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. 14 And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

To begin William Barclay (THE GOSPEL OF MARK; The Westminster Press; Philadelphia; 1975) mentions of this text "There can be no doubt that this, without exception, is the most difficult story in the gospel narrative. To take it as literal history presents difficulties which are well-nigh insuperable." He goes on to mention that this is true because "the story does not ring true." and that the account does not seem worthy of the Lord. The main premise he presents is that the Lord had never used His own powers for Himself. He continues to explain that Mark was correct to state that the time of figs was not yet and makes his second point "Why blast the tree for failing to do what it was not possible for it to do?"

Barclay decides that it is what he calls an "enacted parable" to illustrate one of two truths. "Promise without fulfillment or profession without practice." I would suggest that the parable idea might well be true, but would choose some more relevant truths for it to illustrate. We will see my suggestions later.

A little background on trees along the way might be of interest. One author, George M. Lamsa in his "GOSPEL LIGHT" book by A.J. Holman Co.; Philadelphia; 1936 pp 196-197, mentions that the planter of a tree was the owner of the tree in the Lord's time. Even if someone planted a tree on someone else's property the tree belonged to the planter.

Trees along the roads were owned by the planters of the trees. However over the years the planter might die and the owner would be unknown and thus the tree became public property along the roads of the time. These trees were free game for any traveler or poor person who cared to pick the fruit. Since this is a little before Howard Johnson and Burger King the Lord was hungry so He went to one of these trees to find something to eat.

He also mentions that the leaves were full so there should have been fruit but there was not. The tree probably had been picked free by other travelers, or it may have been defective in some manner, but no matter, the Lord cursed it. The author seems to ignore the comment of Mark which tells us "for the time of figs was not yet."

I am not an arborist, but my limited experience from observation is that blossoms appear before the fruit on trees in this country and are followed by fruit, however the fruit comes after the leaves are full and the fruit does not magically pop out fully mature, but comes on small and then develops over time.

This same author suggests that to curse was rather normal in the day when something did not go as one had anticipated and that this curse was not abnormal. I am not sure what the author would do with the fact that the tree was dead the next time by, but I would suggest that the curse was a little more than a run-of-the-mill curse out of exasperation.

Now, being the man that I am I can well remember a time in my life that I would curse in exasperation many times a day. If I was working on my car and things were going wrong I could curse very profusely, and could even be seen striking the poor defenseless car with any tool that I might have in hand. Even though I knew how to curse profusely, not once did I kill a tree with one of those curses.

If I pull out in front of someone and they curse me, I want it to be a run-of-the-mill curse rather than one like the Lord gave to the tree.

I had wondered if the death of the tree was not the result of the problem that caused it to not have fruit. This might have been but to have leaves and looking alive and normal and the next day be dead does not seem to be possible.

In looking for answers I went to some commentaries and the first one - Barnes Notes - ignored

the passage. Lightfoot mentions that there was a type of fig tree that would bear fruit but it would drop off before it was ripe for the first three years of its existence and assumes this was the case here.

Several commentaries mention that this seemed to be a particular tree that caught the Lord's eye. It may have been one of many and it was full of leaves indicating there might be fruit, though the rest of the trees were void of or of limited leaves.

Matthew Henry suggests that the comment about it not being the time for figs was a simple statement of fact; the figs were not due and were not present.

Robertson mentions of the tree, it had "promise without performance." Not unlike many believers today who have a good game on when in church on Sunday but do not perform to their possibilities during the week.

In my mind it may well have been a tree placed there to allow the Lord to give His illustration to the apostles.

Now, if this was a parable or "enacted parable" as Barclay suggests, I would suggest five possible truths, all of which are quite striking but also they relate clearly to the context of the "parable."

1. This may illustrate Israel. The Jewish leadership was dead at the roots and there was no fruit in Israel, and the deadness was from the root to the top - all living Israel was dead at this point of time (of course there were a few believing Jews but the majority were dead spiritually).
2. This may illustrate God's sovereignty to the two that wanted to sit on the Lord's right and left in the last chapter. This would show so clearly that God does as He wills and His will is far above our own understanding. He wills to do, He will do as He wills and His will is going to be done.
3. This may illustrate the unfruitfulness of the believer. The Lord came looking for fruit and found none and the clear message is that the believer is dead. A dead believer is of little use to the Lord.
4. This may illustrate the taking home of fruitless believers. John fifteen mentions the fact that the unfruitful branch will be taken away or taken home.
5. This may have been a clear message, to those that saw the occurrence. This was God that they were dealing with, this was the One sent to Israel, the Messiah come.

It is inconceivable to me that some of these thoughts did not run through the apostles minds as they considered the occurrence.

Then again, to consider the Lord's application to the situation might be the wiser line of thought. He said that this illustrated the fact that the apostles needed to pray and receive their answers.

Whatever the apostles prayed, they would receive. Christ cursed the tree and the tree withered. Seems simple enough to me, it seems that we often make way more of a passage than is really there.

Yes, this was out of character for the Lord, yes, it seems to be a curse for something the tree had no control over, and yes, it is unfair, but then it is God that is taking these actions and it is God that was teaching the disciples.

To think of it, the disciples had seen many miraculous things and were still in a fog as to the Lord and His coming trials. This may well have been one shocking act to try to wake them up to the fact of just whom He was - God.

As to this being a parable, there seems little to suggest it is; on the other hand it seems to be a completely normal day in the life of the little band of men making their way through the countryside, albeit accompanied with a little of the divine supernatural.

It most certainly would have been an act for them to remember in coming days when they would have tremendous needs and it would have brought them to pray with faith, knowing that their prayers were going to be answered.

No matter where you come down on the reason for this situation you must surely see a heavy dose of God's sovereignty. Whether it relates to a sovereign act to demonstrate things to the apostles, or whether a sovereign act to demonstrate something else, it is an act by the perfect God-man Jesus Christ our Lord and we need to accept it whether we plumb its depths or not.

Personally the idea of it being a final declaration of His character and power to those that witnessed it seems the most viable and sensible.

Now remember verse eleven and the record that Christ had gone into the temple and had looked around. This day, He goes in but not for just a look, He went looking for action and action He gave them. In our next section He cleaned house.

In verse eleven He had just arrived in Jerusalem - what is called His triumphal entry into the kings city having been proclaimed king and He entered the temple - not to be received as king but to "look around." (11 And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.)

I assume He came to see if there was any reaction from the Jewish leaders hearing of His being proclaimed King by the folks, but finding no reception and no acceptance He left planning His next move relating to the temple and the Jewish leaders. ("9 And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed [is] he that cometh in the name of the Lord: 10 Blessed [be] the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.")

We now see a premeditated act based on His viewing of the temple just prior. It is safe to say that He was not a happy camper.

15 And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; 6 And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. 17 And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves. 18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.

"My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer?" This is a quote from Isaiah 56.7 which brings up an interesting point. Jesus quotes the Old Testament giving it validity, but more than just the surface validity is present. "Written" is a perfect passive indicating that the words were written under influence from the outside - inspiration of the Holy Spirit - and the perfect indicates something that is complete and complete into the future - indicating it is preserved into the future to a point of completion. This passage is a very good proof of the inspired Word of God.

At the minimum it gives validity to the passage itself and by extension the entire book if not the whole canon of the Old Testament. No matter how far you extend it the passage also teaches the doctrine of inspiration and preservation of the Word.

One of our television stations has a series on their newscast called "The Fleecing of America" where they show how the taxpayer is being ripped off by government and business. There is never any reporting however of anyone doing anything about this fleecing of America. No one ever goes in and punishes the bad guys, nor recovers the good guy's money - only corruption.

The Jewish leaders were ripping off the normal Jew both financially and spiritually. They had turned the temple into a place of business and I am sure it was for a profit rather than out of the goodness of their hearts. HOWEVER, unlike the network that continues to report but do nothing, Christ moves in on the fleecing of the Jews and does something about it. He ran the corruption out of the Lord's house and returned it to being a house of prayer.

Now this is a new realization about the temple. In the mind after reading the Old Testament law one would think that the temple was a place of sacrifice rather than a place of prayer.

True, this was the outer courts of the temple so there was the aspect of sacrifice, but is this not possibly some further insight into the tabernacle - the area surrounding the place of sacrifice - might the Jews of old have been engaged in prayer before their sacrifice was offered? It would seem quite probable. To pray before sacrifice might have been that time of repentance and getting right before God before offering the required sacrifice.

This may well picture for the New Testament saint the attitude we should have before seeking forgiveness from the Father. Yes, Christ paid it all and His sacrifice was sufficient to anything

that we might set ourselves to do, but that repentance and time before God in prayer might well be the proper thing to do before asking forgiveness.

Lest we forget, many of us call our churches the sanctuary - house of prayer - hummm is this really true today? Are we really about God's business in our churches today? The New Testament church was heavily involved in prayer, preaching and fellowship with one another. Today we meet and greet and get fuzzy and leave seldom getting to the real prayer, real Bible study or the real fellowship.

Just consider if you would call your church a house of prayer.

"Cast out" has the thought of expel - a forceful setting outside. Christ did not just ask the folks to leave He threw them out, or drove them out. He became a people herder or driver. One might wonder if the first words from His mouth did not get folks moving toward the exits. Can you picture the money-changers struggling to gather their money together before He got to their table? It must have been quite a scene.

Can you picture the scene in our own time - Christ coming into the church driving out the "musicians" and the book tables hocking the latest pages from the guest speaker? Can you picture the guitars flying, the keyboards sliding from their stands, the pages flying from the books, the cash being overthrown? Watching the author heading for the window or nearest exit? Yes, only dreaming but oh what a day that would be. A little harsh? Well maybe. Then again Christ said that they had made the temple a den of thieves - rather explicit terminology for hocking wares in the Lord's house.

And the moldable leadership when they heard of the Lord's action reformed the use of the temple to the proper use - prayer - NOT! They had a board meeting to figure out how to destroy Him because the people believed His teaching.

It might be of note that this plotting has been going on for quite some time. They must have been really trying to hatch a foolproof plot - something that would get Him out of the way, yet something that would leave them free of suspicion by the people. No it will not be suggested that this sounds like the politicians of our day - why mention it, it is so terribly obvious. As we used to say in the service, "It is obvious to the most casual observer."

The passage mentions that the people were "astonished" with His doctrine. He was presenting truth rather than the falsehood of the Jewish leadership, why would they not be astonished. This man was teaching things they had not heard and He was explaining the things they knew in a different manner that made complete sense. He was giving them the Old Testament as it was meant to be understood, not as it had been perverted to enslave.

The word "all" is a word meaning the whole - literally all the people were astonished with His teaching. Wouldn't that be nice pastor/teacher - to have all the people listen and be astonished at the truth that you were presenting from the Word? Today we have people who have bought into so many isms and philosophies that truth is not known when it is heard.

Indeed, it is not uncommon for pastors/teachers to have bought into the isms and falsehoods and the people are confronted with the same thing they hear from the world.

Oh for the day when Christ will return to set truth where it belongs - as central to man's thinking. Truth is the standard by which Christ will rule and it will be the standard by which He will judge, not the namby pamby philosophy of today.

This election cycle we have had more lies and innuendo than ever before and the politicals do it with a straight face and gusto.

What a mess to find one's self in. The people love you and the leaders hate you. One wants you as king and the other wants you dead. Not much pressure to carry on a ministry in. I used to think getting before a few dozen folks for a sermon was bad, but Christ was in a real mess between the rock and the hard place. Yet He continued on toward the cross with His usual fortitude and calmness.

Oh that we as pastors, teachers and lay-people should handle such pressure calmly - most of us do not handle half the pressure this well. We could if we would only choose to but all too often we ignore the precursors of stress and let it build till we react in an inappropriate way. As you find yourself stressed find a quiet place to seek the Lord and His power to sidestep the outburst and find calmness for the situation.

19 When even was come, he went out of the city. 20 And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. 21 And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away. 22 And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. 23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. 24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. 25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. 26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Now as a point of application, this was to the apostles and possibly to some that were around them. It was not a general promise for all coming ages. If it were there would never be a Christian ministry that did not have full and adequate funding, there would be no Christian that was in poverty or in need of food and if it were true for all believers there would be no needs in the world because we could fulfill them all with our prayers.

This was a promise to the apostle's time and no more. The reality of this came to me years ago when I read this passage out of its context. We were in a dire straight financially, we had little to eat, my job was not paying very well and we had just moved to attend college - and of course no money for tuition. I read this passage and set to praying for all of our needs knowing that God would answer. He did not answer that day, or the next, nor many after that. We did see God provide for all our needs over time but as I started college I found that the context had a lot to do

with claiming a passage.

I found I could know that God would provide the need, but not based on this passage but upon passages that related to the New Testament Christian. We went through college and a lot more with the Lord's able assistance - not wealthy but we made it through with some very thin times as well as some plump times - each teaching us their own lesson.

The last portion of this text is of deep importance to the believer. 25 "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. 26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses."

Seems quite clear what the Lord was saying to the apostles - if you do not have forgiveness in your life for others DO NOT EXPECT IT FROM YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER. I do not think He could have made it clearer for us.

If you want forgiveness from the Lord, be sure that you have forgiven all those that have need of your forgiveness.

Now I was impressed with the fact that the Lord placed the forgiveness within the confines of prayer. It is through His strength that we can forgive others for their wrongs to us. Many situations in life will cause others to wrong you, and some of those wrongs may be terribly hurtful, but in prayer you can do that which you must to gain forgiveness for your wrongs toward God.

This forgiveness passage was directly linked to the moving of mountains type prayer so the apostles must have gotten the link between the power of prayer and their own forgiveness of others.

The obvious question is whether this forgiveness thing relates to us today. It was already presented that the asking for mountains to be moved is for the apostles so why not this as well? Appropriately it does not relate directly to us as the moving of mountains, but there is application for our day.

We are to be steadfast in our faith when praying for God to work and the application of the forgiveness section would seem quite obvious. There is a relationship between God's forgiveness of us and our forgiveness of others. We should tend those relationships quite closely.

Both principles can be found elsewhere in Scripture for us. Not forgiving others is sin in our lives, thus God will not be responding to our prayers that are hindered by sin. Faith is the basis of all prayer. If we have no faith we would not be praying and asking.

Verse 22 and following mention "That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. 24 Therefore I

say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive [them], and ye shall have [them]."

As I was reading this today it called my mind to a television show I watched yesterday. The show was about Island Mountains that have slid into the sea and the devastation that it causes thousands of miles away in the form of tsunamis. The powerful force of the displacement of so much water can wipe out coastal areas in a moment.

Now this is a bit of a stretch for application but I think it bears bringing up as we discuss the power of prayer.

This relates somewhat to the Lord's comments about prayer. He said if someone asks that a mountain be cast into the sea that it will happen. The point that we should take from this is not only the power of prayer, but maybe the consequences of prayer. We may have need of moving a mountain, but what are the consequences of doing so? Are we certain that we want to face the consequences of our prayers? Do you really mean what you say when you make a deal with God? When you tell Him you will do something if He answers your prayer are you getting serious with yourself and your commitment to that deal?

Many years ago I was praying for a man to come back to the Lord. I was convinced that I should continue to pray for this man and his spiritual condition. Over the months there seemed no real change in the man's walk in this life.

One day I was so burdened for his life that I told the Lord that He could take my life if it would wake this man up to his need. As I verbalized the words in my mind I was brought up short with what I was suggesting. I stopped to do some serious consideration of the consequences of the "deal" but I went on and told the Lord that He was free to do so if it would change the man.

Since I am sitting here typing we all know that the Lord did not take me up on the deal, but the experience was one that taught me to think about what I prayed - is my sincerity in order? Am I really open to what I verbalize? Please consider the consequence of casting that mountain into the sea. If it is needed for God's glory then have at it, but be sure there may be consequences that cost.

Of course the Lord was using hyperbole to make his point and it is certain that the apostles received the point of His comments. One must wonder how often the apostles thought back to this account as they faced great adversity and met with the Lord in prayer. We must wonder how many mountains they cast into the sea as they ministered for the Lord in their lives.

Just a short rabbit trail, can you imagine the apostles having walked and talked with the Lord for so many months but now He is gone – you pray to Him. They had an intimate knowledge of the Lord and they could address Him directly in prayer. That must have been such a comfort to them as they faced terrible times.

That might be a good reason to spend a lot of time in the Gospels getting to know Him more

intimately.

27 And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, 28 And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things? 29 And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. 30 The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me.

31 And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him? 32 But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed. 33 And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

Answer the question, not based on the answer, but upon the answer that most fits the situation. What a bunch of losers, truth had nothing to do with their beliefs.

It should be pointed out that most of the world operates on the system of the Jewish leadership - do not sweat the truth, just answer questions in a way that is safe and secure for you. I see politicians doing this all the time. They are asked a point-blank question and they answer it in a way so as to keep them safe from those that would hold them to their answer. Tell the truth? Never skirt the question? Do so to the best of you ability.

This political season we recently saw an ad for a senatorial race. One of the men had voted not to allow the partial birth abortion bill. Partial birth abortion is when the baby is in the midst of a live birth and the doctor kills it before it totally emerges. Murder by any normal standard of thought but we in America call it abortion. At any rate the opposing camp of the senator used this vote to say that the senator had voted to over turn Roe vs. Wade the court decision that led to the allowing of legal abortions. The twisting of truth is the normal person's "truth" in our country today. We ought to be ashamed of this current climate in our country, but instead many Christians are living the same sham and calling it truth.

The leaders asked Him a question that left Him with a dilemma, if He told them His authority was from God or from Himself, they would have accused Him of blasphemous speech, while if He said His authority was from some earthly figure they would have denounced Him as servant of someone other than the Jewish authorities.

So to be fair and equal He asks them a question that left them with a dilemma. If they answered that John's baptism was from heaven, they would have been admitting they were wrong to reject it, while if they said no they knew they would be slammed by the people who held John in high regard.

Be danged if you do and be danged if you don't as they used to say when you were on the horns of a dilemma. Rather like asking someone if they have stopped beating their wife.

Now I am not suggesting the Lord lowered Himself to the level that we often operate at, but it seems that there might have been a small sense of satisfaction in telling the Jewish leaders to mind their own business when He said that He was not going to tell them by what authority He operated. He could easily have told them and staved off their attacks until He was ready to submit to their plots, but He did not choose to do so at this time.

To have faced such a body knowing they were set upon His death must have been daunting for the disciples, but imagine when they saw Him face them down without a thought - just faced them, dealt with them and went on with what He was doing.

No, we are not Christ, and no we do not possess deity to face problems that come along, but we do have the Holy Spirit in full measure to assist us in facing any and all problems. We need to have confidence, strength and forthrightness when we are faced with problems; however we also need to have wisdom in knowing when someone is coming to create problems and when someone is coming to us in honesty with problems.

God, for some reason gave me a real sense of people and their underlying motives. Often when someone approaches me I can tell before they speak whether they are there for trouble or assistance. This sense is not always right on so I tend to wait till they reveal their motivations, but often my sense has been correct.

Try to develop this sense of a person's character; it will greatly assist you in life and ministry. It often gives you a few moments notice to consider your response to the person.

As we close a comment or two relating to prayer would be appropriate. Christ told the disciples how to pray - to ask believing and to have forgiven all before you ask. Some principles from this for us.

PRAY WITH KNOWLEDGE. Don't go to the Lord unless you have thought the need through. Is it a need? Is it something that will be useful to God in your ministry?

PRAY WITH EXPECTATION. Many tell us that God answers prayer, yes, no and wait which is true, however there seems in my opinion that the Lord was saying that there was a truth to remember - ask believing and it shall occur. Praying with expectation would seem to indicate that we are praying for something that we know God wants and that He is going to give for His glory.

PRAY WITH PREPARED HEART. Be sure that you are on holy ground. Do not have unfinished business with other people coming between you and the Lord.

The prayer of faith mentioned in James may well be related to this idea of praying with belief and expectation. James 5.15 "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." In short if you are going to get involved with praying for healing you had better follow James instructions - pray with faith.

The expectation seems to be a part of James thought in that the "prayer of faith" assures the healing so there would naturally be an expectation of healing. No, there is no thought of faith healing here. There is a specific methodology involved in the context that must not be ignored.

In summation, the Lord has made it clear who He is, the Jewish leaders have made it clear that they could care less about who He was and the people don't care who He is as long as He saves them from the Jews. Only the Lord has a clear focus on what the situation is and He is on a collision course with that situation as the cross awaits his finishing work of salvation.

MARK CHAPTER TWELVE

Mark 12:1 And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. 2 And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. 3 And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. 4 And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. 5 And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some. 6 Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. 7 But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. 8 And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. 9 What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others.

To most this is a simple parable to tell the Jewish leaders that they were corrupt murderers and the text makes it clear that they knew He was talking about them. They knew He spoke about them, but did they realize that they were going to murder him as the men in the parable? Did it really sink into their minds that they were going to be murdering the SON OF THE OWNER?

It would seem that if they did realize this that they would have given more serious thought to what they were planning and the consequences. Christ Himself told them the consequences of what they were plotting. "What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others" Had they really contemplated this portion of the parable you would think that they would have reconsidered.

We should remember that parables were to convey information to some but to hide it from others. The Jewish leaders probably didn't catch the drift of the details, only that He was talking about them.

Then one must wonder what any of the Jewish leaders would think when they saw Jerusalem destroyed in 70 A.D. - did they think back to this parable and see the vineyard being taken over by others?

The parable simply explained: God is the vineyard builder, He gave it to the promised people to tend. He sent prophets from time to time but they just killed them and finally He sent His Son Jesus Christ and they killed Him. God destroyed the Jews and scattered them across the earth and gave the vineyard to others - the gentiles. Whether the vineyard is Jerusalem, Israel or the spiritual blessing is of discussion. It would seem more to the idea of spiritual blessing rather than a geographical location/area.

It pictures well the thought of Israel rejecting their King/spiritual connection to God and the vineyard being given over to others. The others of course being the church and all that is entailed in that concept.

Mixed blessing for sure. The Jews lost while we gained. Because they were cold toward God He shifted His blessing to us. This is not an eternal shift of focus, but only a temporary one. One day the focus will shift from the church back to the Jewish people. God has not separated Himself from them eternally; He has only set them aside for a time while He deals with the Church.

The hedge was to keep the thieves from the vines and the tower was normally where the one guarding the vines lived and watched to guard against intruders. The Jewish people had a hedge around them and God was their protector. He always brought them through.

Today some speak in prayer of setting a hedge around a person to keep them safe. This is one of the thoughts leading to that kind of prayer, though the hedge was for Israel, not particular people in the church age. It should be taken as a general protection of God over the whole, not particular individuals.

One should maybe consider the idea of a vineyard. It would be set up to gain fruit from the tenders. If we are now the husbandmen then our Vineyard owner is desirous of profit from our labors and His vines. We also should consider how we are treating the vines and vine owner. Are we profitable?

There is a real sense in which the taking up of dealings with Israel will be related to the failure of the church. God will one day return the vineyard to the husbandmen - not the original workers but to righteous/ believing Israel - and will again take up dealings with them. The church needs to remember they are temporary workers, not owners of the vineyard.

The winefat that was prepared is the receptacle below the vat where the pressing takes place. The juice drains into the winefat. There does not seem to be any great significance to the winefat other than the fact that the owner set it in place - why - to gain profit from the crop of the vines. There was to be fruit that produced profit and the owner gained no profit from the labor that he had put into the business.

God is not a profiteer, but He does expect fruit from His servants and that fruit will bring Him profit from the investment that He has made in us.

Verse seven is of note. "But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours." The Jews knew He was speaking of them, it might be wondered just what inheritance they had in mind when killing the Lord. Probably just the idea of being rid of this man who had given them fits for three years. To be rid of His teaching, of His miracles and of His influence over their "followers."

There is also another reality related to the same verse. They had it in mind that the "owner" or as we know, God was not coming back. They had no real concept of the Lord returning for His profit. The owner was in a far country. Many today in the "Church" are living the same way, they live as if God is in a far country and not very interested in His creation. Not so, God is very interested in His creation as well as His creatures, thus we know that He will return and do

business with those that have kept His profit from Him.

The last portion of verse nine pictures this return "he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others." DESTROY is the key to the Jews and they had no idea what Christ was talking about but rather saw His words as just more verbiage to ignore and reject from this false one.

12:10 And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: 11 This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? 12 And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.

Another right jab to the chin - you have rejected this stone, but one day the builders will realize it was the cornerstone and it will be set in its rightful place in the building. Psalm 118.22-24 is the text that Christ was reminding them of, "The stone [which] the builders refused is become the head [stone] of the corner. 23 This is the LORD'S doing; it [is] marvellous in our eyes. 24 This [is] the day [which] the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

This was first speaking of David according to Barnes but the Lord uses it of Himself.

The cornerstone was normally the best and nicest looking of the stones when building a house. It was placed with great care since the entire building was built in relationship to the cornerstone. It was the most important part of a project yet Christ tells them they have rejected it. In a very real sense it could be said that all their building for God had been askew since the corner stone had not been placed thus the building cannot be built correctly. (Acts 4.10 and I Peter 2.7 relate to this quote if you would like some further study.)

Verse eleven is very interesting in this context. "This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?" Was this a Calvinistic statement of some sort? Was Christ referring to the thought that Israel had been blinded so that they could not understand as in the explanation of the parables? What does "the Lord's doing" relate to in this context? Does it mean that the rejection of the Messiah is of the Lord's doing and the apostles are finding it as marvelous?

Of ten commentaries I checked, none dealt with this phrase quoted from the Old Testament. Evidently others have found they had more questions than answers in relation to verse eleven.

Just some observations of the verse might be in order.

1. Whatever it is it is of the Lord's doing, not meaning Christ but God in general as in the Old Testament quote.
2. "Our" in the Old Testament context was ---- (See later in the study for more on this.)
3. "Marvelous" would seem to be something very good. Thayer mentions of the word "1) wonderful, marvelous; 1a) worthy of pious admiration, admirable, excellent; 1b) passing human

comprehension; 1c) causing amazement joined with terror; 1d) marvelous; 1d1) extraordinary, striking, surprising"

4. Only Matthew and Mark mention this passage but neither gives explanation of the text.

5. It would seem that the evaluation is being done by those with Christ - the apostles, and that they find it very pleasing.

6. The King James places a question mark behind the phrase. Most of the major translations do the same though not all follow the King James.

7. Verse ten and eleven seem to be one sentence thus very closely linked. Of the ten translations I checked only the Geneva Bible has a period between the two verses.

8. The question boils down to whether the Lord's doing is related to the rejection, the making of the stone the corner, or whether it is related to both.

Some possible conclusions:

1. The trinity is in view, and their evaluation of "marvelous" is based on the result of the stone becoming the cornerstone. The Calvinist would probably insist that the rejection is also included though I would not go that far. I am not sure that God's evaluation of so many being lost would be one of joy.

2. The apostles are finding joy in the rejection and/or the exaltation of the stone. The fact that the Lord is saying this would seem to preclude the apostles as being within the comment.

3. The Lord was simply quoting the entire passage, not meaning that anyone in His time was finding it marvelous but only that those in the Old Testament quote were involved. This would require a study of the context of the quote mentioned. Let us take a quick look at that topic.

a. In the context of the Psalm it is a person speaking of his own trials but calls upon Israel and the Priests (house of Aaron) to acknowledge the Lord for what He is.

b. The account would fit King David and since He wrote many of the Psalms this might be a good decision. Gill takes the Psalm to be related to David but does not mention the writer. Matthew Henry suggests David as the author though Henry suggests a possible later writer remembering the occasion. It would seem to be about David if not written by him.

c. In reading the entire Psalm it would seem that all Israel would be the "we."

Now to the Mark passage, by inference it should be suggested that Christ was indicating that all Israel should be viewing these things as marvelous, though the Jewish leaders did not agree with that conclusion of "marvelous."

To continue with the historical context, David had been anointed but had been chased extensively before he finally became king. Indeed they attempted to kill him as they were going to be doing to Christ. The similarities in the situation Christ was in are strikingly close to the situation that David had been in and survived to glorify God over the results.

Now to the question of whether the marvelous was being related to the rejection or the installation of the stone. The dispensationalist might see in this the marvelous rejection by the Jews and the giving of to the Gentiles, though that would be a slight over statement. The Old Testament context was on the installation, not the rejection, so it would seem that Christ would have seen the same relationship to His situation.

It would also fit that the leaders in both cases had done the rejecting, while the people benefited from the rejection. Don't lose the poignancy of the Lord using this passage in light of the proclamation of the people as He entered the city, (Mark 11.10) "Blessed [be] the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest."

The men Christ was addressing would have known this passage since they were well taught in the Old Testament. They would have caught all the irony in the situation and that most likely just added to their desire to have Him killed.

13 And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words. 14 And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? 15 Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it. 16 And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's. 17 And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.

What a bunch. They are trying to trip Him up yet they use the truth to do it in front of the people. They declare Him to be Truth and that He teaches the ways of God.

When they say "and carest for no man" they are not slamming His compassion for others, but saying that He cares not what others think about Him. He concerns Himself with no man but teaches Godly principles.

At least they get just who He is in action even though they have not gotten the "Who He is" principle. They may have been lying through their teeth when they declared this also - they thought He was a false prophet - teaching new stuff so most likely this was a lie to His face in front of the people.

Mark tells us that Christ knew of their hypocrisy. The term hypocrisy is the Greek word that we gain hypocrisy from. Christ knew them for what they were but played their silly game anyway. He asked to see a penny. Not that He did not know what it looked like; he had most likely seen them many times. He just wanted to emblazon it upon their minds as well as the minds of the

people who were witnessing the event.

Matthew 22.18 mentions "But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why make ye trial of me, ye hypocrites?" Christ was rather plain and blunt. Matthew, the writer that wrote to the Jewish community wanted the reader to know exactly how the Lord felt about their leadership - He spoke His mind.

They marveled at Him! They went to catch Him, He outwitted them and they were surprised. Matthew and Luke record that they left Him. I would think so after such a complete shutdown.

It is of note that the Pharisees and Herodians came together for they were at the opposite ends of the political spectrum. The Pharisees wanted freedom from the Roman Empire and were looking for a political Messiah to free them while the Herodians seemed to want to keep the status quo by supporting the leader that Rome had appointed over the Jews - Herod.

When you want to get someone, it does not matter who you hook up with - the end justifies the means as they always say - situational ethics in other words. Your ethics are determined by the situation that you find yourself in.

One of the first lessons one of my professors brought to us in Bible College was ethics and the first part of that was related to situational ethics. I have no idea where my mind was indoctrinated but I had to wonder why he was teaching us things like this - in my mind no one could use that polluted of a system to live their life.

Today I fear we should have been teaching more about it over the years in our churches and our colleges. Christians often change their belief system to match the surroundings and situations. Their God is as moldable as their lifestyle. Sunday they are the righteous living folks that go to church and then on the weekday they turn into one of the world, someone that a person could not tell from another lost person.

Folks our lifestyle should always match our Sunday best no matter what. If we are believers, we are to be Christ-like 24/7, not Christ-like on Sunday and then world-like Monday through Saturday.

Our associations should also match our belief system. We should not change our living to match a different set of friends during the week. Our viewing of movies and television should also match. We should not say amen to the pastor's decrying of the latest episode of some TV show on Sunday and then watch it during the week. We should not cry out for the moral high ground in viewing - for others - and watch trash in our own home.

It is appalling what some believers are watching these days. They often tell the lost of their dual standard by demeaning television and then tell them that they are watching PG and worse rating shows.

One cannot miss the truth that the Jewish leaders certainly missed. He requested the coin and

asked whose image it was. They said Caesar's and He told them to render unto Caesar that which was His and to God that which was His - OUCH! They are in God's image and they certainly had not given themselves unto God in fact they were trying to kill God.

Reader, do not miss that one yourself. You are in God's image and the Lord told them to render that which is God's to God. Do not wait, that is the concept of the Lord for all of us. We are His, He bought and paid for us, it is only up to us to commit ourselves to Him for our lives as bondservants.

If you pay your taxes, and you should, then you also should give yourself to God for His use else you are not following the Lord's admonishment to the Jewish leaders.

12:18 Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying, 19 Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 20 Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. 21 And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. 22 And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also. 23 In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife. 24 And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? 25 For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven. 26 And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? 27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

Imagine the Lord containing His laughter. People who do not believe in a resurrection come asking him questions about the resurrection based on Old Testament teaching and they are wondering about the implications of the two teachings. How comical, how sad, how ridiculous! Then the Lord blasts them with their own belief about the resurrection or the lack thereof and tells them that since they are quoting Moses do they not know that the same writings teach the resurrection.

We can gain a small glimpse into the heaven that we will one day enjoy. No matter the joy of marriage in this life, there is no marriage in the next. We will be totally as individuals with our Lord. We have no real idea of how the relationships will work, but it would seem that the strong bonds of family here will not be as important there, or if they will even exist.

We see also the idea that God is not the God of the dead but of the living. We the believers are living both now and then. We will not be dead one day though we will pass through death. We will be as we are now - living - though in a much better state then than now.

This is a main passage when giving study to Genesis 6 and the Sons of God and daughters of men subject. If angels, fallen or not, do not marry in heaven are we to assume if they come to earth they will? Or are we to assume non-marrying beings are also sexual beings? Would God

have such a disparity of standard between heaven and earth (sexual activity okay in the non-married in heaven while only married beings are sexual on earth)? Are the angels even sexual in nature. Just a few of the questions that will come to mind as you relate the two passages in your study.

The key to this section is that the Jewish leaders were throwing all ethics, belief and logic to the wind so that they could get rid of the Lord before He did any more damage to the people. You should give it to them they were trying to protect their students - or were they? It might well be that they felt their positions, honor and livelihood shaking under them and they were trying to stabilize their own realm, rather than it being anything to do with concern for their people.

Pastor --- uhhhhhhh be very aware of the need for you to analyze your own motivations when teaching your people, when confronting others, and when you would seek to correct the incorrect. Be very sure that you are not doing these things to protect your financial status, or your honor and prestige in the community. You are charged with teaching and guiding - assure that these are your motivations and not some sense of personal protectionism.

Just a side note, when the Lord called the Jews attention to Moses "have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? 27 He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err." We have an explicit application of the Old Testament in Christ's time. If you want to understand New Testament quotes of the Old you should study each of them and see how the quotes were used. You then have a better understanding of how to teach the Old Testament in our church age.

Many draw long and intricately upon the Old Testament texts when they ought to look at how the New Testament writers used the Old Testament and draw principles from them rather than setting their own principles of Old Testament interpretation. There is much for us to learn there, but there are promises a bunch in the Old Testament that do not relate to us in this time.

And when you think of the Lord's text you must admit this was one royal slap in the face to people who did not believe in the resurrection - Christ calls their attention to the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses and tells them that those great men of their faith knew that God was a living God. The clear and easy implication is that they should have understood that resurrection was a reality.

Hebrews 11.18-19a mentions in relation to Abraham offering his son "Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: 19 Accounting that God [was] able to raise [him] up...." Now if the writer of Hebrews knew this it might just be that it was part of Jewish learning, thus the Sadducees would have been ignoring their own people's teaching even further.

Now, if we are honest as believers do we always treat God as a living God, a God that wants to interact with us daily, like a God that guides and directs our lives, and a God that has a plan for our lives? Who is it that makes decisions in your life? Who is it that directs your life? Who do you interact with in your life? All too often it is not God, but ourselves and our wants, desires

and goals.

The Sadducees were substituting their own doctrine for that of the Lord and the Bible. It is imperative that we compare our belief system with that of the Lord and be sure we are on the same page rather than in opposition to the clear teaching of the Word.

12:28 And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? 29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: 30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. 31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. 32 And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: 33 And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. 34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

Now the Lord has a change of pace. He has a Jewish leader that is there for honest interaction. He is a man who was seeing the validity of the Lord's conversations with the other leaders and saw the truth in what He was saying.

Now pastor you wouldn't know anything about this would you - you know someone coming to you with questions that has no ulterior motive? So many believers tend to skirt the real issues rather than come to the forefront of what they want to know. Indeed, some come with questions meant to trap another in some way.

Pastor, learn as you can to sense other peoples motives as they come to ask questions. Try to understand where they are heading for two reasons. First, try to understand people's motives, to avoid getting trapped into something and second, to assist the true seeker with their questions. Some will question surface issues and leave before actually gaining an answer to their true and deep question.

A young man came with question upon question relating to dating and I could tell he was asking every question in the book other than the one he wanted an answer to. Finally I asked him carefully what he really wanted to know. He paused for a moment then asked me if I thought a certain girl might go out with him. I said, you will never know till you ask. He asked and the two ended up married - now what if he had never asked the question that he really wanted to ask? We will never know, but be sure seekers of information leave with the assistance that they seek.

We see another aspect of the Old Testament. Many today feel that an understanding of the Old Testament law is needed for the lost to understand the New Testament Gospel. There might be weight here for that belief. The man knew and understood the law thus Christ suggests he was close to being a follower. Barnes introduces this truth as well. "This shows that a proper

understanding of the Old Testament, of its laws and requirements, would prepare the mind for Christianity, and suit a person at once to embrace it when presented. One system is grafted on the other, agreeably to Gal_3:24"

To the point of the Lord's answer it would seem that He gave a summary of the Ten Commandments in two statements. If you look at the commandments the first section covers your commitment to God and the last section is about your commitment to man.

The man knew his commandments and knew that the Lord summed them up quite nicely.

12:35 And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David? 36 For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. 37 David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly.

It would seem that Christ is still speaking to the Scribe that had asked the question. This is also as identified as taking place in the temple. Christ is being quite in their face with his actions and teaching, even though they don't seem to be getting the point.

The only reference to the Son of David in Mark is here and in chapter 10 where we studied the blind man who came to the Lord for healing. (Vs. 47-48)

Matthew expands on this somewhat, but Luke mentions that the Lord was referring to a Psalm when he mentions David. "For David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand," Luke 20.42

Matthew 22.41 "41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, 42 Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, [The Son] of David. 43 He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, 44 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? 45 If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? 46 And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any [man] from that day forth ask him any more [questions]." (The quote Christ mentioned is from Psalm 110.1)

He questions them of their own beliefs and ignorance related to the coming Messiah. They evidently had been telling the people who the Messiah was to be -the son of David, but they had missed the fact that David viewed him as Lord or God. Here God is sitting among them, the people have declared Him as the Messiah, but the leaders have not tumbled to the fact that He is Messiah and/or God. The people were way ahead of their teachers and leaders.

This may relate to why Matthew listed the detailed genealogy of the Lord in his the opening statements of His Gospel. Matthew was writing to the Jew and would have wanted to bring this fact to the forefront of his discussion.

Matthew Henry has this to say relating to the passage:

"1. They told the people that the Messiah was to be the Son of David (Mar_12:35), and they were in the right; he was not only to descend from his loins, but to fill his throne (Luk_1:32); The Lord shall give him the throne of his father David. The scripture said it often, but the people took it as what the scribes said; whereas the truths of God should rather be quoted from our Bibles than from our ministers, for there is the original of them. Dulcius ex ipso fonte bibuntur aquae - The waters are sweetest when drawn immediately from their source.

"2. Yet they could not tell them how, notwithstanding that it was very proper for David, in spirit, the spirit of prophecy, to call him his Lord, as he doth, Psa_110:1. They had taught the people that concerning the Messiah, which would be for the honour of their nation - that he should be a branch of their royal family; but they had not taken care to teach them that which was for the honour of the Messiah himself - that he should be the Son of God, and, as such, and not otherwise, David's Lord. Thus they held the truth in unrighteousness, and were partial in the gospel, as well as in the law, of the Old Testament. They were able to say it, and prove it - that Christ was to be David's son; but if any should object, How then doth David himself call him Lord? they would not know how to avoid the force of the objection. Note, Those are unworthy to sit in Moses's seat, who, though they are able to preach the truth, are not in some measure able to defend it when they have preached it, and to convince gainsayers."

This is Christ's own statement to the Jewish leadership that He was not only the Messiah, but that He was indeed God. Not the sort of rhetoric that the leaders really wanted to hear nor did they want the people hearing such declarations, but Christ had laid it all out for them so that their next move might be made in their plan to do away with Him.

12:38 And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, 39 And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: 40 Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

Uppppppsssss, there is that nasty word DOCTRINE that preachers hate. You see them scattering to all the dark corners when someone mentions doctrine or theology. I've mentioned before the many many times I have heard men in the pulpit deride doctrine and theology as if it were the plague to be avoided as if it were a terminal thing for the believer.

This word is the same word used many times for teaching in the New Testament. There is nothing sinister about it, just the teaching of the Word. Always amazes me that men deride that which they are engaged in - or in some cases should be engaged in. Teaching is the reason for going to church, it is so sad that so many churches have none. Much of the "teaching" in the church is little more than Readers Digest type shortening of the world's philosophy.

Beware of the scribes:

They loved the following things:

1. To go in long clothing: Flowing robes might be the idea - the going in clothing was not wrong but the loving of it was - the super self-evaluation that was going on with them was the problem. They were just too stuck on themselves.

Not unlike some today that are proud of their dress in church be it academic robes, suits, Easter dress, or casual, none are wrong, but the pride oft times involved might well be a problem for the person.

2. Love salutations in the marketplace: This would be salutations that called attention to those that were involved. Anything to draw attention to themselves.

Not unlike many cell phone users that parade around with their phone to their ear strutting as if they were really something more than they really are. How arrogant a person who leaves their phone on in church and even how much more arrogant the one that answers it in church or a meeting. It has been reported that people fake talking on the cell phone - now give one reason a person would do that other than pride and arrogance. How self important must that person be.

We have all seen this sort of person in our own time - one that is loud and obvious in their plea for attention from all in the area as they greet one another.

3. Love the chief seats in the synagogue: You know the ones; they are the ones in back just like in most of our churches, where you can head for the door if things get to hurtful to the soul - not. There are always special seats reserved for important people. In our churches they would be the ones on the platform for special speakers, the pastor and song leader.

I would assume similar seats were reserved in the synagogue for those in leadership and most certainly they would be sought by any self absorbed person who wanted more and more attention.

4. Love the uppermost rooms at feasts: This is an unfortunate translation, the thought being that they love the prominent place at meals or feasts. The custom then was to be prostrate on large pillows at the table. In our culture we have the head table or speakers table and that is where these men loved to be seated.

They had in mind the center of attention as could easily be anticipated from the rest of the passage.

Now a little personal account, I am not one of these. If there is a greeting in the marketplace I want it quiet and unnoticed. I hate attention, if speaking I usually am in the last row of the church where nobody is watching me if at all possible. If I am on the platform I try for the seat behind the pulpit. At dinners I find the place most out of the way where the chances of someone sitting with me are least.

As to long robes, when graduating from a second bachelors program I was talking to my church history professor. It was hot, we were standing outside in the sun in black robes waiting for things to begin and I was reminded of some of his comments from church history where some of

these TRADITIONS started and how foolish such traditions were. When I reminded him of his comments all he could do was hang his head and admit we were in the middle of foolish tradition.

I do not describe myself for attention, nor to say how spiritual I am but to point out that this activity of the Jewish leaders might be related to personality traits to some extent, but attention once found can be easily addictive. Beware its wiles young graduate when you start receiving it - humility is the better.

On top of that they devour widows' houses: It is obvious that they were doing more than just accepting the offerings of the widows, but actually taking them to the cleaners.

In some churches that are well established in older neighborhoods there are many widows that give and give and then when they die they give some more. I question not their motivation, but I might wonder at the churches that keep accepting such offerings that are sacrificial to put to the high wages of staff and programs.

Years ago we received a newsmagazine from one of the colleges I had attended. The cover was a copy of a handwritten note from an old man and his wife. The wife had received a little "birthday" money and she had her husband send it to the school. Five dollars from an old woman giving of all she had to the school that took the rest of the paper to speak of the massive building programs, sports programs and travel programs that were being planned - well and the massive pleas for more money.

I could just bet when that old woman sent her five dollars in she was not picturing in her mind assisting to send a faculty member to Europe for a trip. In short be wise and careful how you spend the offerings of your people and be aware of your widows. Are they giving more than they are able and suffering physically for it? Not to say you should not accept the offerings of the saints, but watchfulness over the sheep is always good.

On top of that they make long prayers for a pretense: Prayer in public is a hard subject to evaluate. There are people who pray as if your undivided attention were their very existence and the person may be as genuine as can be. Others are doing it to look spiritual and to gain attention for their status as a prayer.

Be careful in evaluating the prayers of others, it is hard to determine at times. The quiet person will pray and you wonder if they are spiritual at all since they are so halting and short in their speaking with the Lord. Prayer is the most personal part of the spiritual life so do not find yourself setting a status bar in your mind and aligning different ones to different levels.

The text mentions length as a criteria and this may well be the key. When I was small we attended a church where an older pastor was ministering. Part of the congregation wanted him out and ultimately they called a second pastor that was young. Both men tried their best to minister in this divided situation but it was not working. The church decided to have a prayer service to determine the direction of the church.

They started the prayer time and three hours later my mother sent me home due to my sore seat of the pants and complete boredom. Not being a believer at the time I wondered at the foolishness of such "prayers" that went on and on and on. Some of the people were out for show in my mind and I also felt that many were so phony in asking God to do what they wanted rather than them finding what God might want and doing that.

Beware the phony prayer for show, you are not impressing God and He is the only one you need to deal with. He can understand short concise sentences just as easily as long detailed explanatory short stories. He does not need the fifty dollar words, He is capable of all sorts of language, dialect and verbiage. Just talk with Him and you will know that He is listening. More does not mean He listens more, only that you are repeating yourself to a God that understands the first time you say it.

"These shall receive greater damnation." These refer to the men and not their prayers.

Now let me take you on a little rabbit trail. This idea of a greater damnation indicates that there are levels of damnation in some way. We are not told how this works but it is a Biblical truth. There are levels of reward for the believer so to have levels of damnation for the lost seems quite consistent. The fact that Revelation mentions that the lost are judged by their works is another indicator of this "level of punishment." II Corinthians 11.15 tells us that the Devil's assistants will also be judged according to their works in some manner. (Revelation 20.12-13 "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is [the book] of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.")

When I was growing up there was a comic that was based on this premise. Rather than being just a strip of pictures it was one large picture of a scene in hell. The scene always depicted how different people would be treated and tormented in hell. The strip was called, if memory serves me well, Hatlo's Inferno.

Just one example would be the person that never stops talking would be gagged and surrounded by dozens of people that will never ever stop talking.

Now, of course this idea of various levels of torment needs to be understood in light of the fact that they all are in eternal punishment in hell, even though there might be levels within that terrible torment.

One final thought before we leave the Scribes. The word translated "beware" has the thought of perceive or realize. It relates to watching as well for you cannot perceive without watching. Be watchful of people like the Scribes, watch out for people like the Scribes. How do you do that? By watching for people that exhibit the qualities of the Scribes.

Watch out for and avoid people that love fancy clothes for attention's sake. Beware of people

that love to make a show of that they know and who they greet. Take note of people that like to bring attention to themselves in church. Beware those that want the attention at the potluck and take note of those that abuse the widows. Note the phony prayers of these folks as well.

These folks are phony and out for their own self-adulation as well as to seek the adulation of all that they meet and associate with. These folks are not humble - they are the opposite. Mark them, take note of them and beware of them. Do not become like them, and avoid their teaching, would be the underlying thought since they had been misleading the people about who Christ was. They were attempting to lead the people away from their Messiah come.

Years ago John R. Rice was speaking at a church in town along with another prominent man. I had enjoyed some of Rice's books and wanted to go hear him. The other man spoke first and what an arrogant and proud man he seemed during and after his message. It is of note that I remember nothing of his message but remember everything of his attitude, air and demeanor.

When he started twisting arms for the offering we had our fill and left the meeting. He was asking those that were going to give a certain amount to raise their hands, then those that were going to give an even higher amount were to stand for the adulation of the folks around them, my what showmanship! In short he was expanding his pride to those that he was trying to encourage in his own shortfall. It was obviously working for those that stood looked around in all directions to be sure everyone got to see their face and know what they were doing. Oh how everyone knew what they were doing - if only the proud had known how they appeared to others.

When he closed his message and began to pray the pianist started playing softly. He stopped short and in a very curt way told the pianist to stop playing, that he did not need music when he prayed. The wife happened to listen to his radio program the next day and music was playing in the background when he prayed.

From the reports that I have read his humility did not decrease over the years and many have warned of his teachings. I am sure the man had a lot of good to tell the church, but I am also afraid much of it was lost in his arrogance, self righteousness and poor teaching. Sadly many have followed in his stead to repeat the problems that they learned from the master.

Be very careful who you hitch your wagon to. If you take an example to follow make it one that would fit into the image of Christ, not the image of the Scribes.

12:41 And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. 42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

43 And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: 44 For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

Just some thoughts about the woman and then about giving in general.

She gave all she had, she gave in faith that the Lord would provide and she was not worried about a pay package. She was doing for God, expecting Him to do for her - she had done all she could do.

What a contrast, the rich casting in much and not much notice from the Lord and the woman gives all that she had and she was noted by the Lord. Our giving is first of all observed by the Lord, but more importantly it is evaluated against what we have or have not. "Give according to your income lest God make your income according to your giving" Peter Marshall

OLD TESTAMENT GIVING:

TITHE ONE: For the Levites. Lev. 27.30-33; Num. 18.20-24

TITHE TWO: For the yearly feast. Deut. 12.5,6,11,13; 14.22-27

TITHE THREE: For the Widows and orphans to eat (every three years). Deut. 14.28-29; 26.12

From Unger's Bible Dictionary – p. 1103. "From all this we gather: 1. That one tenth of the whole produce of the soil was to be assigned for the maintenance of the Levites. 2. That out of this the Levites were to dedicate a tenth to God for the use of the high priest. 3. That a tithe, in all probability a second tithe, was to be applied to festival purposes. 4. That in every third year either this festival tithe or a third tenth was to be eaten in company with the poor and the levites." (Unger goes on to mention that Josephus lists this third tithe as a separate tithe from the first two.)

THEN THERE WAS FREE WILL OFFERINGS:

The tabernacle was to be done with free will offerings. Ex 25.1-8 (as hearts were moved). Lev. 22.17ff also mentions free will offering

They gave as their heart was stirred. Ex. 35.21, 29

They gave so much that they were told to stop giving. Ex. 36.5-6 (Imagine that happening in the churches of today.

NEW TESTAMENT GIVING:

1. A PRIVILEGE AND RESPONSIBILITY. HEB. 13:16
2. CHRIST IS OUR EXAMPLE OF GIVING. II COR. 8:2,9; HEB. 13:6
3. NOT RELUCTANTLY OR UNDER COMPULSION. II COR. 9:7
4. SHOULD BE EAGERLY GIVEN. II COR. 8:12
5. IN ANTICIPATION OF RESULTS. II COR 9:6-9; MARK 10:29-30; MATT. 6:19-21
6. ACCORDING TO THE PURPOSE IN THE HEART. II COR. 9:7
7. CHEERFULLY. II COR. 9:7
8. VOLUNTARILY. II COR. 9:7
9. EVEN THOSE IN POVERTY CAN GIVE. II COR. 8:2
10. AS GOD PROSPERS. I COR. 16:2

11. ACCORDING TO WHAT HE HAS. II COR. 8:12
12. SACRIFICIALLY IF YOU WANT. HEB. 13:16
13. ACCORDING TO FREE WILL PRINCIPLE OF THE Old Testament II COR. 8:3,12
14. IT SEEMS EVERYONE IS EXPECTED TO BE INVOLVED THOUGH NOT FORCED TO BE. II COR. 16:2
15. MAY AFFECT SPIRITUAL MINISTRY. LUKE 16:10
16. PLANNED. I COR. 16:2
17. LOOKING FOR BLESSING. ACTS 20:35
18. GIVE TILL IT HURTS? LUKE 21:1-4
19. GIVE FOR THE FUTURE. MATT. 6:19,20
20. GIVE IN OBSCURITY. MATT. 6:1-4
21. GIVE EVEN IF YOU ARE POOR AND IN AFFLICTION. II COR 8:1-5
22. GOD IS CREATOR. GEN 1:1; PS 24:1 (He owns everything)
23. SPECIAL PROJECT GIVING? I COR. 16:2

IN SHORT, PUT GOD FIRST.

Note a "certain" widow - wonder if He and the disciples knew who she was?

Luke 21:1 And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. 2 And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. 3 And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: 4 For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.

1. She by faith believed that her contribution would make a difference.
2. She by faith believed that her contribution would be acceptable to God.
3. She by faith believed that her contribution would be accepted by the temple officials.
4. She by faith gave all that she had.
5. She by faith trusted God for her coming needs.

He didn't compare her giving to one other giver, but to ALL.

(from the daily bread Wed. May 4 Sorry, do not know what year)

John A. Broadus one Sunday followed the usher around as the offering was collected watching what the people placed in the plates. Some were angry and all were confused. He then returned to the pulpit and explained that the Lord watched the widow and He watches each time they place something in the offering.

"God not only looks at the face of your check, He also looks at the balance on the stub."

APPLICATION:

1. We have seen in this passage that the Lord walking among men was totally misunderstood by many, He was rejected by many others and He ultimately received response from many more. In

light of the various degrees of knowledge Spurgeon in his Morning and Evening devotional has some good comment. "Spiritual knowledge of Christ will be a personal knowledge. I cannot know Jesus through another person's acquaintance with him. No, I must know him myself; I must know him on my own account. It will be an intelligent knowledge-I must know him, not as the visionary dreams of him, but as the Word reveals him. I must know his natures, divine and human. I must know his offices-his attributes-his works-his shame-his glory. I must meditate upon him until I "comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." It will be an affectionate knowledge of him; indeed, if I know him at all, I must love him."

2. The fact that different groups of Jews came to the Lord at different times shows that all were out to get the Lord killed, yet coming as individuals might mean that there was a competition going on between the groups. A let us see who is going to get Him first sort of thing.

Competition for believers is usually not a good thing. Try to be cooperative amongst yourselves rather than competitive.

Years ago we were members of the missions committee and the church was way behind on missionary commitments due to low giving and spending missions money on church bills. The church body met and committed to meeting the missions commitment by the end of the year.

The pastor gave the missions committee the job of trying to raise money for the missions deficit and we took the challenge. The committee met a number of times to plan some internal fund raising events and some programs to stir some excitement toward the need of raising a lot of money.

The plans went off without a problem; the money was raised along with a couple thousand extra which enriched the missions committee budget.

All were excited about the setting aside of the deficit and the success of the plans as well as the newfound excitement about missions in the church body. Well everyone but the budget committee who thought they should have been the ones to be charged with raising the money. The friction that ensued was not long lasting nor rancorous, but it was unneeded, uncalled for and "competition" that was not needed within the church body. Instead of rejoicing about the body's commitment to meet their commitments and the excitement of raising the funds, some decided to argue about who got the glory.

3. Gill mentions that Deut. 6.4-9 is one of the passages placed in the phylacteries of Jesus day and are now those that Conservative Jews wear today. They also repeat this passage morning and evening.

Now, just what do you do morning and evening? Do you spend time considering God's word morning and evening? Do you wear any sign of your commitment to God? No, today we do not wear signs of our commitment unless it might be a cross, though that is less a sign of commitment than a visit to the jewelry shop since lost and saved alike wear the cross. We might

wear our Christianity on our being which is always a good thing though not enough of us do that these days I fear.

Deut. 6.4-9 "4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God [is] one LORD: 5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. 6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. 8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. 9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."

This passage follows the recounting of the Ten Commandments presented in the previous chapter of Deuteronomy.

Thus we see why they wear them in a box strapped to their forehead and repeat the verses morning and night. Oh, yes we can find all sorts of reasons to do either one. We would not want to embarrass anyone (like ourselves) nor would we want to offend the other religions of the world thus we should not do anything outward and no we would not want to ritualize our time with the Lord by repeating the same passage over and over. And we must not forget that this is the Church age, not the Law age, so we do not have to do such things. All of this is true, but even if you believe all this and I do, just what do you do to show your commitment to the Lord in your everyday life? I trust you either have an answer to this or set yourself to some plan to prepare and institute an answer.

Just how do you plan to love the Lord in a way that is in keeping with this passage? How do you plan to show the Lord that love? Will you make a commitment to answer these questions in coming days so that you can give answer to the Lord when He asks you how much you love Him?

No do not make it a habit that you feel you have to keep, make it a commitment that you want to keep. God is a living God and He relates to us on a personal live basis rather than in some quiet and dead manner that our habits and rituals usually are.

4. Verse five of the Deuteronomy passage mentions "5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

Heart, soul and might are the mentioned terms. We are to love God with all our heart the tender spot that aims toward God, with our soul the center of who we are and with our might the physical being, the power of the body. There seems little to the imagination here - with all our being, everything we are and everything we can do we are to love God. How does that translate into your life and mine?

Our hearts should be centered on Him, not other things of this world, but upon God, the provider of our salvation. Our soul or mental faculties should be aimed toward Him with all of our power, and then with our physical being we should be working for Him to show the love that we have

for Him. How else can we demonstrate our love for Him if we do not respond with our heart, soul and body to Him in any and every way that we can.

"All" is quite a word and means all or complete or whole. Now how can you give the Lord Sunday morning and live like the world all week? How can you do ALL while sitting in front of the television or in the theatre hour upon hour filling your mind with everything but God?

Preachers are great at parroting the phrase, "Some believers are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good." Uhhhhh, me think that the phrase is false as well as the preachers point of being to spiritual. There seems no such thing when viewing this passage - ALL does not allow for part, nor some, nor most of - it requires ALL.

It would seem in light of this passage that pastors that use this phrase to diminish the believer's spirituality are in error and are quite foolish in leading their sheep to believe that they shouldn't be completely sheep, but that they can be sheep some of the time but that they should also be cows at other times.

We are called to love God with our entire being and there is no opening for less than such a complete turning over of the being to God. Now if you can watch those trashy television programs that you know you watch while concentrating on God feel free, but please be a little more honest with yourself than that - God knows your train of thought when you are watching those programs with the trashy mind numbing worldly scripts, dress and actions.

Years ago I challenged a congregation with how they live with an overhead projector transparency of a man in a recliner watching television going up into the air in the rapture. No, we will not be taking our furniture with us but the way we live one would think that we could - that is the way we are living our lives. My challenge to the congregation was, just what do you want to be doing when He comes to take us home.

Ephesians 4.8 reminds us of this subject. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things [are] honest, whatsoever things [are] just, whatsoever things [are] pure, whatsoever things [are] lovely, whatsoever things [are] of good report; if [there be] any virtue, and if [there be] any praise, think on these things."

MARK CHAPTER THIRTEEN

We now move into a short section on prophecy that will give the apostles some insight into the future, but at their vantage point probably little more than encouragement that the future is known to the Lord.

This also should have given those knowing of the discourse that He was God or else a huge phony that was playing them. He was telling them of coming events that would happen with quite a little detail so that they could understand it if they happened to live long enough.

Prophecy is nice for us at this end of the spectrum, but not so helpful to those that received it. One must wonder of the Old Testament teachers that studied the prophecies of old and wondered at their meaning much as teachers/pastors of our own time struggle with them.

We can read, study and guess but until the events are unfolding no one will know for sure what they mean. We can know much about the future and the events/personalities though we do not know of the detail.

Dr. Jeremiah recently in his television message told of many of the traits of the antichrist, but made no attempt to name who it might be - we have no idea who but only a lot of his character and coming activities.

13.1 And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! 2 And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. 3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, 4 Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

THE GREAT QUESTION:

The disciple was commenting on architecture and he gets the whole gang into a prophecy lesson.

Now I do not know of the disciples travel activities prior to meeting the Lord but this account makes me think that they might not have been to Jerusalem before. They were marveling at the buildings of the temple as though they had not seen them before. Luke 21.5 "And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and offerings,"

When I was in the Navy, fresh out of small town America where the biggest and fanciest building I had seen was the county courthouse, I was sent to San Francisco. What a feast to the mind of one that loves ornate big buildings. I was in awe for weeks as I walked around that city looking at its wonders of architecture.

The Lord mentions that all these nice stones will be removed from one another - that not one stone would be left standing on another. The usual historical account related for this prophecy

when it did happen is that the temple was burned and all the gold in the building ran down into the cracks between the stones and the soldiers in their quest for plunder moved stones from each other to dig out the gold.

We might marvel at the building of these grand buildings and the great workmanship but it only takes a little greed to destroy such grandeur.

We will not take time here to discuss the idea of the outward pomp and grandeur of the temple as it relates to the grand buildings churches are erecting across the nation. We will not talk now of the great status that many people gain by attending some of these grandiose edifices. Christians today as the Jews of old focus on the edifice rather than the edifying all too often.

As with the temple there is little good to the grandness of a building, but that inner grandness is that which the Lord seeks.

Later, four of the disciples come to Him asking when this would happen and what the signs or precursors to the events might be.

The Bible is loaded with the thought of signs of things to come and signs of things that have happened. Just pick up a concordance and peruse the use of the term. The apostles were not out of line to seek a sign, they were only being who they were - Jews that looked for signs.

We are not much different from these of old for when we pray for guidance we often look for some sign from God as to what direction to go. God does not always give these signs but if He does be attuned to his indicators.

When between ministries I felt that the Lord would have me continue with some education. I had narrowed it down to two schools and had spent a lot of time praying about the selection. I was having difficulty in making a choice since both were equally good situations.

I had kind of set a certain date to make the decision so that we could start making proper plans to move the family. That date had arrived and that evening I was praying especially long at the topic and asked the Lord to give me some indication of what He wanted me to do. As I finished those words the phone rang. I answered and the man on the other end said, "I am Dr. _____ the head of the theology department at school X. Jaw dropping sufficiently I asked how I could help him. He had simply called to see if there were any questions he could answer and I informed him "No, you just answered the one question I had."

I had never been called by a school in my life and was shocked that one would call at that point in time. God used the simple act of another believer wanting to give me assistance to answer a long asked question. Some might say that this is not the way God leads and I would concur most of the time that God does not always answer prayer with signs, though at times He does and we ought to be wise enough to take note.

THE GREAT WARNING:

5 And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you: 6 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. 7 And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. 8 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.

The Lord answers the request for information about the end and He replies with a warning of those that would deceive them about the future. He then mentions some signs that must come before the things that He has mentioned.

He mentions that many false Christs will come on the scene attempting to deceive the believer. We have had these come now and then through history. I have heard of many personally, two of which come to mind. The first of note was Sun Myong Moon claiming to be the Messiah come - uupppps not so, He came a couple thousand years ago. There is another today that first claimed to be God, then Christ come and the last time I heard he was claiming to be the Devil - guess he is trying to cover all the bases or else he has multiple personalities along with his god complex.

These would have us believe that they are the Christ and that they have come to save us. Not so, they are only shams and lies looking for an ear to deceive. Refuse these false Christs and cling to the one that can and did save you. No matter how eloquent, no matter how smooth, and no matter how powerful a man presents himself to be, he IS no Messiah. Do not be duped by the false when you can serve the real thing.

The items that are coming which might be a precursor to the time the Lord was speaking of are "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows."

Anyone today reading this verse must wonder at our own time. There are wars and possibilities of wars all over the world along with major earthquakes and famine. Troubles are everywhere and an outbreak of some of the possible diseases would only add to the troubles.

Add to all this the persecution that believers are facing around the world and you have really got troubles. Even in our own country we have precursors to outright persecution mostly due to the Political Correctness that has labeled preaching against homosexuality as a hate crime elsewhere in the world and most likely here in a congress coming soon.

I have never been one to say that the Lord is coming soon, preferring to say He can come at any time, but today I suspect He is coming soon as I gaze upon the world scene. Christians are dying in the world at the hands of Muslims and we call it war, we call them refugees and we call them everything under the sun but murdered. And what is worse is that our country allows it to go unnoticed due to a media that is focused on their darling politicians that are fleecing our nation and the politicians are too interested in lining their own pockets with Americas wealth to take note of the murdering of people for their faith.

The time is right for the Lord's return, though all the problems of the world could go away and it might be another thousand years before He returns so it is wise to stick to "He can come at any moment."

THE GREAT PERSECUTION:

9 But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. 10 And the gospel must first be published among all nations. 11 But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

We need to understand the context and times that we are looking at. The Lord was speaking of things that related to the Jews/apostles, though a time frame was not in mind. These things were to happen to the Jewish people rather than to the church. If these things happened in 70 A.D. all of it is over, and if it is still future the church will be gone before these persecutions and troubles take place. This relates to Jewish people only and God's dealing with them.

Now, as to when all this takes place is the question. Some say that it happened in 70 A.D. when the temple was destroyed. Others believe it is all future. The truth might well seem to be somewhere in between. The no stone left unturned was truly fulfilled in 70 A.D. but there is a truth in Scripture/prophecy that prophetic items can have a partial and complete fulfillment at two entirely separate times.

The prophecy of Joel mentioned in Acts was partially fulfilled at the beginning of the Church, however there are parts of that prophecy that are yet to be fulfilled.

As one reads Mark it would seem that Christ was speaking of the temple that was in existence back then rather than some future temple. The later portions do not seem to have been fulfilled thus a partial then complete fulfillment scenario seems to be most appropriate for this text.

THE GREAT CONFLICT:

12 Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. 13 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Now when I read this I see Hitler's day and time stamped all over it, however I do not know if that was a partial fulfillment or not. Most of the giving up of relatives was amongst the Germans themselves and not the Jewish people that were being persecuted thus a partial fulfillment does not seem to be in view.

Verse thirteen mentions "and ye" speaking to Jewish men that were apostles. This sentence certainly related to the apostles and their end, though the previous verse does not seem to fit their

situation. I am unaware of any time in history when verse twelve would have been fulfilled amongst the Jewish people though I am not a historian of any stature whatsoever.

It seems best if you see this passage as a combining of different prophecies into one block of information. Whether the apostles understood this or if they knew what went where in prophecy we are not told. I rather suspect that they did not know the details any more than we do from our vantage point.

THE GREAT ABOMINATION:

14 But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains: 15 And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: 16 And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. 17 But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 18 And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.

Again, we have a text that had a partial fulfillment under Antiochus Epiphanes (Antiochus IV) in 70 A.D. when he sacrificed in the temple which he had re-dedicated to Zeus. It also looks forward yet to the time when the Antichrist will do similar in the rebuilt temple. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia has a section on this time in Jewish life.

"Under these conditions it is not surprising that Antiochus should have had both the inclination and the courage to undertake the total eradication of the Jewish religion and the establishment of Greek polytheism in its stead. The observance of all Jewish laws, especially those relating to the Sabbath and to circumcision, were forbidden under pain of death. The Jewish cult was set aside, and in all cities of Judea, sacrifices must be brought to the pagan deities. Representatives of the crown everywhere enforced the edict. Once a month a search was instituted, and whoever had secreted a copy of the Law or had observed the rite of circumcision was condemned to death. In Jerusalem on the 15th of Chislev of the year 145 aet Sel, i.e. in December 168 bc, a pagan altar was built on the Great Altar of Burnt Sacrifices, and on the 25th of Chislev, sacrifice was brought on this altar for the first time (1 Macc 1:54, 59). This evidently was the "abomination of desolation." The sacrifice, according to 2 Macc was brought to the Olympian Zeus, to whom the temple of Jerusalem had been dedicated. At the feast of Dionysus, the Jews were obliged to march in the Bacchanalian procession, crowned with laurel leaves. Christ applies the phrase to what was to take place at the advance of the Romans against Jerusalem. They who would behold the "abomination of desolation" standing in the holy place, He bids flee to the mountains, which probably refers to the advance of the Roman army into the city and temple, carrying standards which bore images of the Roman gods and were the objects of pagan worship."

This was a day in which the Jewish nation had turned its back on their Messiah and had plotted for His death. It was a day when the nation turned their back on the God that had called them out from amongst the world from a position within the world. While the passage is still speaking of the Jews this well fits the church today as well. We use the Lord's name in all we do but we have cheapened that name by using it to justify our worldly activities and our worldly lifestyle.

Today we as a nation elected a man that approves of killing babies, a man who lies at the drop of a hat, and a man who would foist upon us the curse of socialism. This man rejects half of his heritage and clings to the other half as if it were his whole for political advantage. This man argued that a child aborted that lives is an inconvenience to the doctor. His argument was that for the doctor to be sure the child was dead was an "inconvenience." Small wonder since the child was only an inconvenience to the mother.

America has in practice done what the Jews had done, we as believers have accepted the world standard as our own. You cannot tell Christian music from the world's, you cannot tell Christian literature from the world's, you cannot tell much of anything of the church from the world except the title "church" as the Jews accepted the title of "Jew."

Yes, there are vestiges of true Christianity as there were vestiges of Judaism in the Lord's time, but the whole brought judgment upon Israel, and I fear the Church has assisted in calling judgment upon America.

THE GREAT AFFLICTION:

19 For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. 20 And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days. 21 And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not: 22 For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. 23 But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.

First, we see the terrible affliction to come. These afflictions will be worse than any since the creation. Now that leaves us with a large question. What affliction was there in the "beginning of the creation?"

Some believe that in Genesis between verse one and two there was a whole creation that we do not know about; a creation that went terribly wrong in some manner resulting in the total destruction of that creation and the fall of the angels.

Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. 2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness [was] upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

This passage in Mark might lend some support to that theory. The other gospels do not cover this information so this is all we have to go on. Just what was this tribulation at the beginning of creation? Was it another civilization? Was there a time of tribulation or was it just the turmoil of the whole creation.

To answer these questions let us consider. God is perfection, thus why would He create a heaven and earth that was full of turmoil and trouble? It does not fit with His character so let us set that

possibility aside.

Is it possible that His first creation was good and that the Angelic host was the beneficiaries of this good universe, but their desire to be God overwhelmed them and their society to the point of all out rebellion against God and quite possibly outward warfare with the angels that remained loyal to the Lord? This would fit well the theory and the texts though we have no other indication that this theory is true

Note "neither shall be" which keys us to the fact that Christ is speaking of the great tribulation since there will never be another time like it. This might well figure into the "gap theory" as well, since if the Angels fell and destroyed the earth, the tribulation would probably have been from God as His judgment against this terrible and complete rebellion against Him.

Indeed this gap theory has some possibilities but it is also based on something that is not said in Genesis and one verse in Mark. To base such a theory on so little evidence is bothersome to most, yet everything seems to fit what we know thus far. It is also of note that there is nothing in the verse in Mark to indicate anything further.

Gill views this statement not to say that there was a tribulation in the beginning, but that there hasn't been this type of tribulation since the beginning. "such as was not from the beginning of the creation, which God created, unto this time, neither shall be; of which there never was the like in any age, and cannot be paralleled in any history, since the beginning of time, or the world was made, or any thing in it, down to that period; nor ever will the like befall any one particular nation under the heavens, to the end of the world;"

This seems to have been fulfilled in the 70A.D. destruction of Jerusalem, but it is possible it looks forward to the destruction in the tribulation as well.

The Gap Theory? Not valid in my view but many believe it and there really seems to be no doctrine that is affected by holding it other than the problem of building a teaching on the two spaces between two sentences of Scripture. This is a real problem when you realize how many gaps between sentences there are in the Word.

Secondly, we see the severity of the affliction to come. These times were to be of horrible proportions. There will be great problems for those living through these times. We in our day have not seen this sort of tribulation unless it might have been during World War II when the Jews were slaughtered by the millions. There were also times of slaughter during the crusades when Muslims were fighting Christians.

Thirdly, we see that God will shorten the affliction. This affliction will be so terrible that if it were to be allowed to continue the decimation of the Jews would have been complete within the land. There would not have been a complete annihilation of the entire Jewish people in the world for many were scattered around the world, but those in Jerusalem and surrounding area would have been completely eradicated.

God in His mercy shortened the persecution so as to save some of His people.

A side note to this destruction of Jerusalem is the love God has for Jerusalem and His temple. Though He loved Jerusalem and His people, because of their sin and corruption, God unleashed terrible destruction upon both.

This ought to be a fair warning to American believers. We ought to mend our ways before God brings destruction upon this great country and our families. Many see the American church in total decline with judgment as the coming result. We have no prophecy as such against America, but we know from the Old Testament that hard times always followed a falling away of the Jews. Application might be a wise decision for us as well.

The love that God had for Jerusalem is also very special. If you do a word search of Jerusalem/Salem in the Word you will find a number of verses that show this love. He chose the spot for His temples, He chose this spot for the birthplace of Christ, and I personally believe that it is the site of the Garden of Eden. There is a study on my website relating to this. This may be the exact reason for the Lord's birth, death, burial and resurrection there.

After throwing the first couple from the garden, He established this as His meeting place with man. Angels were stationed to keep man from the garden.

It is also of note that this city is the place for many activities in the end time. Indeed Christ will set His Millennial throne in Jerusalem and rule the world from there for 1000 years.

This was a city so special to Him yet He allowed it to be destroyed as part of His judgment upon Israel. This was also the case in the Old Testament time when the Jewish leadership was offering to idols in God's temple.

The fool might think that because God loves us that He would not judge us. The wise man understands the relationship of sin and judgment. One follows the other and foolishness will make no change in that equation.

Fourth we see that there shall be false Christs and false prophets. Note that they are not the same things, thus indicating a match to the prophecy of John in Revelation of the Antichrist and the False Prophet.

Fifth, they will show signs and wonders. Even though a person shows signs and wonders there is nothing to indicate that a believer should follow their false miracles. One must wonder at the signs that come today from the false teachers that are deceiving even the elect in our churches today. Signs and wonders have been the stuff of a number of movements in our modern day, yet Christ Himself labels them as false christs and false prophets.

Surely some in these churches wonder at the Lord's comments about signs and wonders. Why do they continue to follow the false teaching that produces that which Christ Himself condemned? Most likely they follow because they feel good when they leave church.

And finally we see that He encourages them so that they will not be surprised. He had foretold of things to come so they would not be overwhelmed by them when they arrived.

Recently I watched a series on the end times presented by Dr. Jeremiah. Though I don't buy into all that he said, I was convinced of his genuine desire to do three things through the series. First he wanted to communicate God's message to his listener, then he obviously wanted to touch the hearts of sinners that were not prepared for this time of trouble, and finally I was impressed with his desire to encourage the saints by assuring them of the Sovereignty of God in all the end times activities to come.

A number of times the excitement of the believers relationship to these prophecies seemed to totally excite Dr. Jeremiah and you could tell by the look on the congregations faces that they knew there was encouragement in these messages from God relating to the end times.

Christ left the apostles with encouragement even in light of coming terrible times.

THE GREAT CONTRAST: We have in this passage the greatest catastrophe and yet the greatest happening of all time. We see the sun darkened and the stars falling yet the coming of Christ and His angels to gather the saints.

Driving through Kansas City years ago the sky was dark as night when there was a crack in the sky that was sun bright. The crack gradually opened letting the sun stream into the darkness. The brightness of the sun was hurtful to the eye until it had time to adjust. The crack started rolling open and the clouds were split asunder revealing the brightest blue sky and sun I had ever seen.

I was near pulling to the side of the interstate to get out of the car and await the appearance of the Lord it was so gorgeous and so right a moment for His return. However not seeing Him I trudged on down the long road ahead of me to Oregon remembering the glorious sights of the moment, yet that sight will falter completely in light of the glory of His coming.

24 But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, 25 And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. 26 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. 27 And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

Mark is the only gospel that mentions this portion of the Lord's words. The passage definitely adds a future aspect to the prophecy as well as the local limited aspect of 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem.

This passage must have been quite an encouragement to the apostles after the tribulation portion of the message.

There would be the question of just when in the future this will occur. There is no indication that the rapture is accompanied by signs in the heavens, but rather as a thief in the night. There is also the aspect that we will be gone in a flash - not a time of appearing armies of angels in the heavens. The following text also adds credence to this being the 2nd Coming of the Lord in His final gathering of His Jewish people from the earth just prior to the judgment. It could also relate to the coming at the end of the tribulation to set aside the armies of the world and the setting up of the Millennial Kingdom.

Which? I think I would opt for the end of the tribulation but would not be able to prove it conclusively.

THE GREAT HOPE:

We now see another shift in the time back to the 70 AD aspect of the prophecy in that the Lord tells them that some of "this generation" will see these things come to pass. Or on the other hand the Lord may have meant the generation that sees the signs of the coming that He has just laid out for them. This would be the generation of the tribulation.

Since He is speaking to Jewish apostles, and knowing that they would be teaching primarily Jewish people of this prophecy, it would fit best if He were speaking of a Jewish generation - one that would see the signs and be present at the coming of the Lord.

Now, this to me fits best, but I must also wonder if the apostles did not see this as speaking to them. Did they not feel that the coming was going to be in their generation especially when tribulation started to come to the early church.

Just what their expectation was we do not know, but it would seem logical that they would see it as for them and their generation.

28 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: 29 So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.

30 Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done.

Gill holds that it was the Lord's own generation. "Not the generation of men, in general, or Jews in particular, nor of Christians; but that present generation of men, they should not all go off the stage of life,"

THE GREAT APPLICATION

I have mentioned an overlay that I used years ago to encourage believers to consider how they use their spare time. The overlay showed a man reclined in a recliner watching a ballgame on television on his way up in the rapture. Now we all know that our furniture and television will not be going up with us but it illustrates the idea that when the Lord comes how do you want Him to find you, working for Him or enjoying self. This is a question all of us ought to consider

as we go about our daily lives. When He comes how will we be serving Him or ourselves? Will we find egg on our face or joy on His?

31 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. 32 But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. 33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. 34 For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. 35 Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: 36 Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. 37 And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

Eternality of the Word

This was a simple phrase, maybe even an off-handed phrase in the context "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away." He has just been speaking of the coming end of all things, but contrasts that to the fact that His words to them will not pass away; they will not pass from history, they will not pass from memory, nor will they pass from eternity future.

In short He seems to be saying, mark my words, I have spoken to you and these things will come to pass. Actually more words of encouragement - there is a certainty to what He has been telling them. Have no doubt, just be ready and watch for them to come to pass.

Unknowableness of his coming

No man, no angel and not even the Son of God know of the time of the coming, only the Father knows. Now some raise the obvious question of why the Father would know the time and not the Son. One might note the Spirit is not mentioned as knowing or not knowing, thus it might be inferred He also knows though that would be an assumption. The text does say "but the father" indicating that He alone is the one that knows.

So, why would the Son not know, He is totally God thus if the Father knows, why would not the Son, do they keep secrets? No, secrets in the Godhead are not possible.

The obvious answer is that the Son while on earth is limited in some manner as to His relation to his Godly attributes. It has been covered numerous times in my studies that I believe that Christ limited some of His attributes, limited the use of some of His attributes, or was in some way limited in some of His attributes by the Father. There is no indication other than the passage that mentions (Phil. 2.6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.") the humbling of the Lord but this is the logical conclusion after viewing the Scriptures. It would seem that the Son, while on earth did not have that knowledge, but there is no indication that before or after the incarnation that He did not

know the time of His coming.

Whether the time had been set prior to the incarnation is not known either. It might be assumed that the time was set amongst the decree/decrees before the foundation of the world and this would probably be a safe assumption.

Our command to watch:

The Lord gave a very clear illustration of His command to watch. The illustration puts it in a very clear understandable manner - watch lest you be sleeping when He comes. Our command is not to rest till He comes; it is not take a break till He comes, but watch and why are we to watch? We are to watch so that we will be sure that we are active when He returns.

Now if I could just schedule His return for early in the morning when I am busy in Bible study over coffee I would be in good shape, but I just know He is going to come when I am napping in the mid-day. No, I doubt this is speaking of our literal sleeping, but certainly speaks to our activity or non-activity for Him and His work. We are to be about our heavenly father's business, not enjoying this life with all the leisure that we can find and buy.

A little further application:

As the apostles, we often focus on the future rather than upon the day that God has given us. We all too often focus on what we will one day do for Christ, but as the days go by we do little or nothing and one day we awake to the fact that we have done nothing and the future is here.

My father-in-law became terminally ill - one day a vibrant hard worker and in a day or two flat on his back for the majority of his last days. Cancer tends to wake people up to what they have not done.

His regret was all the people that he had not witnessed to through his life, but that was immediately corrected. Every person who came into his room was confronted in one way or another with Christ. Even in his funeral several came to the Lord through the service.

Do not put off doing for God today, for you probably will tomorrow as well - even the next day and the next and - correct that error in your life now, before it is the future.

It is our individual responsibility to wait while watching. It is not up to the pastor to tell us when, what and where to watch, it is up to us as believers. It is our Lord that is coming back, it is our Savior that died for our sins, and it is our Christ that will judge us as individuals. We will have no excuse when He returns if we are not active and serving Him.

I can just envision the finger pointing and the stream of excuses as the Lord calls each of us before the court and asks us why we were so lax, so lazy, and so intentionally cool toward His service.

Last evening I happened upon Judge Judy and was caught by her high level of animation toward the pair before her. I stopped (not a usual habit) to watch for a few moments. The couple had lived together for a couple of years and had split up leaving them with some financial difficulties between them. Judge Judy was attempting to get to the facts but she in her short stature was having trouble wading through all the excuses, discrepancies and finger pointing.

Had Judge Judy had a two hour show it would be doubtful that she would have dug through the mess that this pair was weaving before her very eyes. Oh that we as believers would just step to the Lord's judgment in honesty and forthrightness admitting to our many failings.

May we be waiting while laboring with a watchful eye to the heavens. It truly could be that His coming could be at any time but we know not when.

MARK CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE SETTING

1 After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death. 2 But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people.

At least the political folks of the time cared about what the people thought. Today in America the government does what it wants with little regard to what the people think. Heaven forbid they actually represent the people who elected them. The Jewish leaders knew where their support came from and wanted no part of upsetting the folks that foot the bills.

It may be of great note here that the Priests and Scribes are mentioned as well as the elders that Matthew mentions. Of all the groups plotting the Lord's demise, the Sadducees and Pharisees are not mentioned. It might be wondered just why they are not part of the plot at this point. Were the Priests and Scribes just tired of waiting for the other groups to do their thing, or maybe the other groups had given up for some reason, whether boredom, fear or maybe even some were wondering of the validity of the Lord's claims.

Darby uses the terms scribes and Pharisees in relation to this text in his commentary. Most of the other commentaries do not mention any groups in their notes. I might assume that Darby was just following the normal flow of the text where these were the two groups normally mentioned and made a slip of the pen. His Bible translation follows the King James in mentioning the same two groups as do many other translations.

We will have to take note as we proceed into the activities that follow His arrest to see if any of the other groups are mentioned.

Note also that they wanted to do it by craft, or deceit. They wanted to do it under cover so no one would know it. Evidently they wanted to abduct him, kill him and keep it all a secret. Oh the plot thickens in the world of the lost souls seeking to extinguish the only true light in their midst.

Pastors beware those in your churches that are crafty. They will go in secret doing their work stirring up problems and you will never know where the problems are really coming from. One or two crafty people in your church and you will have constant turmoil. You will think something has been settled then out of nowhere the problem is back.

Years ago while pastoring a pioneer work we had a situation where many in the church thought a certain direction was right and proper. I on the other hand and a number of others thought it a disastrous direction. It came to a church vote and one of the main families did not attend the vote. The direction was voted down much to my relief.

Several months later the husband of the family sat down beside me at a potluck and told me that

he had talked to everyone in the church and all were agreed that we should revote on the item. Beware the crafty person! If they need to be crafty, they cannot be doing too much good.

THE OFFERING

3 And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. 4 And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? 5 For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. 6. And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. 7 For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. 8 She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. 9 Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

John names the woman as Mary, and Martha along with Lazarus are mentioned as well. Thus we know the people present. The accounts in Matthew, Mark and John mention about the same information though only John identifies everyone. The apostles evidently were talking among themselves about the "wasting" of the spice while John identifies Judas as the one that approached the Lord about it. Also note in the text that he is named as a thief for taking money from what he held communally for the rest. John 12 mentions "4 But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, that should betray him, saith, 5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred shillings, and given to the poor? 6 Now this he said, not because he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and having the bag took away what was put therein."

Jumping ahead a little to the betrayal I recently saw an article on a web site asking if Judas was showing his fidelity to God when he betrayed Jesus. In other words was the act the act of an obedient believer that was following the Lord's plan for His life. At first I thought to myself that only a Calvinist could come up with such a question, but further reading showed that the man is just a believer that likes to question everything in a different way.

The crux of Judas and his spiritual life probably is answered just here - he was a thief and he was a traitor for money. He knew he was going to do the betraying thus he covered the truth by not admitting it was he at the last supper when the Lord told the apostles the betrayer was with them.

Was he fulfilling God's best for his life? I rather doubt it from what we have already seen. As to whether the man was a true believer, many discuss this to great length but it comes down to "You will know them by their fruits." Only God knows the truth so we should leave it to Him.

This account brings up something that is seldom if ever mentioned in a study of the Lord. The bag that Judas carried was the money that the Lord and apostles had in common. Out of that bag we can assume they lived - food, drink and other needs of a wandering group.

The clear implication also is that they gave to the poor out of this bag. It might also be assumed

that gifts other than cash might well have been sold for the cash to feed them and give to the poor. There was clearly a social side to the Lord's ministry to the people around him on a cash level as well as feeding them via miracles etc.

Today giving cash is not the wiser way to assist the poor. A woman on talk radio the other day mentioned that she saw a woman in front of a supermarket asking for food. The woman caller took her inside the store and told her she would buy her a certain dollar amount for groceries. The woman took off with a cart and came back to the counter with cigarettes, steak and every other high priced product that she could find.

The caller vowed, never again. This is probably the wiser choice in our day since there are so many scammers around. Giving to a church food ministry or some similar charity might be a better way to help though you do not have the personal contact this way.

On the same topic my daughter and husband started carrying two sacks of groceries in their van so that they could give to folks that were in need. They pulled into a grocery store parking lot and were met by a man wanting food. They offered him a sack of groceries and the man said, "No I need cash." Well, so much for setting a Christ like example for their children by giving to the poor. :)

Helping the poor is the work of believers; we just need to be very careful how we go about it in our day.

THE PLOT THICKENS

10 And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them. 11 And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.

Now, those that think that He was a believer might suggest that he wanted the money to pay back that which he had stolen from the bag, but that would seem a grasp in the dark. It is his motive of disloyalty that is so very prevalent in the text, not his goodness, repentance and restitution.

Note the gladness and the willingness of the parties to act upon their plot as they thickened it. Note also the specificity of the text. "Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve" leaves little doubt the one that was guilty. Not much of a way that the critics of our day could get around that clear declaration and identification.

Now, Judas might have been a little toward the lazy type in nature. He sought how he could "conveniently betray him." He did not want to go to too much trouble to get this job of betrayal on the road. And from the lack of mention in the text it would seem that the leaders took care of his minor request.

Sin is always the easy way, the way most convenient and often leads to serious consequences, as did the act of Judas.

Luke adds that the act was to be away from the multitude, out of sight, in secret. The leaders are still worried about the public and their reaction to the killing of Christ. Matthew adds that Judas asked what they would give him and they gave him 30 pieces of silver and he closed the agreement.

Barnes suggests that the rebuke of the Lord related to Mary's offering to Him may have angered Judas and that with his natural bent for covetousness tipped him over the edge with serving this man who he had followed for three years. One might wonder if there were other incidents that caused feelings if not friction between the two over that time period.

Luke mentions that Satan entered into Judas. We have little evidence that Satan actually was ever this involved in his devious activities, but at this time he was giving things his personal attention. The very fact that he entered into Judas would indicate that he was not a believer. There is no indication that Satan can indwell any believer.

One might contemplate the joy, excitement and shock of the Jewish leaders. In quiet they are plotting the death of the Lord, trying to figure out their plot and their plot plops into their midst in the form of Judas. What a relief, no need for all that thinking and planning, we will just let him do the work for us.

The People's New Testament notes suggest even a more sinister reason behind the offer to betray the Lord. They suggest that the loss of the possible money from the offering of Mary had upset him in that he could not make that gain profitable for himself. They also go on to suggest, and it might well be correct, that he has just realized that his chance of being the Lord's money keeper in an earthly kingdom was going away. This may have angered him even more than the rebuke in front of the others.

No matter the motivation or the inner character flaws the plot was set into motion and it would end in the arrest and ultimate death of the Lord.

THE PASSOVER

12 And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover? 13 And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. 14 And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? 15 And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us. 16 And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

The apostles knew the Jewish special days and knew that the Lord would want to observe Passover. The text shows the Lord's respect of the law and the desire to follow it. He was here to fulfill the law, not break it.

Two of the disciples were told to go into the city and a man would meet them. Whether the Lord had sent someone to make these arrangements or whether it was a miracle we do not know. Either would fit easily into the text. It is possible that He had sent Judas to make the arrangements and Judas just made a little side trip to the Jewish leaderships meeting place to make another deal.

My mother was not an artist, but someone gave her a Paint by Number picture of the last supper. When television was boring I would often look at the picture and wonder what it was all about. This was long before I met the Lord. I, in my lost state, knew that there was special significance to the picture other than its artistic value. Even though it was only Paint by Number it was a reproduction of the slightly more famous one and I knew that for someone to paint that scene there must be more significance than the supper aspect.

This was the last time that the Lord would be alone with the apostles before His arrest, trial, death and resurrection. He later spent time in prayer struggling with the knowledge of the coming cross. His emotions must have been quite astir even though He was fully God.

After spending three years with these men He must have felt alone as He faced his coming troubles. There must have been a heavy piece of excitement as well knowing that He was about to be the lamb led to slaughter for the sins of all mankind. The Passover was a memorial to the angel of death passing over Egypt killing all first born. The Lord had instructed the Jews to put the blood of a lamb over their door so that the Angel would know to pass over that household and spare their firstborn. The blood of that occasion was a picture of the blood of the pure Lamb of God that was shed to save all mankind from death.

THE REVELATION

17 And in the evening he cometh with the twelve. 18 And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me. 19 And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I? 20 And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish. 21 The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.

Christ announces to the twelve that one of them would betray him. They asked "Is it I?" Can you imagine what Judas felt like when they began to do this? Did all the apostles ask the question? We do not know but if they did Judas must have had some uneasy times.

John gives a little more detail on this and indicates that Jesus spoke directly to Judas and told him to do his work quickly and that Judas left. It seems in the context of John that he may have left early in the celebration. John 13.27ff "Jesus therefore saith unto him, What thou doest, do quickly. 28 Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. 29 For some thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus said unto him, Buy what things we have need of for the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor. 30 He then having received the sop

went out straightway: and it was night."

This speaking to Judas was another indication of Christ controlling the entire situation. He knew of the coming cross and the events prior to it. How Christ knew of Judas and his activities we do not know. The Spirit may have revealed this to him or someone in the Jewish leadership/household might have told him of Judas and the leaders having met.

Imagine the uneasiness in Judas as the Lord leaned to speak to him of these things. There must have been some fear of the other apostles if not fear of the Lord Himself. Judas knew that this man could walk on water and control nature; it must have given him some great fear of what Christ would do in anger. No anger was evident; it was God's will working out in Christ's life.

THE ORDINANCE

22 And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. 23 And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. 24 And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. 25 Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God. 26 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

Christ ties the Lord's Supper observance to the Passover quite nicely. The one observance was a celebration of thankfulness for life physical and the other an observance a celebration of thankfulness of life spiritual.

Christ mentions that He will not drink of the fruit of the vine until He will drink it in the Kingdom. This may indicate that the Marriage Feast of the Lamb is that time when the Lord will again partake of the cup. One a celebration looking back at the cross yet looking forward to the future and the other a celebration looking forward to the future with the Lord.

THE OFFENCE

27 And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. 28 But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. 29 But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. 30 And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. 31 But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.

The Lord warns the disciples that they will be offended soon. They would be scattered as sheep. Peter is quite outspoken that he would not deny Him - that he would go to death with him without denial. We all know the results of the coming events. Peter failed miserably in his promise.

We ought not to be too hard on Peter however because most of us make promises to the Lord that

do not always materialize. Some give their lives to the Lord then take them back and live for themselves. Some tell the Lord they are going to be great givers, but fail to follow through. Most of us, at one time or another have made promises but fail to follow through with our pledge to the Lord.

On the other hand we ought not to be so quick to declare ourselves better in this area for we know not what we will do when we are placed in the position of declaring our allegiance to the Lord and His.

We can, in our untested position, declare easily that we will do this or that but when under the pressure of deciding between family or life and declaring our commitment to Christ we may falter the same as Peter - hopefully not, but may the Lord give us strength to choose Him.

Do not take these comments as a way out when we face pressure, but take it as admonition to consider what you will do before the pressure is applied. Christ calls us to total commitment. Many through the ages have taken their stand with the Lord and many also have lost their lives and fortunes by doing so.

As you consider your response for Him, consider His response for you - He died for you, can we do less for Him if the situation should arise?

PRAYER ONE

32 And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. 33 And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; 34 And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.

35 And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. 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.

It is of interest to note the special association the Lord had with Peter, James and John. He confided in them what he would not with the other disciples ("began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; 34 And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death") He shared his innermost feelings with them at this very difficult time of His life.

“began”

This was the start of His feelings, until this time He had either controlled his emotions or at this time started feeling this way. This word means to commence or rehearse from the beginning.

“to be sore amazed”

The term is used of fear or fright and by the construction it is indicated that this fear was caused from outside Him. This would fit the realization of what is coming upon Him very soon.

“be very heavy”

This heaviness seems to be on His part. The realization is upon Him and he allows the heaviness to come upon him.

I don't mean to imply that I know what was going on with the Lord, but it would be my impression from the construction that the realization that His time was very near struck Him, maybe even unexpectedly, and as a man His mind just wrapped itself around the facts and the full force of them struck Him and His mind just went into heavy mode. Not that His divinity was out of control or not in control, but that his manhood suddenly realized what was about to face Him.

“exceeding sorrowful”

This was a simple expression of what He was feeling to His closest associates. He was very sorry. Whether sorry for Himself or for the apostles and their coming torment we are not told, but It would seem that a little of both might be included. The whole situation was going to be terribly hard for all involved.

"Fell" seems to have a relationship to prostration as well as moving from the standing position to prostration. This is often the position for worship in the Bible and we ought to consider it more in our churches today. We seem to be rather flip about worship today. If we aren't rocking on out, we are wandering around greeting one another and when that is over we hear lots of fluff about how God owes us a great life even though we have no idea of how to really worship.

It is hard to relate what is seen in churches today to the Biblical concept of worshipping God. Might some take a look into the concept in the Word rather than seeking information from somebody's blog or website. God sets the standard we are to follow not the local church growth analyst.

“prayed”

While laying face to the ground the Lord was meeting His Father on serious business. When you have serious business to do with the God please consider Christ's method of approach to the Father – that approach by prostration. Much of the unanswered prayer people complain about might well be due to improper life and approach to the fulfiller of prayer.

Some might bring up Luke 22.41 and his use of kneeling rather than lying down or prostrate. The translation is unfortunate since the term Luke used normally means lay, put or lay down rather than simply kneel, though it is translated kneeled four times elsewhere. Matthew 26.39 translates the act as "fell on his face."

“hour might pass from him”

His simple request was that the Father might allow this hour of trouble to pass from Him. I am sure that in His heart He knew that He must walk through these trials set before Him, but the

hope of a man dreading the pain and coming death seems to speak forth.

There is also the possibility that there was a dread over and above this. There may have been dread of the coming separation from God and pain of the sins of the world. We are not told much of these things in the word, but taking the sin of all mankind upon one's self cannot be a pleasant task to look forward to. We have no idea just what that meant to the Lord or how it affected Him but there certainly must have been ramifications.

“Abba Father”

Abba is a Chaldee (transliterated) word meaning father while the term translated father is a Greek word. The Greek speaking Jews often combined the two words together in prayer. On the other hand Barnes states that it is a Syriac word. Lightfoot has an extended discussion on the terms if you would like further information. (Matthew and Luke mention only one father as opposed to Mark's two. Matthew and Luke mention only the Greek father.)

Some preachers over the years have said that this just means Christ was saying Papa to God the Father. I have seen nothing but interpretation in their comments; there is nothing in the meaning of the words to indicate that this informal common term would be used by neither the Greek Jew nor even us today. I do not see Christ speaking to the Father in such a familiar, common way either. There is little indication that God the Father has a mature Father and child Son relationship, they are equal and to indicate there is such a childlike quality to the Lord nears sacrilege in my mind. If they were on such an informal childish relationship I suppose that Christ would have shortened it to Pa in His teen years according to these men. Some even go so far as to say that it means dada a term used by infants.

“Take away this cup”

This seems best related to the whole thought of the coming persecution and the cross, while some might suggest that it only related to the persecution. I see nothing to indicate that it is the trouble alone. Indeed, we do not know if the Lord knew of the pre cross events well enough to know what it would be like, nor that it would be something to dread. He would only have known of His coming death for certain.

The important point being that He was sorely tempted and yet withstood with the help of the Holy Spirit and was willing to submit Himself to the will of the Father.

It should be noted that such temptation in the face of trouble and torment is not wrong and it is not sin for we know Christ lived this life without sin. Bowing to temptation is that which is sin.

PRAYER TWO

37 And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? 38 Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.

Oh, the implications of telling one that you will pray for them and then not following through on your promise. They were only asked to "watch" but they did not even do that, they just took their late evening nap. The terms translated "watch" are all the same Greek word relating to awake, watchful or vigilant. Watching for trouble might be the thought of the word. They told Him that they would watch but they slept instead.

The Old Testament references of the watchmen watching the city come to mind. They are to watch for the enemy not lie down and share in sweet dreams.

How very alone the Lord must have felt at that moment when He found them sleeping, and how the disciples must have felt when they were caught in less than astounding circumstances.

PRAYER THREE

39 And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. 40 And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him. 41 And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

The Lord returned to prayer saying the same thing again to the Father. Repeated prayer is not wrong, it is the normal pattern. Pray until you have confidence that there is no longer a need to pray.

The promise to pray but not praying concept was introduced a few paragraphs ago. Oh how many times we say we will pray but we do not. It became my habit many years ago to think a moment before I answer when someone seeks my assistance in prayer. I consider whether I am willing to remember to do so, if I am willing to take time to do so, and whether I am going to do so. If I cannot in my own mind feel confident that I will follow through I will not respond with a positive. Seldom if ever do I actually say no or ignore such a request, but always the thought process occurs and the prayer commitment is made.

Prayer is so terribly important but churches today seem to shun the concept by canceling prayer meeting for most any reason be it weather, summer or winter, there is always an excuse.

I was in a church years ago where they had an early Saturday morning prayer time for men. There were seldom more than four and normally only three, but we always prayed and enjoyed the fellowship after. The meeting was often set aside during the summer and when it became two, it was set aside completely. It is sad to cancel prayer times due to lack of interest but the church often does.

Years ago a mission sent out a letter to all of their supporters of all of their missionaries. The letter suggested a prayer list to be sent out with needs of the various workers. The mission requested the supporters check a box to say that they were interested. The mission had over one hundred workers so you can imagine the letter went out to quite a number of supporters, but the mission only received one letter back from their questionnaire.

Oh, the power of the church today. At least the supporters were honest and said no they would not pray, unlike the apostles that were asked to pray and did not. Actually the text does not say that they responded to the Lord's request in the affirmative but one would assume you would respond positively to one you had followed for so long.

Luke records that an angel ministered to the Lord during His time of prayer. Luke 22.43 "And there appeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. 44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground."

It is also of note that the Lord asked them to pray that they not be tempted. This probably relates back to the persecution that was to come upon them - that they not be tempted to deny Him in their facing of their enemies.

Along with the prayer that the apostles were to be involved in they were to be praying for themselves that they not fall into temptation. Prayer for yourself and your living are not wrong. We ought to be careful to prepare ourselves for the spiritual warfare that we are in as we walk through this life.

THE ARREST

42 Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand. 43 And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. 44 And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely. 45 And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him. 46 And they laid their hands on him, and took him.

The record is clear that this is Judas the disciple not another unknown Judas when Mark records "Judas, one of the twelve" thus clearly proclaiming the one that betrayed to be Judas the apostle.

Now, the question that always has been in my mind is why the Jewish leaders needed Judas to assist them. The Jewish leaders had been confronting Christ for months and trying to trip Him up in their question/answer sessions, why would they not recognize Him?

There are two possible answers to this, first these are leaders in Jerusalem and they might not have seen Him before, or only on a limited basis. Second, it may be that they wanted super positive identification so that when they took him before the courts that there would be no surprises. It may have been part of the system to require someone that knew the accused to point them out for positive identification.

Note that Judas requested that He be lead away safely. Was this concern for the Lord? Was there really thought in his mind that nothing was going to happen to the Lord? On the contrary the word relates to "assuredly" rather than keep Him safe. Judas wanted them to be sure to lead Him away in custody; there was no concern on the man's part for Christ or His safety.

The whole bunch came to take Him, not that they thought a multitude would be needed but more likely they all wanted a bit of the glory for being there when He was arrested.

There are those today that are glory hounds. They will strain in whatever matter needed to be a part of something that is going on so that they can tell their coworkers and family "I was there when _____." It is part of our makeup to seek glory, that is why we should work on not wanting to seek glory. If we bring glory to God we have satisfied our reason for being on earth, we have no need of being famous or being with the famous. We are indwelt by the most famous personality possible - God Himself.

Mark records the words of the man that betrayed his companion of three years, "Master, master; and kissed him." How false, how phony, and how disingenuous of Judas, he has in mind to sell Christ out, indeed he is in the act of doing so and he uses such terminology. Doing an evil deed and making himself a liar at the same time. It is no wonder the man is held with such derision by the Christian world, yet he is part of God's plan of the ages. God uses man to do His will/plan. It is up to man to make sure that the doing is positive and not negative. Remember this fact when you work within your local church.

It would seem that the Jewish leaders were totally willing to be a part of this great occasion in their lives - what a fact to have to give answer for when they stand before God to be judged by their works.

THE REALITY

47 And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. 48 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me? 49 I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled.

Peter (John's account names him) shows his extreme interest in the Lord by drawing his sword and hacking off an ear. Christ, though not recorded by Mark, healed the man's ear - what did that man think, being in the capturing crowd and knowing the man being arrested was more than his employers had made out.

Now I have no idea what was in Peter's mind when he swung that sword but to get an ear off it would have had to have been traveling in a vertical plain and fairly quickly to cut it off. A fisherman was good at casting nets but a sword is a bit different. Unless Peter had been practicing for three years it would seem safe to assume that he did not hit his mark, indeed someone's head must have been in his sights originally and only someone's quick ducking response kept him from being a raising from the dead miracle.

As we have often done in this study, how do you think this man felt, first to have lost an ear, the pain, the realization of being defaced and then of being healed by the man you are assisting to arrest. Imagine the man feeling that pain disappear and knowing that the ear is whole - his mind must have been awash in emotion, intellectual struggles and mixed feelings about his

involvement.

Jesus clarifies everyone's thinking by asking them why they did not take Him while He was in the temple. There does not seem to be an answer in any of the Gospels. It was obvious that they were being secretive and that they feared the people had they done anything publicly.

The detractors came at night, in secret; and so it often is in the church. When trouble arises it is not at the business meeting, but usually in the background where people can do their work in secret. Business meetings have their own type of problems, but watch for those things going on in the background.

So often trouble hatches when people in the background get together to stir their little pots of plots. The several times when other believers have determined to cause our family/ministry problems it has always been a few back there in the shadows plotting and causing problems that they would never make known in public. The sad part is these shadowy plots often come to fruition and often there is nothing that you can do to counter the attack. Yes, God knows all of the plots and all of the shadowy figures involved so we need not worry about retribution or making known the culprits. He will deal with them in HIS OWN GOOD TIME; it will not be a time of refreshing for either party for a healthy amount of dread for them is held on my part.

There is indication in what the Lord said about being in the temple that they really had no reason for Judas in that they knew Christ and what He looked like. One of my professors years ago suggested the following as a reason for needing Judas. "The Romans might have seen and known the Lord but how much can you see by torchlight - anyway those Jews all look alike so who would be able to tell Jesus from the rest?"

Of course the Romans were not the ones that wanted Him arrested and we do not know that Romans were in the group but John seems to leave that possibility open when he mentions (John 18.3) "Judas then, having received the band of soldiers, and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons." Whether the soldiers and officers were Roman or Jewish we do not know at this point.

Matthew 26.53 brings up another interesting topic. "Or thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?" Imagine the shock on the part of the Jews if this had happened. This proves that Christ GAVE His life rather than it being taken from Him. At any point in the process from the arrest to the death, He could have stopped the whole process by seeking the assistance of the Father.

His having this knowledge also relates to His prayer in the garden asking for all of this to go away but submitting to the Father's will. He could have simply stopped it all; yet He submitted to God and went forward with what He knew was about to come to pass.

Now being the worrywart that I have been known to be, I think I would have considered going home after such a comment if I were with the Jewish leaders. I cannot imagine twelve angels being a good sight at that moment much less twelve legion! My guess is I am out of there with

such possibilities unless I really was convinced that this guy was a nut case.

THE FULFILLMENT

50 And they all forsook him, and fled. 51 And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: 52 And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.

53 And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.

All forsook Him in His worst hour of trial. Imagine pouring three years of your life into training these men and at the sign of big trouble they all flee. Now, this might be providential in that some of the eleven might well have been arrested, but still the eleven showed little courage in the face of trouble.

One, a young man evidently was on the way out of the situation when he is caught by the little clothes he had on and the cloth was ripped from him. I'd guess we have all had those dreams when all of a sudden we are naked and there are all sorts of people around. This is no dream for the young man, he is naked and there are a ton of folks around.

There is speculation as to who the young man was, and many suggest Mark himself. The thinking is that he is the only gospel writer that mentions the incident thus it must have been personal. Personally, if it had been me I would not have recorded the fact. I would have refrained first of all due to the embarrassment, but second because of the possible ramifications with the Jews having identified myself as having been there.

Barnes suggests it was the owner of the garden. "A certain young man - Who this was we have no means of determining, but it seems not improbable that he may have been the owner of the garden, and that he may have had an understanding with Jesus that he should visit it for retirement when he withdrew from the city. That he was not one of the apostles is clear. It is probable that he was roused from sleep by the noise made by the rabble, and came to render any aid in his power in quelling the disturbance. It is not known why this circumstance is recorded by Mark. It is omitted by all the other evangelists. It may have been recorded to show that the conspirators had instructions to take the "apostles" as well as Jesus, and supposing him to be one of them, they laid hold of him to take him before the high priest; or it "may" have been recorded in order to place his conduct in strong and honorable contrast with the timidity and fear of the disciples, who had all fled."

People's New Testament notes and Robertson both suggest Mark as a possible identification, but all point out that identification of the man is pure conjecture. The Net Bible also suggests Mark. "The statement he ran off naked is probably a reference to Mark himself, traditionally assumed to be the author of this Gospel. Why he was wearing only an outer garment and not the customary tunic as well is not mentioned. W. L. Lane, Mark (NICNT), 527-28, says that Mark probably mentioned this episode so as to make it clear that "all fled, leaving Jesus alone in the custody of the police.""

The point being in recording of the incident is that the mob that arrested the Lord was out for others as well as the Lord. They were taking aim at all that were with him. The man seems to be distinct from the apostles in the text. As to why Mark recorded his nakedness is not stated. It may well have been to clearly identify him and the lengths that he took to remove himself from the situation.

As to identification, one day my wife and I were working in our office when a woman began screaming obscenities just outside our house. We looked out the window and saw a black woman walking down the middle of the street naked. I called 911 and told them there was a naked black woman walking down the street screaming. The 911 operator asked, "Can you describe her?" I replied that I thought if they sent an officer that he would probably recognize her. Nakedness is quite an identifier.

In the final portion of the text we see that Jesus is taken before the Jewish leadership. Not only was the chief priest there but all that had been plotting His death. These men were bent on His demise and wanted to be sure that it came to pass.

THE FALSE WITNESS

54 And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire. 55 And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none. 56 For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. 57 And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, 58 We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. 59 But neither so did their witness agree together.

Peter seemingly wanted to be with the Lord, but fear kept him from voicing his opinion relating to the false witness going on against the one that he had followed the three years prior. He entered into the house and sat with the servants. It would be suspected that there was a little covertness related to the situation.

From the text it would appear that there were false witnesses, then when their stories did not add up another group came to bear false witness as well. This second group might well be thought to have been some of the Jewish leaders that were named just previously since there is no indication that this group came from outside the building.

What frustration must have been felt by the Jewish leaders. Finally they have their man in court and there is no evidence. Years ago I was called for jury duty and was chosen for a jury seat. The man on trial was accused of driving while drunk and hitting another car. The lawyer for the man must have felt as the Jewish leaders. He would stand to give the man's story but there was no evidence whatsoever to give on the man's behalf. The man had been drinking, the evidence given by the prosecution seemed to be iron tight and the man's lawyer seemed mute on his behalf. The jury only took about twenty minutes to reach a verdict and most of that time was taken with explaining things to one juror that evidently was asleep most of the trial.

The man's lawyer had no evidence to prove the man innocent and the Jewish leaders had no evidence to prove the Lord guilty. At least the lawyer on our trial got paid for his labors; I'd guess that the Jews that brought charges were lacking in credibility for a long time.

One must wonder if Peter would have given testimony for the Lord had there been any semblance of proof against Christ. Had some of the false witness seemed to the high priest to have been credible, would he have come forth to witness against those that would bear false witness.

The fact that he felt he wanted to be present moves me to think that he might have come forth as a witness for the Lord. What the outcome of such would also be speculation. On the other hand we know that God had all of this set within His plan and the sequence of events was set - Peter was not needed for a positive witness due to the fact that the Lord was set to go to the cross no matter the outcome of any of the trials that were to come to pass.

THE ACCUSATION

60 And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? 61 But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? 62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. 63 Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? 64 Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death. 65 And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

It seems that the truth has little standing in the court of prejudice. Christ told them exactly who He was and they condemned Him for it.

It is of note that in the previous passage Peter was sitting with the servants, but here the servants are beating on the Lord. One is left to wonder if Peter was just all of a sudden sitting alone, whether he left or whether he moved into some other segment of the crowd. Since all seem to be condemning the Lord it would make one wonder where he was and if he wasn't rather prominent in his standing alone.

Actually the next passage tells us exactly what was going on. It seems that he was rather conspicuous and people started pointing him out as one of the apostles and we have recorded for us the denials of Peter as the Lord had predicted. He was standing out from the crowd but was in fear for his life and denied the Lord three times.

We all know that we would never deny the Lord if placed under pressure to do so, but even Peter failed. We should hope and plan to take a strong stand for Christ, but only that situation will allow us to know for sure what we would do or not do.

The Lord is condemned on His own words, even if they were totally true. He admitted to being

who they thought he believed He was, but because it was heresy to suggest such a thing He was condemned for His statements.

He laid claim to being God and they rejected totally that claim and held that He should die for such a claim.

With laws like that the Messiah can never come for if they find one that claims to be he is automatically condemned to death. Seems they will eternally look forward to the Messiah - well until He opens their eyes and they realize that He is the One which they had been looking for over the generations.

THE DENIAL

66 And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: 67 And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. 68 But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. 69 And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. 70 And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. 71 But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. 72 And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

One of the witnesses at O.J. Simpson's murder trial was condemned out of hand for saying that he/she heard a black person saying something. The basis of the condemnation was that you cannot tell race from the sound of speech. Humm, I always thought that the witness could have been correct. Not that you can ALWAYS tell race from voice, but often you can. It is not voice itself but the terms used, the inflection and the attitude. This passage makes it clear that there is basis for such thinking in that they recognized Peter as Galilean from his speech as well as other things.

After all can we not recognize someone as being from the south of the United States by their "southern drawl" and the New Yorker from his unique verbal skills? Not always, but often this is the case.

Peter was one of the twelve and he wanted to be close to the Lord but not too close. He did not want to be killed or condemned but he did want to be close to Him. This may have been love, commitment or just curiosity but I would guess the first two were most important to Peter.

The question for the reader relates to how are you when people begin to question the Lord in public. Are you outward in your support of God and His things or do you just settle into the crowd as an observer? Are you bold in your witness for Him? Are you up front and in the face of opposition or way in the background?

It is hard to be a solid defender of God and the Word if you do not know the answers to the critic's statements/questions. This is why KNOWING the Word is so very important to the believer. The church is supposed to be training the believer to stand as a witness in this life, but I fear most churches are just teaching the believer to look for what benefit the Lord can bring to them.

Our pastors and teachers need to be not only teaching the Word of God in detail so that we know what it says, but they should be teaching us the art of apologetics - the giving of an answer for our faith. Knowing the Word is step one and step two is being able to defend the Word. It is not that we need to prove the Word is valid, but we need to answer the critic's unbelief and incorrect representation of the Word.

Critics can have good sounding sound bites, but they need to be held accountable for the lack of support to those sound bites. Al Gore has been given the Nobel Peace Prize for his environmental work even though many scientists tell us that it is based on false assumptions and poor data. Anyone can make anything sound great, but to give it legs to stand on is another thing all together.

The Word can and does stand on its own, but we need to be able to point out the fallacious thinking of the false teachers. If Christians do not stand up to the falsehood in our world it will only grow in strength and stature due to our inability to discredit it.

There are apologists today that have been condemned for their work against falsehood, yet those condemning them are unable to do that same, needed, work. We cannot just get along in this life; we must be standing alone on the hill as a beacon to the lost. If we are blending in with the lost they can never know the brilliance of this Christ that was so easily condemned by the Jewish leaders.

MARK CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE TRIAL

15.1 And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate. 2 And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it. 3 And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing. 4 And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee. 5 But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.

A meeting of the minds it would seem, the chief priests, elders, scribes and the WHOLE council met to agree to the killing of the Lord. They hauled him off to Pilate and sought His death. There is bravery in crowds to be sure as it seems pictured here. When crowds gather and someone is stirring the pot, often trouble is the result of the situation. No different with the Lord and his accusers or false accusers might we say?

Christ spoke to Pilate but refused to respond to the false accusers. This amazed Pilate. It might be assumed that the amazement arose from the fact that the Jewish leaders were frothing at the mouth with their falsehood and Pilate knew or at least suspected it to be false and was impressed that Christ did not join into their little game of false accusation. The term translated "marveled" has the thought of admiration within its meaning. Pilate was not taken by the Jews, but admired the Lord for His actions.

So it is at times in church situations. You might be falsely accused but to respond will draw you into a fight that is un-win-able. Once falsehood is unleashed it often is impossible to counter even with the truth. False accusation often results in an innocent party being left with mud on their face and a name belittled.

Many years ago in a small town a woman made accusation against her pastor. He was ready to resign when his church board asked him to stay and told him that they were behind him 100%. He remained on for several months but the damage had been done. Rumors continued to circulate even after the woman admitted her sin and falsehood. The man was forced to resign and leave town due to the circumstance of falsehood.

The word translated council is the word we gain the Jewish council "Sanhedrim" from and is simply a council of the leaders. This was the big guns in Israel, the legislature if you will - the ones that caused things to happen in the country spiritually.

Pilate's question probably was his attempt to find fault with the man. Had Christ said yes, that He was the King of the Jews there would have been grounds for sedition charges against him for attempting to usurp Roman authority. Since the Lord gave an evasive answer Pilate was left to consider Christ based on the lies of the Jews.

Robertson assumes that the Jews had given this as one of the many charges, though we do not

know if that assumption is correct. It would be impossible for Pilate to overlook this charge or fact due to the fact that he himself could well be charged for overlooking such a crime against Caesar.

The trip to Pilate was also part of Roman law, Rome held sway over the death penalty so that the Jews could not just kill Jews that were friendly toward Rome.

THE SENTENCE

6 Now at [that] feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. 7 And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.

8 And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. 9 But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? 10 For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy. 11 But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. 12 And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?

13 And they cried out again, Crucify him. 14 Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.

15 And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.

Possibly I read too much into this text but it crossed my mind that they were willing to kill the true Messiah, the one that would set up their kingdom, and instead cry for the release of that one who fought the Roman's. They truly did not understand their Messiah expected. They wanted freedom from Rome more than their Messiah. Not uncommon for lost man I suppose. Reject truth while embracing falsehood.

America today is embracing every falsehood set before them and love it since it feeds their personal desires. The truth of the Word is not to be had since it feeds the spiritual those negative messages of do not or do that, or do this - no do's and don'ts for us.

The passage mentions that Pilate knew the Jews had brought Christ due to "envy." Now that portion of the equation has not come forth before, though it was pretty obvious as a good part of the Jewish leadership's problem with Him. He could draw the crowds; He had the pizzazz needed to be a leader at this time in Israel's life. Of course they were envious of His ability to draw followers. Followers that were no longer listening to the Jewish leaders, followers that were probably no longer giving to the leaders and followers that were finding truth in what the man said. Yes, envy must have been a factor. Even a lost Roman leader could see the inner workings of this mob.

Envy is a terrible thing. It not only causes problems for the one envied but it causes the envier to sin within and often to sin without with overt actions to get back at the envied.

Having been asked as a young seminarian to teach a senior adult class I dove in with all the gusto

possible. I had taught the class several weeks and one Sunday I was speaking of service in the church. One of the elders asked what they could do in the church. I responded as devil's advocate challenging them to tell me what they, the old timers, the has-beens, could do in the church.

The class responded with several dozen items that they were sure that they could do for the Lord in that church body.

No one told me before I took the class that the class was a bunch of do nothings that would balk at any suggestion that they do anything. I went to the pastor with my list with all the excitement of a young person expecting a good response from the pastor.

He looked at me for a long time after he snidely snickered and said that bunch will never to anything and you are foolish to think they will. I protested but was sharply cut off by the pastor and dismissed from his presence.

Within a few hours I was also dismissed from my teaching position and one of the deacons read me the riot act for being one of "Those young seminarians that is going to change the world." I was out of line for stirring the older folks up and a litany of other accusations fit for a young seminarian.

We left the church quite disheartened at our failure - till a few months later when we learned of another "young seminarian" that had been run off from the church for the same reasons. Then in another month or two someone informed us of the three other "young seminarians" that had been run off by the pastor and elders before I stumbled into the church.

Each "young seminarian" had crossed the line with some group in the church - they had started to have a rapport with the folks and were ministering to them. It seemed that the pastor could not stand to have anyone but him minister to the people. His envy was eating him alive. His church did not grow over the years in fact it dwindled to nothing. Yes, envy affects both parties if not contained within.

The saddest part of the entire story is that the pastor was a wonderful pastor, a great Bible teacher and he never realized how important he was to the church body.

THE CROWD

16 And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band. 17 And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, 18 And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! 19 And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him. 20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him.

The other end of envy is humility. Envy is jealousy due to an over inflated opinion of one's own

presence. Humility is the lack of willingness to allow self to be the criteria by which one sets one's opinion of themselves. The Jewish leaders were proud of their position and status while Christ held His in abeyance to His purpose in life. He thought himself to be what He was, the Lamb of God present to take away the sin of the world, not Almighty God to show everyone who He was.

The crowd treated Christ as they desired, but not as He ought to have been. They did not grasp His importance to them nor to the world. They saw Him as a threat to their way of life and they were upset enough to beat Him and humiliate Him.

We find it easy to look at the crowd and condemn them for their actions, yet do we really treat God any better in our lives? Do we honor Him as our Lord and Savior, or do we tend to humiliate Him with our inattention, our lack of response or our lack of interest. God expects these things from the lost but expects more of His children.

The "reed" which is mentioned brings thoughts of a story my wife used to tell of her dear grandmother. When the grand children misbehaved they would be sent to the tree in the backyard to pick a stick for the swatting. They found if they picked a weak and small stick grandma would go to the yard and pick a more appropriate stick for the deed. They found quickly to pick one sturdy enough to do the job or grandma would pick one that would do the job better and more painfully.

The reed could also be translated staff, cane or walking stick so this was not just a reed from the marsh or as we used to say beat me with a wet noodle, but this was substantial and quite painful.

My father was paralyzed from the waist down and walked with two canes to hold him up as he shuffled along. My brother and I slept on a hide-a-bed in the living room. When we would not go to sleep we often horsed around. Mom would holler at us, then come in and scold us, and now and then give us a swat or two. It all was part of the scheduled activities and it seldom slowed our horsing around down. There was, however, one sound coming from the back of the house that would stop all activity and sound and that sound was the shuffling of dad's feet as he started his long trek out to take care of the foolish brothers. Upon arrival an order was given to turn over and we would feel the sting of one of those canes across our backside. Even if we stopped everything upon that first sound he would not be swayed from his trip to the front room.

The pain was sharp and burning and did not always quickly go away and I would guess the Lord had much more pain than my brother and I.

Oh, it is so easy to speak of the fact that Christ suffered and died for us, but to stop and contemplate the pain, the humiliation and the mockery. Then to further comprehend the pain that He went through in the beatings and the crucifixion. To contemplate these things with any seriousness should move the contemplator to a desire to serve this One that gave and suffered so much for us.

Matthew also records that they knelt down before Him in phony worship. Dressing Him in

scarlet, giving Him a scepter and kneeling before Him in mockery, they knew not that one day they will kneel once more before Him knowing what they did to Him and knowing that He truly was the true Messiah and that they had mocked Him to His face.

It is not a good thing to look the Messiah in the eye and tell Him that He is a phony baloney. Some compassion should be held for these poor souls that were so mistaken or so misled. They will not have a pleasant time before the Lord in judgment. (Rom. 14.11 "For it is written, [As] I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. 12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Phil. 2.10 "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth; 11 And [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father." See also Isa. 45.23) This will not be a good day for these folks unless the Father's grace was extended to them in salvation at a later date.

It is not impossible that some of the tears that the Lord will wipe away will be shed over seeing poor souls such as these being condemned to an eternity of punishment. (Rev. 21.3 "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, [and be] their God. 4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away)"

Put yourself in the Lord's place for a moment. You know that death awaits, yet they prolong that death and suffering by turning you over to the crowds for suffering and pain. Capital punishment seems to be the Lord's standard for the world, but there is no need of prolonging that agony with other activities. If it is to be done, do it quickly.

THE CROSS

21 And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross. 22 And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull. 23 And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not. 24 And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. 25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified him. 26 And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Simon was minding his own business and they made him take up the cross for the Lord, evidently the beatings had taken a serious toll on the Lord's physical being. We are not told who the "they" were, but since it was the Roman soldiers that were given the orders it would seem that they were the ones that picked Simon.

That would have been some interruption to one's life. In town to run some errands and you get loaded down with a cross to carry out to the place where they killed the criminals.

Simon is specifically identified as being a Cyrenian and the father of Alexander and Rufus. This may have been for identification from all the other Simons that were around. Gill mentions some detail: "They found a man of Cyrene: a place in Libya, and one of the five cities called Pentapolis: which were these, Berenice, Arsinoe, Ptolemais, Apollonia, and Cyrene There were many Jews dwelt here, as appears from Act_2:10, as this man was a Jew, as his name shows; and besides, there was a synagogue of the Cyrenian Jews at Jerusalem, Act_6:9, so that though he was a native of Cyrene, he might now dwell there, and some of these were converted to the faith of Christ; for of those that were scattered abroad at the death of Stephen, some were men of Cyrene, Act_11:19. And it is very likely, that this man was a favourer of Christ, which might be one reason why they laid hold on him, and obliged him to bear the cross of Christ; since he was the father of Alexander and Rufus, who were men of note among the first Christians:"

Gill mentions that Christ was stoned just outside the Sanhedrim however I find nothing in the text to indicate this. This might reveal why Christ needed someone to carry His cross, but it is an assumption as near as I can tell.

The term translated "Golgotha" is a transliteration and the term translated "skull" is the Greek word from which we gain our term cranium. Golgotha simply means a knoll. Several commentators suggest that this was the place where the Jewish leaders killed those that they condemned.

Gill presents this picture of Golgotha: "that is to say, a place of a skull: some say Adam's skull was found here, and from thence the place had its name; this is an ancient tradition, but without foundation (m): it seems to be so called, because it was the place where malefactors were executed, and afterwards buried; whose bones and skulls in process of time might be dug up, and some of them might lie scattered about in this place: for, one that was executed as a malefactor (n), "they did not bury him in the sepulchres of his ancestors; but there were two places of burial appointed by the sanhedrim; one for those that were stoned, and for those that were burnt; and another for those that were killed with the sword, and for those that were strangled; and when their flesh was consumed, they gathered the bones, and buried them in their place; i.e. in the sepulchres of their ancestors."

Not only did they give Him false worship while they were beating Him but they further declared who He was by telling everyone present, in their ignorance, who He was. "And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS." Not that they knew that all they did was truth, nor did they give this information knowingly and truthfully, but in reality their falsehood and mockery told the world what they were too ignorant to know - this was the King of the Jews come to set up His kingdom on earth, yet they rejected and made a mockery of His presence among them. Well, rather normal for man - reject truth and embrace falsehood.

THE HUMILIATION

27 And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left. 28 And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors. 29

And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, 30 Save thyself, and come down from the cross.

31 Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save. 32 Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.

We see the priests and leaders calling Him Christ, the king of the Jews and crucifying Him in a manner consistent with prophecy. They either missed this completely or they did it on purpose to further mock Him. Either way they were showing their complete ignorance of Him and His authenticity.

Oh the self-control that the Lord must have been using. They are mocking Him in a way that really would boil most of us right over the edge of the pot and when our emotions hit the burner it would just sizzle and fry.

They were attacking His personal character and calling Him a liar, one thing most of us would not tolerate, yet the Lord tolerated this as well as the humiliation of being hung among thieves and being crucified for doing nothing more than existing.

When the personal attacks come, silence is often the best response. It lays the heckler out flat for their best shots are falling on deaf ears. Of course they will probably further their attack behind your back while telling others how wasted you were by their attack. Silence will give them nothing further to use against you.

Many years ago in the middle of a business meeting I was falsely accused but the accusation was so terribly ridiculous I just smiled and went on with the discussion. My wife and I were pastoring a small church that had been planted by other pastors in the area. We had moved at our expense to the town and were renting a large enough home to meet in but the room was becoming cramped due to growth.

My wife and I thought it might work well if we would buy a house that was larger with a large basement to meet in and we could live in it as well. We thought then that when we left for another ministry we could just sell or give the house to the church for a parsonage. I presented this to the church body and one of the members spoke up and said that he thought I felt that the present meeting place was beneath our housing standard and that I was just trying to lead the church into a bigger NICER house that I would be more satisfied with.

He did not know the house we were in was provided by the Lord, it was the first house that we had ever lived in as a family (only apartments before) and we felt terribly blessed to have been in this nice house already for over a year.

My wife was sitting on the front row with the children. I looked over and tears were streaming from my wife and my small children looked like their dad had just been skewered with a lance. As mentioned this was such a ridiculous comment that I just smiled and moved on. I had nothing that would come to mind to respond to such an off the wall comment.

"He saved others; himself he cannot save." Ah the irony of it all, He is about to save all mankind by giving Himself and they are still stuck on the physical and have no clue spiritually what is going on in the situation that they have created. Oft times it seems that Satan and his minions are so very clueless. In their rush to get the Messiah out of the way they do not know that they are sealing their own fate by their final downfall. They were totally defeated at the cross even though they are allowed freedom for awhile to test the saints and spin their webs of cleverness that can never succeed.

Christ set his total dominion over the earth in the death on the cross and the Devil has no further say in his "superiority" over God - he is not and that was proven by Christ's victory over death and the provision of salvation for all mankind, if only they will receive that salvation.

"Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days," Ah more sweet sweet irony. They taunt Him with His own words as He is fulfilling those very words and they show their complete lack of understanding of what He said at the temple. He is going to raise Himself up in three days, not the temple that has not been destroyed. He spoke of His body, not the building, though He could certainly have done that as well. In fact one might wonder if there will be a literal fulfillment of the building in the end time as well.

"I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands." Mark 14.58 This passage speaks of Christ doing the destruction not Romans in 70 AD thus this was not fulfilled with the destruction of the physical temple. It is possible this is a prophecy for the end times but obviously it is a prophecy of his physical body being destroyed but His having a new body not made of hands.

THE DEATH

33 And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? 35 And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias. 36 And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down. 37 And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. 38 And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. 39 And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

The term translated "reed" here is the same word used of the people beating Christ with a reed, giving good evidence that it was more than a small reed but more on the order of a staff or cane. The man lifted up the sponge with the reed, which would require some strength as well as length to lift the heavy sponge up to the Lord.

The people thought that He was calling for Elias or Isaiah to come and save Him from the cross. This was simply a comment to His Father in His time of pain and loneliness.

Just what is meant by "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is much discussed in theology classes across the nation and world, but there is no definitive answer to the question. Let us see what different men have said of the phrase.

Wesley: "Thereby claiming God as his God; and yet lamenting his Father's withdrawing the tokens of his love, and treating him as an enemy, while he bare our sins."

Henry also follows the thought that the sin of the world was upon the Lord at this point making Christ feel as though abandoned. He puts it this way: "Because in this especially he was made sin for us; our iniquities had deserved indignation and wrath upon the soul (Rom_2:8), and therefore, Christ, being made a sacrifice, underwent as much of it as he was capable of; and it could not but bear hard indeed upon him who had lain in the bosom of the Father from eternity, and was always his light. These symptoms of divine wrath, which Christ was under in his sufferings, were like that fire from heaven which had been sent sometimes, in extraordinary cases, to consume the sacrifices (as Lev_9:24; 2Ch_7:1; 1Ki_18:38); and it was always a token of God's acceptance. The fire that should have fallen upon the sinner, if God had not been pacified, fell upon the sacrifice, as a token that he was so; therefore it now fell upon Christ, and extorted him from this loud and bitter cry."

I think there is a bit of error mixed into Henry's comments such as "as he was capable" indicates Christ took upon Himself all that He could stand - however He took upon Himself all that was due, every whit of it, not just what He could stand to take. He suffered for the sins of the world in total not in part.

Gill waxes eloquent on the subject but does not really give us the answers we seek. He suggests that this was the Lord human speaking not the divine. This may be but this is not clear from the Scripture.

The Lord human was definitely not separated from the Lord divine, the statement was related to God the Father being separated from Him. Gill relates this to the separation of the lost from God in Hell. That is of interest, but does not really relate because the lost will still see separation from God in Hell. The Christian was saved from this fate, so not sure why you would need Christ separated from God the Father even if it were possible within the Godhead which it is not.

This was Christ (both human and divine) speaking. Had God forsaken Him in the sense that we understand it? Was there a separation between the Son and the Father? Both seem rather impossible as we understand the Trinity.

We need to understand this within the context of Christ being totally God and totally man, not two entities tied up in one container. He was both at once, not both at different times or some blended mix of some sort.

Clarke mentions: "Some suppose "that the divinity had now departed from Christ, and that his human nature was left unsupported to bear the punishment due to men for their sins." But this is by no means to be admitted, as it would deprive his sacrifice of its infinite merit, and

consequently leave the sin of the world without an atonement. Take deity away from any redeeming act of Christ, and redemption is ruined. Others imagine that our Lord spoke these words to the Jews only, to prove to them that he was the Messiah. "The Jews," say they, "believed this psalm to speak of the Messiah: they quoted the eighth verse of it against Christ - He trusted in God that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. (See Mat_27:43). To which our Lord immediately answers, My God! my God! etc , thus showing that he was the person of whom the psalmist prophesied." I have doubts concerning the propriety of this interpretation."

He also presents the thought that the words might be interpreted slightly differently to produce a different conclusion to the words of the Lord. "The words, taken in this way, might be thus translated: My God! my God! to what sort of persons hast thou left me? The words thus understood are rather to be referred to the wicked Jews than to our Lord, and are an exclamation indicative of the obstinate wickedness of his crucifiers, who steeled their hearts against every operation of the Spirit and power of God. See Ling. Brit. Reform. by B. Martin, p. 36.

"Through the whole of the Sacred Writings, God is represented as doing those things which, in the course of his providence, he only permits to be done; therefore, the words, to whom hast thou left or given me up, are only a form of expression for, "How astonishing is the wickedness of those persons into whose hands I am fallen!" If this interpretation be admitted, it will free this celebrated passage from much embarrassment, and make it speak a sense consistent with itself, and with the dignity of the Son of God." He continued to support my thought that there is no possibility of a division within the Godhead thus there must be a different meaning to the text and I would heartily concur. His explanation seems to be the better of all options read to this point in time.

Barnes submits the usual line of thought which this author has been taught through reading and classes over the years. This line of thinking has never really given me a proper understanding of the text whereas Clarke's thinking seems more the logical. I will allow the reader their own struggle with understanding this text.

"Eli, Eli ... - This language is not pure Hebrew nor Syriac, but a mixture of both, called commonly "Syro-Chaldaic." This was probably the language which the Saviour commonly spoke. The words are taken from Psa_22:1.

"My God, my God ... - This expression is one denoting intense suffering. It has been difficult to understand in what sense Jesus was "forsaken by God." It is certain that God approved his work. It is certain that he was innocent. He had done nothing to forfeit the favor of God. As his own Son - holy, harmless, undefiled, and obedient - God still loved him. In either of these senses God could not have forsaken him. But the expression was probably used in reference to the following circumstances, namely:

"1. His great bodily sufferings on the cross, greatly aggravated by his previous scourging, and by the want of sympathy, and by the revilings of his enemies on the cross. A person suffering thus might address God as if he was forsaken, or given up to extreme anguish.

"2. He himself said that this was "the power of darkness," Luk_22:53. It was the time when his enemies, including the Jews and Satan, were suffered to do their utmost. It was said of the serpent that he should bruise the heel of the seed of the woman, Gen_3:15. By that has been commonly understood to be meant that, though the Messiah would finally crush and destroy the power of Satan, yet he should himself suffer "through the power of the devil." When he was tempted Luke 4, it was said that the tempter "departed from him for a season." There is no improbability in supposing that he might be permitted to return at the time of his death, and exercise his power in increasing the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. In what way this might be done can be only conjectured. It might be by horrid thoughts; by temptation to despair, or to distrust God, who thus permitted his innocent Son to suffer; or by an increased horror of the pains of dying.

"3. There might have been withheld from the Saviour those strong religious consolations, those clear views of the justice and goodness of God, which would have blunted his pains and soothed his agonies. Martyrs, under the influence of strong religious feeling, have gone triumphantly to the stake, but it is possible that those views might have been withheld from the Redeemer when he came to die. His sufferings were accumulated sufferings, and the design of the atonement seemed to require that he should suffer all that human nature "could be made to endure" in so short a time.

"4. Yet we have reason to think that there was still something more than all this that produced this exclamation. Had there been no deeper and more awful sufferings, it would be difficult to see why Jesus should have shrunk from these sorrows and used such a remarkable expression. Isaiah tells us Isa_53:4-5 that "he bore our griefs and carried our sorrows; that he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; that the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him; that by his stripes we are healed." He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us Gal_3:13; he was made a sin-offering 2Co_5:21; he died in our place, on our account, that he might bring us near to God. It was this, doubtless, which caused his intense sufferings. It was the manifestation of God's hatred of sin, in some way which he has not explained, that he experienced in that dread hour. It was suffering endured by Him that was due to us, and suffering by which, and by which alone, we can be saved from eternal death."

There is much discussion relating to the work of the Lord on the cross. Some suggest that He suffered what we suffered had we gone to hell; however there is no real proof of this. He saved us in some manner from that fate, however it is not stated that He took our punishment upon Himself. Indeed if the picture of the Old Testament sacrifice is related to the Lord's own we see that the lamb did not suffer the fate of the saint, it only died and shed its blood, which in fact the Lord Jesus Christ did for each one of us. He died and His blood was shed, no more is required of the Lord to save us.

Others point to the fact that the Lord went into hell to suffer our punishment - no there is no indication of this. He died in our place, He shed His blood for atonement, but there is no indication that He suffered hell for us. Just a point of logic, how could one suffer millions of eternities in hell for all mankind in a few hours in the grave?

The requirement for sin was the sacrifice of another - an animal in the Old Testament, and God in the case of the New Covenant - this is clear in the book of Hebrews. The emphasis is on the shedding of blood, not suffering torment for the saint.

Did He suffer on our behalf? Definitely, in beatings, in humiliation and in death, but He did not suffer the fires of hell for an eternity so that I would not have to. As I type these thoughts the general teaching on this subject over the years seems more and more polluted. It is clear that we have been misled and it is quite possibly due to the misinterpretation of the Lord's words in this text.

Let us list some items and see if we can gain some overall understanding of the work on the cross.

There is the fallen nature often called the sin nature.

There is the death physical that was part of the curse upon Adam.

There is spiritual death.

There is the second death.

There is suffering in hell.

There is atonement.

There is Christ's death.

There is Christ's shedding of blood.

Just how do all of these items relate to one another? Let us see if we can work through these one at a time and relate them to one another if they are indeed related.

THERE IS THE FALLEN NATURE OFTEN CALLED THE SIN NATURE. This in my mind was dealt with at the cross for all of mankind. All Old Testament people died and went to Abraham's bosom (often called Sheol) according to Luke 16. Christ took the saints out of this location after His work on the cross indicating that the Old Testament saints were not complete in their salvation in some manner. I would relate this to their lack of regeneration a work of the Spirit that could not take place until the provision of the cross. Their salvation was completed at the cross so that they could go to be with God after that completed work.

The fact that the Old Testament lost were in the same location as the saints, though in a separated area, indicates that they were in similar circumstance - they were not yet ready for eternity indicating that they also awaited the work of the cross in some manner. This would be that eternality of nature that the work of Christ did on the cross.

Chafer once said something along the line that Christ did everything to make us as if Adam had not fallen. I believe that this is correct. This work of the cross gave all of mankind the same possibility of benefit, though some would accept the completion of that work via salvation and others would reject it.

It would be my contention that the cross work gave all mankind eternal existence, though the quality of that existence would be based upon their belief or non-belief in God. We see in the

Revelation that all areas will be emptied into the Lake of Fire that final resting-place of the Devil and his own. This is in the context of the Great White Throne Judgment. Rev. 20.14 "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

Another reference to this is found in the same book a tad later and lists some of the types of people involved clearly showing lost souls. Rev. 21.8 "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

Since the saint does not have a part in this second death we must assume that is one of the items covered in the work of the cross. Since this second death is to the spirit of the lost person and the saint has no part in that death, then one of the benefits of the cross and our belief in Christ is to avoid the second death.

Now let us move on to the point of the sin nature. This would seem to be that which would keep one from eternal existence. Since the lost were retained in a holding pattern with the saints would indicate a purpose. If they were to be lost/annihilated they would have been gone in a flash at the time of their death. Instead they were retained in Abraham's bosom for some purpose. They are still retained there awaiting the Great White Throne Judgment.

Thus post cross the lost today when they pass into death automatically have eternal existence though that existence will be most miserable.

The question is do they have the lost nature in this life? It would seem quite so, though they can shed it with simple belief and acceptance of God and His Word as do the saints which claim the work of the cross. Another way of looking at this is that they are by nature lost.

The loss of the old nature or sin nature at the point of salvation seems quite clear when Paul mentions II Cor.5.17 "Therefore if any man [be] in Christ, [he is] a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." "New creature" seems quite definite. It mentions new creature, not a mixture of an old creature and a new creature into a new/old creature, but a NEW CREATURE. Rom. 6.6 also mentions "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with [him], that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Either we are crucified with Him or we are not. We are free to serve Him totally, though none will choose this path of operation due to our self-centered bent to please our own desires rather than His.

We are free of that old nature. Take a simple illustration. Nature means that which makes up the item. If you take a glass of milk it has a nature that makes it milk. If you stir in some poison you no longer have an item that has the nature of milk, you have an item that has the nature of poisoned milk. You do not have a container partially filled with milk and partially filled with poison. In man how can we understand that before salvation we have a fallen nature totally corrupt, then we are made new by salvation - how can you logically or Biblically understand this to mean that God added a new nature to your being while leaving the old. We are not a container

with an old nature and a new nature; we are a "new creation." We as to nature are new, not a mixture of new and old. The work of the cross either changed us completely or it did not.

Either we are made just as Adam was before he fell or we are not. A mixture that wars between its natures is totally illogical and in my mind unbiblical. If you would like further study on this read my work on regeneration and if you reject my thinking then offer a better answer to the questions that my thinking answers so fully.

There is the death physical that was part of the curse upon Adam. Now this one is not so clear. Adam fell and part of the curse was physical death. If Chafer is correct then are we not free from this "first death" that he gained due to his sin? Are we to understand that he would have lived forever had he not fallen? No, there was located in the garden the tree of life. If he would have lived forever why would there be a tree of life to eat from? He was facing physical death over time, but his physical death that was part of the curse seems to have been a quicker much more eminent and guaranteed death. Had he failed to eat of the tree of life he would have died it would seem.

Now we have mentioned that Chafer said that we were made to be as Adam before he fell. Notice in the book of Revelation when it says in Rev. 22.2 "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, [was there] the tree of life," and in 22.14 "Blessed [are] they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." It seems that we will have the same access as Adam did before he fell.

THERE IS SPIRITUAL DEATH. Spiritual death is that final "second death" that the lost must enter into. It is the eternal state of the lost. It is the horrible state of the dead that Michelangelo depicted in the Sistine Chapel. If you have time go onto the Internet and search for the work and take some time to just study it and consider the ramifications of what the man portrayed. It depicts the horror of the lost spirits being ferried to hell in boats. It is not a pretty picture and might even help you to realize just what it was that Christ did for you on the cross.

This is wrapped up in the tree of life and the death that was pronounced upon Adam and Eve. They were removed from the tree of life so were bared from further physical life and the change in their nature guaranteed their part in the spiritual/second death to come.

THERE IS THE SECOND DEATH. This is covered in the section just prior.

THERE IS SUFFERING IN HELL. This is the result of the spiritual/second death. It is described as darkness, fire, loneliness and not pleasant conditions. The Lord pictures it when He referred to the Jerusalem City dump, which was constantly ablaze. His listeners knew when He spoke of hell that it was going to be worse than being cast onto the city dump and suffering for eternity.

Some suggest that this is not eternal, that it is only a temporary place of purification or that it only pictures the final annihilation of the being. These are great theories, which might bring comfort to some, but they are not Biblically based.

THERE IS ATONEMENT. Some suggest that this is "at one ment" or that it is an act on the part of one that brings two back together. Man and God were going different directions, but with the work of the cross man could once again face God face to face - based on belief. The cross brought the possibility of man and God facing one another to a reality if only the man would accept the work of Christ.

In Exodus 29.35 the term is used of purifying the alter. There is a part of atonement that makes one pure and ready to face God and it also allows God to turn to that which is pure. Ex. 30.15 speaks of the people bringing money to atone for their souls. Ex. 32.30ff speaks of atonement in relation to sin and Moses asks God to blot him out of His book if the Lord will not forgive the people.

Moses suggests the idea of substitution in relation to the people's sin and consequence. He is willing to be lost for their safety. Christ actually did this for all mankind on the cross.

Romans 5.10ff speaks to the New Testament concept of atonement. "11 And not only [so], but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. 12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"

The passage is clear that Adam sinned, death came due to that sin, and that death was passed upon all men.

Reconciliation or satisfaction is also the idea of atonement. It is making man right with God, though it is based and is conditional upon man's belief.

THERE IS CHRIST'S DEATH.

A good question to begin with is this; did Christ's death itself accomplish anything for man? Was it the death, the shedding, or the blood that was the item which brought benefit to man. This, from my understanding, was part of the problem some years ago with one of the popular pastors in our country that submitted that it was the shedding, not the blood itself that was beneficial. In my mind it is semantics, as long as that which was needed was done. Whether the liquid was beneficial or not will take a deeper discussion than we will take on here. Besides, that discussion was done some years ago and probably in a better manner than I could do it.

The requirement of the Old Testament set in the garden was death and shedding of blood. When the first couple sinned they discovered their nakedness and covered themselves. God shortly gave them coverings of skin that was the first shedding of blood to cover the sin of man. The requirement did not change. During the Law the requirement was the same; an animal of perfect condition was to be offered.

We know from the book of Hebrews that this was a temporary remedy for it was not adequate to the requirement, but it allowed the Old Testament believer to have some standing with God even though his salvation was not complete until the cross. Many dispute this concept but to do so

means that God had to deficit spend until the cross so that the Old Testament saint could be saved. He had to save them on the basis of what was not yet done.

Some suggest that in God's mind the cross had happened and that the Old Testament saint was as saved as we are. If you can jump through those illogical entanglements feel free to accept their theories. The Old Testament saint was not complete in their salvation, only made acceptable so that they could enter Abraham's bosom rather than the nearby place of torments. When the work of the cross was finished the Lord went to Abraham's bosom and took those saints to be with the Father where we will go when we pass from this life. This is also why the Lord had to "go" before He could send the Spirit. The Spirit could not indwell the souls of men who were not complete before the Father.

Some suggest that Christ must die in our place. Is it the death or the shedding of blood? It would seem death was the requirement in that this was the requirement in of the Old Testament sacrifice. Does the death have some purpose in providing for the saint? It must or it would not have been the requirement.

One point of note is that Adam's curse, which in part was death, is not immediately related to the death of the sacrifice though linked. Physical death is part of that overall consequence of sin and thus related, but does not make the two equals. The death of the cross was death for all that relates to Adam's sin and Adam's physical death is a part of the consequence of his action.

In a sense Christ did overcome the physical death aspect in that He made provision for our resurrection. We still must go through that transition from this life to the next but it is immediate and assured.

THERE IS CHRIST'S SHEDDING OF BLOOD. This was the finished "once for all" sacrifice of God on the cross for mankind. All that will believe will be saved from their lost condition which includes their fallen nature, their past sin, their future sin, their well deserved eternity in hell, and their physical death/resurrection from the grave.

Hebrews 10.10 declares "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once [for all]. 11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: 12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;"

This passage gives us information on two fronts. It was the offering of His body that was efficacious and it was definitely once for all. Be sure to note one time as well as for "ALL." "The Calvinist brethren, and I do believe them to be brothers in the Lord even though they would not admit to the reverse of that, can begin to jump through their illogical hoops to get wrapped around the clear word of God. :-)

It would seem from the context of this passage that it was not only the offering of His body, but later was also the offering of His blood on the heavenly alter that completed this work.

There is also clarity that sins, plural were taken care of at the cross. The removal of sin is part of that great doctrine of reconciliation. There is the removal of the sin nature as well as the removal of sins which allows God to turn to man in the giving of salvation.

There is, whether measurable or not, a sequence to the whole of salvation. My theology online deals with the sequence of events. Now, this is not a sequence as the reformed doctrine tells it. They would have us believe that regeneration occurs then sometime in the future the rest of salvation will happen, whenever the person believes. This is partially why many reformers baptize infants. Others suggest that when John the Baptist squirmed in his mother's womb was the occasion of his regenerated then much later he believed.

Salvation in my mind is in an instant - all of it, yet within that instant there is actually a sequence. Some parts of salvation must occur before others can.

THERE IS FORGIVENESS OF SINS. This occurs when you believe. It is part of the work of the cross - the death and offering of the blood on the heavenly altar. This gains our past forgiveness and assures future forgiveness as we confess our sins according to I John 1.9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The lost on the other hand will answer for their sins, past, present and future as well as pay for their lack of caring for their sin nature by belief. This is indicated when Revelation speaks of them being judged by their works at the resurrection. Their activities will be their judge as to how they will suffer in the Lake of Fire. All are lost, but there seems to be some manner of "according to their works" as well. Much like the believer whose works will be tried by fire to see which are good and which are bad.

BENEFITS/COSTS OF THE CROSS/SALVATION:

FREEDOM FROM THE SECOND DEATH for the saint.

ASSURANCE OF THE SECOND DEATH for the lost.

LOSS OF THE OLD NATURE through salvation for the saints.

RETENTION OF THE SIN NATURE through rejection of Christ for the lost.

GAIN OF A NEW NATURE FOR THE SAINT.

LOSS OF A NEW NATURE FOR THE LOST.

ACCESS TO THE TREE OF LIFE FOR THE SAINT.

LOSS OF ACCESS TO THE TREE OF LIFE FOR THE LOST.

EXCUSE FROM THE SECOND DEATH FOR BELIEVERS.

ACQUISITION OF THE SECOND DEATH FOR THE LOST.

PROVISION OF SALVATION FOR THE SAINT.

CONFIRMATION OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT FOR THE LOST.

FORGIVENESS OF PERSONAL SIN FOR THE BELIEVER.

LACK OF PROVISION FOR THE PERSONAL SIN OF THE LOST.

There were three hours of darkness. This was not a normal occurrence or Mark would not have mentioned it. Matthew, Mark and Luke all record this event and all mention that the darkness was over the land. It might be assumed that all three writers were indicating the land that was involved - Israel, not the surrounding countries however we will see in a moment that this may not be correct.

It would seem that this darkness was somewhat symbolic of the spiritual darkness of the land that had rejected their Messiah. He had come to take them unto Himself in His kingdom but they had rejected His teaching as well as His person. Darkness is the result spiritually and physically. The Jews had sought a sign and now that He had given them one, they still did not catch the implication of this man and His life or death.

Matthew Henry relates this occurrence to Old Testament prophecy. "Now the scripture was fulfilled (Amo_8:9), I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day; and Jer_15:9, Her sun is gone down while it is yet day."

Gill mentions that he had been on the cross since nine in the morning and that the darkness started at noon and ended at three in the afternoon. He also suggests that this was an extended eclipse of the sun. A total eclipse would do the trick but a normal one would not last three hours. This was a supernatural occurrence whether an eclipse or not.

Gill further suggests that the darkness was over the whole of the Roman empire since there are several mentions of the unexplained darkness recorded by secular historians in the realm. These mentions would indicate that he is correct. He mentions "moreover, it was over all the land, or earth, as the word may be rendered; and the Ethiopic version renders it, "the whole world was dark"; at least it reached to the whole Roman empire, or the greatest part of it; though some think only the land of Judea, or Palestine, is intended: but it is evident, that it is taken notice of, and recorded by Heathen historians and chronologers, as by Phlegon, and others, referred to by Eusebius (d). The Roman archives are appealed unto for the truth of it by Tertullian (e); and it is asserted by Suidas, that Dionysius the Areopagite, then an Heathen, saw it in Egypt; and said, "either the, divine being suffers, or suffers with him that suffers, or the frame of the world is dissolving."

If the darkness was over all the earth, the eclipse theory would not fit, but rather a supernatural darkening of the sun which was obvious over the entire "lighted" portion of the earth.

"And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost." This indicates that Christ gave His life on His terms not the terms of the Romans, Jews or the cross. He gave up the ghost.

"And gave up the ghost" is one Greek word. It is a verb and is in the active voice indicating that

it was Christ's action of giving. The word relates to breathing out or breathing out your last breath.

Robertson quotes Augustine ""He gave up his life because he willed it, when he willed it, and as he willed it""

Robertson continues with a quote from Stroud relating to the physical cause of the death of Christ - that the loud cry was one of the proofs that Jesus died of a ruptured heart as a result of bearing the sin of the world. (As mentioned prior to this that whether He actually suffered the punishment for our sin or not is not clear.)

The phrase may just mean that He breathed His last. The synoptic Gospels follow the same active voice but all could mean either that He specified the occurrence, or that He simply died. Since throughout the trials and His actions it is clear that He chose the time of his end and there is no need to think that He did not also choose the exact instant of His death. Indeed, this was the hour for the killing of the Passover lamb, thus if he did choose His time - well what irony.

"And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." Top to bottom would indicate that this was God doing the tearing, not man. At the least this was a picture of the putting away of the Old Covenant and the beginning of the New. Man did not have to access God through the priestly system any longer, but on the other hand had free access to God on His own.

Matthew records that other supernatural things were also going on. There was earthquake, rending of rocks as well as the rending of the veil. This was not just the veil that a woman would wear, but was a heavy curtain. You can find more about it in the Old Testament description of the tabernacle.

"And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God." The Centurion must have noticed something remarkable in what is recorded otherwise he would not have made the declaration that he did about the Lord's son ship.

Some might suggest that the man had no idea what he was saying, that he would have viewed Caesar as God. This might be true but there is no indication that anyone considered Christ a relation to Caesar, nor did Caesar have a "son" as god in the theological sense of Caesar worship.

Matthew records that there were other soldiers with him and it seems all were in agreement as to the son ship of the Lord. It should be assumed that these men had observed the "trials" and had seen the Lord's actions through it all. This likely was part of their evaluation of the Lord and the truth of His claims.

It is also probable that the men had seen many people on the cross and their deaths. The whole scene may have brought them to the conclusion that the Lord was truly different.

It is not of any small note that the Lord's death had immediate results - the quake, the open graves and the tearing of the veil. We do not know how much of this the soldiers observed, but had they witnessed any of it the impression would be that this was not just another Jew hanging on the cross, but someone special.

Robertson observes that the text could easily be translated "a son of god" rather than "the son of god" indicating that the soldiers realized He was out of the ordinary even though they may not have known just who Christ was.

It is doubtful that they understood Christ to be the son of God as we do, but rather as someone super special, someone that carried Himself in an excellent manner and someone that died an honorable death even though seemingly innocent to them. It would be clear to them that after the fact when they heard of the temple veil and opening of graves that they would have really wondered at who this man really was. Some suggest that the hill of the crucifixion was surrounded by graves of those killed on the crosses of the past. It is quite possible that they observed some of these graves opening.

Just what we should make of the immediate results of the cross might be an interesting study. What else occurred at that moment? Was salvation's provision beginning in mankind? We know that some items were probably not completed until the Lord offered His blood in the heavenly tabernacle. When this occurred is not known either. It is recorded that He did not want anyone touching Him until He had ascended unto the Father, but what relation that has to the offering in the tabernacle is not clear either.

I would suggest the following sequence, but only as a suggestion for thought.

Death on the cross

Quake

Rending of the veil

Opening of the graves

Burial

Going into Abraham's bosom to preach

Resurrection

Going to the heavenly tabernacle and offering

Salvation completed for the Old Testament saint and provided for all others

Going to Abraham's bosom to take the saints to heaven

Ascension to sit with the Father

THE BODY

40 There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; 41 (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem. 42 And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day

before the sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. 44 And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. 45 And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.

Women had followed Him to Jerusalem and they were at the cross. One might wonder where they stayed during this time. It might be possible that they were involved in preparation and serving of the Last Supper. Verse forty-one might back this thought up in that they had followed and served Him in Galilee.

Matthew 27.55 mentions that there were "many women" not just a few. "And many women were there beholding from afar, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him:" In verse forty-one Mark also mentions this.

This probably relates to the opposite that was not true, that there were many men. We know that Peter denied the Lord and it would seem that the apostles had been absent if not afar off. There evidently had been no men who had followed from Galilee either.

Now, you women's libbers hold onto your dander here, there is nothing sexist in what I am going to say. Women have always been servers in the Lord's service. They tend to take that humble position to do what they can for the Lord. Many churches would falter if not for the women who serve behind the scenes. Often they are the cleaners and the providers of the needs of the church. Often this is their choice, not their position.

This is not to say that serving is the only thing women can do in the church for they are also fine teachers of children and serve well on committees for preparing for the on-going's of the church.

This is not to say that men cannot "serve" in those same capacities and often do within the church. I served with a man who had been president of a Bible Institute. His philosophy of service was "If you see something that needs doing, then it is your responsibility to do it." This philosophy caused students and faculty to see him picking up trash, mopping floors and cooking in the dinning hall. Anything that needed doing when he passed by was HIS job.

Oh that men and women in our current church would adopt that same philosophy.

Joseph of Arimathaea sought the body of the Lord. His going at this time is related to the fact that the Sabbath was coming and the body needed to be taken care of - probably because bodies on the cross on the Sabbath was not allowed.

Pilate was shocked that Christ was already dead. This is another strong indication that the Lord not only allowed Himself to be arrested, did not defend Himself and did indeed choose the exact time of His own death - a giving up of His spirit rather than it being taken from Him when He died a natural death.

Joseph may have been a member of the Sanhedrim since the term "counselor" is used of members of that body of men. At any rate a man of noble character and high position in some body of men. A man who Pilate may have known or at least he respected the position of the petitioner.

THE BURIAL

46 And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre. 47 And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.

Evidently the women were still a bit afar from the happenings with the Lord since it is mentioned that they observed where He was buried, but were evidently not a part of that burial.

Joseph surely had some respect for the Lord since he took the effort to see to His burial and used fine linen for the purpose.

Maybe a side note to burial. What we go through in our country is near barbaric in nature. To cause families to go through the viewing, the funeral and the burial, all drawn out processes that only prolong the reality of death. It is a natural course in our lives and nothing to be feared since it is rather automatic and we do not have to do a thing to be sure it occurs.

We have bought into the ritual put upon us by the funeral directors need to make a living. The casket, the vault, the never ending stream of costs and time to draw out a process that has already occurred. The person is dead, gone, and not coming back, face it and get on with life.

The world makes us feel that a full funeral is the only way to have a going away, when in reality a quick burial and it can be over. My father was crippled and doctors wanted his body for science to see if his spinal cancer might have been caused by his injuries. He used to joke with us, that way when they are done with me they will cremate me and send me back and you can go out with a posthole digger and bury me without all the cost.

That did not occur but that older generation had a better view of death and burial than this current generation. My wife and I have decided that we will be cremated and buried without a funeral, that way we will not be embarrassed when no one comes to our funerals :-)

Maybe if the lost saw that believers did not fear death as they do there might be some stirring in their minds about the Christ that overcame the grave. At least believers in recent years have changed to memorial services where it is more of a celebration, though there is still a large emphasis on the dieing, rather than the resurrection to life with the Father in heaven.

MARK CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE RESURRECTION ANNOUNCED

Mark 16.1 And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

2 And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. 3 And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? 4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. 5 And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. 6 And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

There is much discussion about what day the Lord was crucified. I did a study long ago on the topic and came to the conclusion that it was on Wed. and that He rose Saturday or Sunday morning very early. The key is that He was raised from the dead, not what day he was killed however some feel that this is a very important issue. There are explanations that make fairly good sense that He was crucified on Friday, though I reject that thought.

It is easily proven that he was indeed in the grave for three days and three nights as was prophesied. It is for this reason that I hold to the Wednesday conclusion rather than the Friday theory. It was said that He would be in the grave three so three would indicate three twenty-four hour periods. This makes the best sense of all the information we are given. More on the topic can be found in my "Mr. D's Notes on Lots of Other Things."

The women knew of the stone covering the entrance and were concerned about it as they went to the tomb to add spices to the Lord's body for burial. This would show that the women had not understood all that the Lord had taught them either. They were taking spices for a corpse and they were going into a grave looking for the same. They had no understanding of the resurrection. If anyone should have known it would have been the apostles, but surely these that were so devoted to him would have known, but they did not.

Upon entering the tomb they are confronted with a young man who was likely an angel. He tells them not to be afraid for he sensed that they feared their situation. He then tells them that the Lord has been raised from the dead and shows them where His body had been prior to the resurrection.

Matthew 28.1 tells us that it was dawn on Monday. "Now late on the sabbath day, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre."

Verse two of Matthew tells us for certain that this man was an angel and that he was the cause of the women's fear. "And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone, and sat upon it. 3 His appearance was as

lightning, and his raiment white as snow: 4 and for fear of him the watchers did quake, and became as dead men."

Now this passage mentions another earthquake. It would seem that some of those involved with the Lord's trial/crucifixion would have wondered at these "natural" occurrences and wondered if they were related to their actions.

This was a supernatural event related to the raising of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. Some might wonder if the Lord rose at the rolling away of the stone or prior to that event. It is possible that the body was in the grave till that point but there is nothing to show that the Lord's spiritual presence was not up and out of there long before. When we die, our body is separated from our spiritual so there is nothing to indicate that the Lord's experience was any different than ours.

Whether the body was taken to heaven or whether it was reunited, as ours will be, with His spiritual being we are not told. I suspect that His spiritual was active external from the grave and that His body was glorified as ours will be at the rapture. We go to be with the Lord spiritually while our body goes to the grave, yet it is a seed for our glorified body in some manner. All this seems consistent - Christ's experience was as ours will be.

Imagine the confusion in their minds. They found their "Messiah" but He was killed. They come to anoint Him and He is gone, raised from the dead. Even if they really grasped what raised from the dead meant, what total confusion. All that He said must have been running through their minds to try to make sense of the whole situation.

The raising of Lazarus should have given them indication of things to come when the Lord spoke to them of things coming toward them in the future. It seems that they missed all of this information or just did not know how to put it all together.

Now if it had been me I would have had to add frustration to the mix. You know, I have my day planned, this twenty minutes is set aside to anoint the guy, and now He isn't here - where is he, how long is it going to take to find Him and what is He going to want me to do, my day is now a total mess. Nothing is going to work out.

I would think, however, that their confusion and shock soon turned to excitement and joy over His being alive even if they had no idea what was going on.

THE RESURRECTION NOT PROCLAIMED

7 But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. 8 And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.

Well maybe the excitement and joy is yet to arrive, but they leave in fear of all that they had seen and heard.

The message was to go to Galilee to meet Him "as he said unto you." Now, just when did this conversation occur? Robertson mentions "Jesus did appear to the disciples in Galilee on two notable occasions (by the beloved lake, John 21, and on the mountain, Mat_28:16-20)." however does not mention the discussion about meeting them.

Mark 14.28 is the text that we are looking for. "But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee."

Rather seems that He knew some things in advance. He knew of His death and of His resurrection and of His going to Galilee after it is over. Why He went to Galilee is not clear, other than it being a meeting place for the group that He had spent so much time with, in a comfortable familiar area.

There is probably the thought that He did not want to be in Jerusalem where the Jewish leaders were. He did not want to stir up the hornet's nest and go through all that would have entailed. They had rejected Him and killed Him thus had He appeared there would have been confrontations that had no place in the plan of God. The Jews were now out of the picture for a time and He would concentrate on other things that needed to be attended to.

There is the other side, now that the Jews had rejected Him, His people were now the little band of believers that had followed Him off to Jerusalem. The crowds are not involved at this point; only the small band that had followed Him through thick and then - well followed afar off as we have seen.

Gill makes an interesting statement. "This news was first brought to the apostles by women, who were greatly honoured hereby; that as the woman was first in the transgression, and the cause of death," I will let you chew a little on that one. True it was the women who brought the news, and true it was an honor to the women who seemed closest to the Lord in this time, but as to "that as the woman was first in the transgression and the cause of death" I would challenge the reader to consider this carefully for clarity and truth. Does that really fit into the Biblical theological concept of the fall and transmission of the sin nature through the father? Was Eve really first? Do a little Bible study and see if you can agree with Gill.

Peter seems singled out from the other apostles, but note it is not to be excluded from the group, only singled out in a special manner. Most likely to draw him into the coming events in case he felt that he had so failed the Lord that he should be excluded from the group.

We should take interest in this invitation to Peter to be a part of events coming. When we fail the Lord most miserably He is there to invite us back into His fellowship. We can do nothing in this life that can isolate us from fellowship with Him except isolate ourselves from Him. He is there, all we have to do is seek His forgiveness (I John 1.9)

We ought to understand Peter's fear as well. He did not deny the Lord out of lack of commitment, but lack of the ability to overcome his fear of being arrested. This is a fear we in America should consider. Believers around the world are being persecuted and have been for

many years. There is legislation introduced quite often in our own congress that would take away the rights of Christians to speak out against sin.

Since we are called to speak out the truth of the cross it is likely that in our own future we will face a similar fear to that of Peter; the fear of being arrested for giving witness to the Lord.

The fear of the women seems to have related to the new and unknown. I am sure they were not used to seeing angels sitting on a stone or anywhere else for that matter. Add to that the reality of being told that a dead man was now alive was probably rather shocking. They may have witnessed the raising of Lazarus, but this was certainly not a common sight in the land.

There is also that thought of knowing in their minds that they had found their Messiah, and then to have him killed on the cross. They would have come to some terms on that point over the days between the burial and resurrection then to find out He was no longer dead. Fear of the unknown is a terrible thing to the believer.

It is also a terrible fear for the lost so we as believers should have our fears controlled and be ready for assistance to the lost. Don't sit down with them and add your fear to theirs, you should be able to alleviate their fears for them.

Fear of the unknown can stop us from doing that which the Lord has called us to do. Fear of the unknown is often fear of failure. We fear we cannot do what the Lord has called us to do, or we fear that there will be no provision for our needs so we just do nothing. This is allowing fear to control our life.

Just remember, even if you have allowed fear to control you, it does not need to ruin your relationship with the Lord - look at the great things Peter did as he was able to realize that his strength was in the Lord and not in himself.

THE RESURRECTION DENIED

9 Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. 10 And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. 11 And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

THE RESURRECTION CONFIRMED

12 After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. 13 And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them. 14 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

Luke 22.14ff records the full account of verse twelve; it is often called the road to Emmaus. This

is an interesting study if you take time to do so.

Here is more disbelief - not to be shocked since the women went away shaking their heads as well. They saw Him die, and they did not understand/believe what the Lord said about the resurrection so why would they believe He was raised.

The Lord confronts them with their "unbelief and hardness of heart" but does not elaborate on the subject. It would be of interest to me as to why he upbraided them for it since it is not clear that any of us would have reacted much differently. It should be assumed that the Lord knew something that we do not know about the situation. If any would have believed it, it would have been the disciples that had walked with him for three years listening to His teaching, but they did not.

It is clear from the Luke passage that part of their disbelief related to the Old Testament prophecies of the Lord. He speaks to the two relating to this issue and then takes time to explain it all to them.

It is also very clear that the apostles at least were looking to Him to save Israel, in other words they believed that He was the Messiah of the Old Testament. "21 But we hoped that it was he who should redeem Israel"

Leave it to the believers - in the Old Testament God wanted Israel to proclaim Him to the world, and He even set up the entire sojourner/stranger system to accept gentile believers into the Jewish fold, but they did nothing to speak of in the area of proclaiming God.

The apostles, the ones that were closest to the Lord, were given information about His resurrection and they say nothing because they did not believe it, nor understand it. The very next passage is the great commission to go into the earth preaching the Gospel and what do the believers do? They congregate in Jerusalem. God had to send persecution upon them to scatter them across the face of the earth with His good news.

In 2009 we are still, for the most part, congregating in pockets around the world to edify ourselves while the world knows nothing of the Lord Jesus Christ. Foreign Mission work is on the decline, the old timers are retiring and there is no one to replace them on the field.

God is now in the process of bringing the world to us and we still are not doing a real good job of sharing the Gospel with them. Yes, the foreigners in our country are slow to warm up to us due to the illegal alien problem (large distrust of everyone for fear of being turned in) but they are here for now and we should do what we can to share our wonderful salvation with them.

I teach a small basic computer class for low-income folks and I am sure many of them are illegal. They are very quiet, they hesitate or refuse to give their phone number, address and email address. Some have given me one or the other and I have sent material to them and they will not respond and fail to come to class. Some seem very shocked when they arrive that I am friendly and open to talk with them. Not that this is not understandable, but it makes it difficult to speak

to them of the Lord.

I have found that I can at least get the Word of God into their hands. I give a CD-ROM of free software and along with it a CD-ROM with a free Bible program and a ton of evangelical commentaries along with a copy of my systematic theology. God can use this in their lives at any time that He would like.

I have not had opportunity to even ask most of them personal questions much less speak to them of Christ. Most will not even tell me where they or their husbands work and if I have no address and ask where they live they just point and say over that way.

THE RESURRECTION TO BE PROCLAIMED

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

The more familiar version of this passage is in Matthew 28.19ff "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: 20 teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

The first missions conference that I attended was in Bible College. One of the missionary speakers, Ron Blue, later of Dallas Seminary, shared from the Matthew text and made the clear point that the passage related to "as you are going" make disciples etc. Not sometime in the future, but as you are going.

This relates to the real truth that we are all to be involved in this process, not just those that "go" somewhere as missionaries. As we go to work, as we go shopping, and as we go visiting, we are to be about this process.

It is about all of the above, not just the winning of souls, it is the winning, the training and teaching/training of the new believers.

There is much discussion as to whether the final verses of Mark really belong there. It seems that Mark ends at 16.8 since there are multiple endings to the book from later manuscripts.

Many observe that all of what is contained in the seemingly added ending is Biblical so it should not be thrown out as long as it is understood that it is probably added. Stress should be given to the Biblical passages that it is based on rather than teaching from these added verses.

The Net Bible notes have some information on this. They mention that some manuscripts have this section marked as not being the original Mark, or spurious. Further they mention "All of this evidence strongly suggests that as time went on scribes added the longer ending, either for the richness of its material or because of the abruptness of the ending at Mar_16:8. (Indeed, the

strange variety of dissimilar endings attests to the probability that early copyists had a copy of Mark that ended at Mar_16:8, and they filled out the text with what seemed to be an appropriate conclusion. All of the witnesses for alternative endings to Mar_16:9-20 thus indirectly confirm the Gospel as ending at Mar_16:8.) Because of such problems regarding the authenticity of these alternative endings, Mar_16:8 is usually regarded as the last verse of the Gospel of Mark. There are three possible explanations for Mark ending Mar_16:8; (1) The author intentionally ended the Gospel here in an open-ended fashion; (2) the Gospel was never finished; or (3) the last leaf of the MS was lost prior to copying. This first explanation is the most likely due to several factors, including (a) the probability that the Gospel was originally written on a scroll rather than a Codex (only on a Codex would the last leaf get lost prior to copying); (b) the unlikelihood of the MS not being completed; and (c) the literary power of ending the Gospel so abruptly that the readers are now drawn into the story itself."

THE RESURRECTION TO BE CONFIRMED

17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. 19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. 20 And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

The book of Acts records illustrations of some of these signs, the snakes, tongues etc. God did indeed confirm the resurrection with these signs later in the early church. This is not to say that they are still confirmations today. The south of our country has many graves full of snake handlers that were killed by the snakes that they were supposedly protected from in their church services.

This passage is useful to the charismatic that is involved in tongues. Just have them read the passage and ask them if they want to test the whole package of items that are part and parcel with the tongues. You will find few takers.

This concludes the study of Mark in this work but is admittedly only a starting place for the serious student that would like to know their Lord in a more personal manner. The book has only been surveyed and a detailed study should be quite beneficial to the serious student.

I think that one last application might be appropriate. Pastors and teachers, please consider the following possibility. I have heard so many times from pastors and teachers that they don't feel they are getting through to their students, or that the students don't seem to change their lives when the Word is preached.

Now, this is not to give excuse to non-listening and non-responsive congregants, but it may explain some of the problem. If the apostles who followed the Lord for three years and watched Him, listened to Him, and observed His many miracles did not get that He was going to die and be raised again how can we expect congregants to hear a lesson/sermon and automatically

conform to its exhortation. Some will and some will not. The response is up to the individual's relationship with God and the ability of the Holy Spirit to work within the life. If the person has no desire to change, why would they? There is no compulsion to do so if the Spirit is not allowed to work in the life.

It is our job to proclaim the Word and it is our job to encourage change, but the individual via the Spirit is the real key to change in the believer's life.

Do not spend your time twisting people's arms to do what is right, simply give them the Word and encourage them to give God freedom in their lives. Just remember, if the Holy Spirit, almighty God, cannot change the life what in the world are you thinking when you think that you can? Impossible. God is the mover and shaker in a believer's life, not you. Do not take on that terribly difficult task when it is not yours and when you cannot hope to fulfill it.