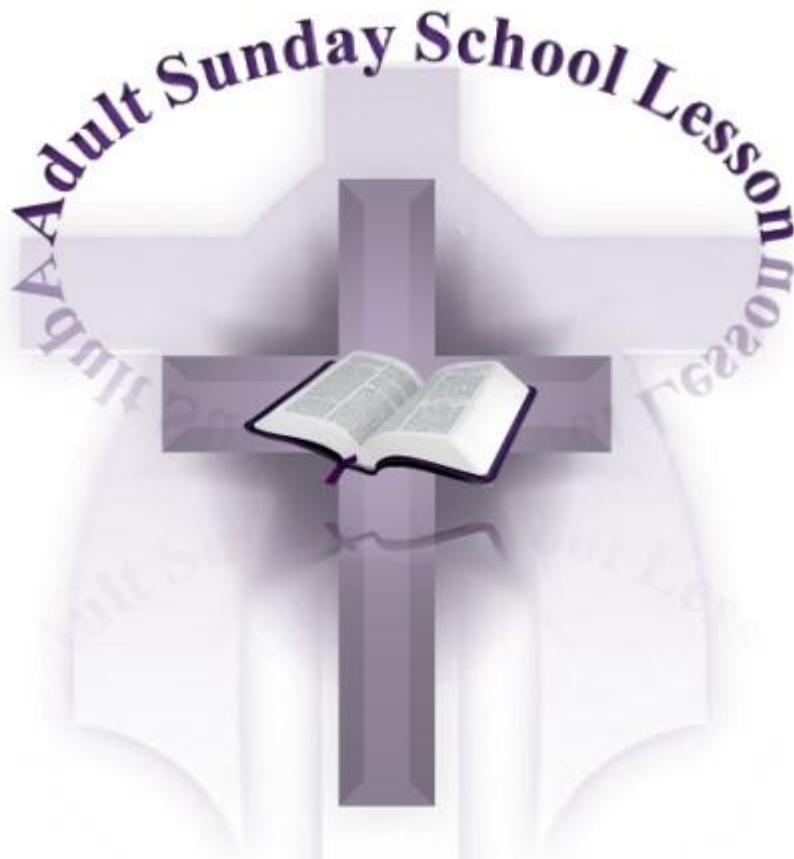




Corinth Missionary Baptist Church

"The City of Faith"

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SPRING – 2024

March 2024 – May 2024

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<https://www.jesusisall.com/sunday-school.htm>

“Diligent study of these lessons will not only bless you spiritually, but also aid you in discovering God's plan for your own life.”

-John Alva Owston





CORINTH
MISSIONARY
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ADULT
SUNDAY SCHOOL
CLASS



ADULT

SPRING 2024 SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

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You can also follow the lesson by joining live each Sunday morning via our website:

<https://www.thecityoffaith.org/sundayschool>



Sunday, March 3, 2024

Lesson 1 - "Healed by His Bruises" (Part I)

Lesson Text: Isaiah 53:4-6, 10-12

Background Scripture: Isaiah 53:1-12

Devotional Reading: Hebrews 10:10-18



Isaiah 53:4-6, 10-12

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 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.

.....
10 Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. 11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

LESSON AIMS

- **Facts:** to show the extent of Jesus' physical suffering for us.
- **Principle:** to realize that by His stripes we are healed.
- **Application:** to understand that we appropriate the healing of Jesus for ourselves when we receive His death as done for us.

INTRODUCTION

Superman

We live in a world that needs a savior. Countless lives are broken, beaten, and confused. We need someone to intervene—someone to expose the lies that dominate our lives and to set us on the right course.

In the late nineteenth century, the atheistic philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche identified just the sort of savior he thought this world needed. His idealized savior was a man, but certainly no ordinary man. Nietzsche's description of a value-creating being translates somewhat loosely into English as "superman." Nietzsche's vision of such an individual was that of a man who rejects any notion that God or any other being outside the world should be the source of values to govern the world. Nietzsche suggested instead that this superman would trust his own intuitive sense of good and evil.

This superman's sense of right and wrong would be rooted in what helps him succeed and prevents him from failing. Since the superman observes that everything in this world is in a constant state of flux, he acknowledges that all that exists now, including his current value system, must be overcome by what comes next. To keep current, this superman must reinvent himself continually in order to become stronger. Thus, according to Nietzsche, what this world needs is a being that draws on his own internal resources to master the practice of overcoming his former self.

If the brightest minds of our day were to design the savior they think this world needs, it might not look

much different from Nietzsche's. It might still be an individual who spurns tradition and is accountable to no one but himself or herself. Or perhaps it would look like one of the countless conflicted heroes of the comic books.

After her decimation by Babylon, the nation of Israel also needed a savior. Israel needed someone who could meet them where they were, overcome their sin, and set them on the right course. Today's passage reveals God's promise to send them the hero they needed. But the hero they received was nothing like anyone expected.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Time: about 700 – 695 B.C.

Place: Jerusalem

Isaiah 53 addresses the same historical context that was addressed in the last three lessons: God comforted His people Israel, who were oppressed by the Babylonians (although that oppression was many decades in the future as Isaiah wrote). The people were calling into question God's sovereignty and their own future. Yet today's passage also takes place in a wider biblical context that is important to its proper understanding.

This particular "Servant Song," which begins in 52:13, is quoted multiple times in the New Testament as a description of Jesus' ministry, death, and burial (examples: Matthew 8:17; Luke 22:37; 1 Peter 2:22). Perhaps the most well-known passage that connects Jesus with the servant of today's passage is Acts 8:26-35, in which Philip evangelized the Ethiopian eunuch.

The eunuch was reading from an Isaiah scroll and was confused by the verses we now identify as Isaiah 53:7,8. That is the passage that describes the suffering servant as a sheep being led to slaughter. Philip immediately identified the servant as Jesus and explained the gospel. This current lesson will discuss this passage in its context and highlight how it points beyond events of the sixth century B.C. toward the work of Christ.

The last three verses of Isaiah 52, which directly precede today's text, discuss how God's servant is to be exalted despite the reaction of the startled nations. The nations were taken aback by the servant's arrival

because they didn't see it coming. It wasn't revealed to them as it was to Israel. Yet all nations will indeed have to reckon with this startling servant.

SUFFERING SERVANT (Isaiah 53:4,5)

1. How does Isaiah 53 fit into its overall context?

Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12 is the third of the Servant Songs and the most familiar of all, especially to Christians. Here we see both the travail and the triumph of the Servant. While some of the other Servant Songs could arguably be applied to Israel, this one definitely depicts the sufferings of an individual.

As the Ethiopian eunuch does in Acts 8:34, scholars puzzle over the identity of this servant. As he read this passage, the Ethiopian eunuch asked an appropriate question: "Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?" (Acts 8:34). While acknowledging the need for guidance in understanding this text (v. 31), it was clear to the eunuch that Isaiah was speaking of a certain man. Of course, Christians recognize that man as the Lord Jesus Christ.

Since Isaiah 53 is rarely read in Jewish synagogues today, it is understandable that modern Jews are unaware of how closely it parallels the sufferings of Jesus of Nazareth. Those involved in Jewish evangelism frequently appeal to Isaiah 53 in their efforts to convince Jews that Jesus is the Christ. Whether dealing with Jews or Gentiles, however, those preaching Christ are still asking, "Who hath believed our report?" (Isa. 53:1; cf. John 12:38; Rom. 10:16).

2. In what ways did Jesus carry our sorrows? (Isaiah 53:4)

According to this verse, God's people are to recognize God's hand at work: it is God himself who strikes the servant. The servant somehow (as we shall see) carries the burden of the people into His suffering. He does not suffer as a solitary individual, but as a representative of God's people.

As Christians, we are reminded of Hebrews 4:15. Jesus is a high priest who can sympathize with our weakness. In becoming flesh, He bears our humanity and identifies with our weakness. Christians see in Jesus a model for ministry: believers seeking to win

the lost should find concrete ways to identify with the lost and meet them where they are. Until we walk in people's shoes, they seldom care about our faith in Jesus.

Jesus' suffering is not only a means to satisfy God's justice, it is also a model for how love conquers evil. It shows Christians how to break through the hard shell of resistance that surrounds people trapped in a life of sin. Jesus does not bear the sufferings of humanity only at the cross, but also throughout His ministry (Matthew 8:16,17).

3. What is the nature of the healing we received through the stripes of the Servant? (v. 5)

We are taught further that the servant's identification with God's people has saving consequences. The servant bears not only the sorrows of the people, but also their sins (transgressions). Here it is clear that the servant's suffering is not for wrongs He has done, but for what others have done. Indeed, He had no sin (Heb. 4:15); otherwise, He could not have suffered on behalf of sinners, bearing the wrath of God for us. Moreover, it is effective: healing and peace result from the servant's suffering.

Once we come to the New Testament, we better understand what Christ did for us at Calvary, where He "died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3). Paul further declared that the One "who knew no sin" became sin for us "that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (1 Cor. 5:21). Peter also wrote that Christ in "his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:24). These last words come from Isaiah 53:5, indicating that Peter understood the healing to be primarily spiritual in nature, namely, the offer of cleansing through Christ's shed blood (Matt. 26:28; Heb. 9:28; 1 John 1:7).

Indeed the "chastisement of our peace was upon him" (Isa. 53:5). Christ suffered to procure our peace with God. "In Christ alone is life and salvation. He alone brought medicine to us, and even procures health by his weakness, and life by his death; for he

alone hath pacified the Father, he alone hath reconciled us to him" (Calvin, Calvin's Commentaries: Isaiah, AP&A).

To be continued...

Lesson summarized by Renee Little
Jesus Is All Ministries



March 10, 2024

Lesson 2 - "Healed by His Bruises" (Part II)

Lesson Text: **Isaiah 53:4-6, 10-12**

Background Scripture: **Isaiah 53:1-12**

Devotional Reading: **Hebrews 10:10-18**



Isaiah 53:4-6, 10-12

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 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 everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

.....
10 Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. 11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

4. Why are sheep an apt illustration of human sinfulness? (v. 6)

Now we are told why the servant has to suffer: the servant suffers because God's people act like wandering sheep. Since they refuse to obey the shepherd, the shepherd has to break their cycle of rebellion. Isaiah 40:2 tells us that Israel pays for its sin in full as a result of the Babylonian exile. But that payment is not enough to change the course of sinful human history permanently. Wandering will resume. It too will need to be punished. So, God in His sovereign will sends the servant to suffer. God breaks the endless cycle of sin and

punishment by introducing something surely unexpected: the innocent sufferer.

Out of love and grace, God takes the initiative and makes a way for His people to avoid the endless cycle of guilt and punishment. That is the point of this passage, and we need to be careful not to miss this point.

What Do You Think?

What can we do to have the mind of Christ toward the scattered sheep?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

- Christ's view (Matthew 9:36)
- Our obligation (John 21:17)
- Urgency (Matthew 18:12,13)

SUBSTITUTIONARY SACRIFICE (Isaiah 53:10-12)

5. How was the Servant's anguish part of God's divine plan? (v. 10)

In spite of the fact that the Servant "had done no violence" (v. 9), He was "despised and rejected of men" (v. 3). He had not been deceitful in any way; "yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him" (v. 10), a seeming rejection by even the Almighty. "The Servant's anguish was in every way the fulfillment of a great divine plan. It had been foreshadowed by sacrifices. Nothing about it was accidental" (Leupold).

However, in this verse an important transition takes place. The servant—who does not have offspring, whose days are cut short, and who experiences sorrow—undergoes a reversal of fortune. He sees His offspring (seed), lives longer (shall prolong his days), and prospers in the Lord. Though it first

appears as if the Lord simply “uses up” this innocent servant on behalf of the guilty, ultimately the Lord vindicates the servant. Death is not the final word, but the beginning of a new era of prosperity.

The pattern represented in this verse is captured nicely in Philippians 2:6–11. There Paul notes how Jesus lowered himself, became obedient to the point of death, and was exalted on high. Jesus therefore fulfills this prophecy. Jesus’ offspring are not biological descendants of course, but are disciples throughout the earth (Galatians 3:26–4:7).

6. How was Christ "numbered with the transgressors"? (vs. 11,12)

The final two verses of our passage echo verse 10 but add greater detail. They restate that the servant suffers to the point of death on behalf of the guilty. He bears their sin and is numbered among sinners. In doing so, He intercedes on their behalf and satisfies God’s plan to reconcile them.

A description of the servant’s final exaltation is offered anew. He is counted among the great ones and divides the spoils that accompany greatness. This imagery is meant to convey the restoration of the innocent servant who gives His all so that the guilty may be reconciled to God.

The fact that we are transgressors reminds us that our sins are acts of willful disobedience to a holy God. Christ, however, stepped in to intercede for transgressors. "The Servant is thus a go-between, interposing between two parties, not as a barrier but as a bridge - the Lord put his Servant in between, using him as a means of disposing of that (our iniquity) which alienated him from us. Here the Servant comes voluntarily to stand with us so that when he had borne our sin he might bring us to God" (Motyer).

Even a cursory knowledge of the events of Christ's final days will quickly lead to the conclusion that Isaiah 53 was written about Him. If we are willing to trust and obey Him, the veil of unbelief will be lifted, and we will see Jesus Christ clearly portrayed throughout the pages of the Old Testament (cf. 2 Cor. 3:13-18).

What Do You Think?

In what ways do you honor Jesus for what He has done?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

- Method and content of your prayers
- Frequency of attending corporate worship
- The way you spend money
- The way you prepare for worship

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. What God is doing in another’s life is not always apparent (Isaiah 53:4).
2. Remember that our free salvation was in truth very costly to the Savior (v. 5).
3. Christ bore my personal sin on the cross because I was and am personally a sinner (v.6).
4. Christ’s death was no accident but rather the plan of God (Isa. 53:10; cf. Acts 2:23).
5. Only Jesus’ death can satisfy the wrath of God and provide salvation (Isa. 53:11).
6. Rejoice in the fact that Jesus intercedes even now for you (Isa. 53:12; cf. Heb. 7:25).

CONCLUSION – Servant People

For the past four weeks we have studied how God intervened to deliver Israel from Babylonian captivity. We have seen that the Israelites were captive not only to a foreign nation but also to the sin that filled their lives and brought about their punishment. God was faithful to deliver His people from both physical and spiritual bondage.

What is important to note as we wrap up our study of Isaiah is the means God used to liberate His people. The Babylonians had mocked both God and His people, dragging their names through the mud. The Israelites responded by doubting God’s power, thinking themselves to be forgotten. Many Israelites undoubtedly embraced the alternative power and religion of Babylon.

God could have responded to these offenses in various ways. He could have imposed His way of thinking on Israel and the nations supernaturally. He could have assembled the heavenly hosts and established His reign with brute force. He could have raised a great warrior-king in Israel to crush Babylon and assert Israel’s superiority.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

In next week's lesson, "Jesus Is the Messiah," we will see that Jesus is the Servant-Messiah sent to us for salvation from our sins. Study Mark 8:27-9:1.

Lesson summarized by Renee Little
Jesus Is All Ministries

Yet God didn't use any of these strategies. Instead, He told Israel that idol worship was wrong as He used arguments that could be accepted or rejected freely. He claimed that His sovereignty was attested in how He brought His predictions to fruition. God used the foreigner Cyrus to execute judgment against Babylon without overriding Cyrus's own agenda. Finally, God used a gentle servant-leader to form a people to bear witness to His power of reconciliation and new life.

In calling both unfaithful Israel and the faithful servant by the same name – servant - God held before Israel a picture of what He aspired that nation to be. This is evident in what God did next with His people: He returned the Israelites to their land without the perks that were supposed to accompany great nations, and He instructed them to wait for the faithful servant to arrive. That would be a servant who would lead them to greatness as God defined greatness.

When that servant arrived in the person of Jesus, He taught God's people that if they were to be His light to the nations, then they would have to follow His path of suffering service. He taught them that such service would be a demonstration of God's power and the proper posture of His people in the world. God's strategy has not changed. Christians and churches in our own day must take seriously the servant posture to which God calls us.

PRAYER

Lord God, we thank You for not giving up on us. Though Your people have deserved punishment upon punishment, You spare us the final judgment we deserve. Through the cross of Your Son, Jesus, You have broken the power of sin. For this we thank You and praise You. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Give your life for the servant of God who gave His life for you.



Sunday, March 17, 2024

Lesson 3 - "Jesus Is the Messiah" (Part I)

Lesson Text: **Mark 8:27-9:1**

Devotional Reading: **Mark 8:27-9:1**

Background Scripture: **Philippians 2:7-8; 1 Peter 5:5**



Mark 8:27-38

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. 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. 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.

Mark 9:1

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.

LESSON AIMS

- **Facts:** to show that Jesus is the Messiah and that following Him often involves suffering.
- **Principle:** to know that Jesus is the Servant-Messiah sent from heaven.
- **Application:** to see that when we seek to follow the Messiah, it may be hard; but it will be worth it in the end.

INTRODUCTION – Crunch Time

Crunch time is a familiar phrase for athletes. For a basketball player, it is the final seconds in a close game. For the marathon runner, it is late in the race when he or she “hits the wall” and has to find the strength to continue. For the baseball player, it is the final inning of the game with two out and the bases loaded; for both the pitcher and the batter, it is crunch time.

Many moments in our lives can qualify as crunch time. The minister’s question “Do you take this woman to be your bride?” creates that kind of time. When a woman is ready to deliver a child, it is that kind of time. When soldiers brace to defend their homeland, when firefighters race into a burning building, when parents have to confront a wayward teen, it is crunch time. Crunch time comes whenever we face an all-important moment of truth.

For Peter and the other disciples in this lesson, one crunch time came at Caesarea Philippi when Jesus challenged them to answer a question. It was time to make a decision, for someone to dare to answer. When Jesus asked His disciples, “But whom say ye that I am?” Simon Peter rose to the occasion and spoke with conviction.

LESSON BACKGROUND

From the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, it was clear that He had come to fulfill the prophecies of Isaiah. John the Baptist prepared the way for Him, just as Isaiah 40:3 had predicted (see Mark 1:2,3). Jesus announced His purpose at His home synagogue in Nazareth, saying, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor." After quoting Isaiah 61:1, Jesus announced, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21).

Through the following years of His ministry, Jesus demonstrated time and again that He was sent from Heaven to fulfill everything Isaiah and the other prophets had said. As the Messiah, Jesus came to bring salvation and reassurance to God's people, the Jews. In addition, He came to bring light to the Gentiles and bring them into the community of God's people. The most difficult prophecy of Isaiah, however, was that the Messiah would be the suffering servant, who would give His life to bear the sins of all people (Isaiah 53, last week's lesson). Well into the third year of His ministry, Jesus was ready to test the disciples' understanding of His identity and His mission.

CHRIST REVEALED (Mark 8:27-30)

1. How did Caesarea Philippi get its name (Mark 8:27)?

While there are few clues in the Gospels concerning the precise dating of the events of our text, many believe that they occurred about six months before the crucifixion (Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels*, Harper & Row). Shortly after these events, Jesus "steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51), thus anticipating His sacrificial death.

Making His way to what was one of the northernmost points of His itinerant ministry, Jesus "and his disciples came into the towns of Caesarea Philippi." Here Jesus can spend time preparing His disciples for what is to come. Philippi, a location nearly 30 miles north and slightly east of the Sea of Galilee, overlooking the northern end of the Jordan River valley.

In this era, many towns are named Caesarea, in honor of the emperor of Rome. A larger and more important Caesarea, for instance, is Caesarea Maritima ("Caesarea by the Sea"), which is on the

Mediterranean coastline. The town in the area where Jesus and His disciples gather has the additional name Philippi, in honor of Philip II (also known as Philip the Tetrarch). Originally it was called Paneas in honor of the Greek god Pan; it was a Gentile area where many false gods were revered. Since these disciples would eventually be sent out into the larger world, where both the emperor and pagan deities were worshiped, this was an appropriate setting to ask some very pointed questions.

2. What opinions were circulating about Jesus' identity (vs. 27,28)?

Jesus first wanted to know what the people were saying about Him. Interestingly, the disciples did not share some of the less-than-flattering remarks made about their Lord (Mark 3:21-22; Luke 7:34; John 8:48; 9:16).

Some thought Jesus was John the Baptist. As relatives (Luke 1:36), Jesus and John may have resembled each other physically and could have been confused by some people. More to the point, Christ preached essentially the same message that John had been preaching especially early in His ministry (Matt. 3:1 - 2; 4:17). Herod Antipas even concluded that Jesus was John resurrected (Mark 6:14-17). Since some of the first followers of Christ had previously been disciples of John (John 1:35-37), the two movements might have been confused.

Others, however, thought that Jesus was Elias (Elijah), as his coming had been prophesied (Mal. 4:5). That prophecy, however, was fulfilled in John (Matt. 11:14; Luke 1:17). Other prophets, such as Jeremiah (Matt. 16:14), had also been suggested by the multitudes. There was certainly enough evidence to conclude that Jesus was more than a prophet, although He was the Prophet like unto Moses foretold in Deuteronomy 18:15 (cf. John 6:14; Acts 3:22).

Whom do men say that I am? "Who Jesus is" is a fundamental issue that everyone—especially the disciples themselves—must face. Where does Jesus come from? What is His purpose? The answer to these questions will determine what we do in response to Him.

3. What did Jesus ask of the disciples (v. 29)?

Now the question becomes pointed and personal: But whom say ye that I am? Have the disciples resolved in their own minds the issue of Jesus' identity?

We are about to find out! We can imagine the disciples hanging back, each waiting for someone else to take the lead in answering Jesus' question. Peter is the one who does so: Thou art the Christ. (The parallel account of Matthew 16:16 notes that Peter also says "the Son of the living God.") All the hopes of Israel, the destiny of humanity, and the eternal plan of God hang on this man Jesus.

Christ is a Greek word, and its Hebrew equivalent is Messiah. They both mean "the anointed one" (compare John 1:41; 4:25). Most of the first-century Jews think this person will be a political figure, a nationalistic king. They assume that He is to sit on the earthly throne of David and rule over an earthly empire. But Jesus will be a leader on God's terms (compare John 6:15).

What Do You Think?

What are some ways that people today answer Jesus' question "Who do you say that I am?"

Talking Points for Your Discussion

- Are the answers similar to the first-century responses?
- Answers that are different from the first-century responses
- John 12:34

Popular Opinion or...?

"Run it up the flagpole and see who salutes it" is an old adage familiar to many. The meaning is that you want to find out what people think about an issue before making a final decision. Politicians use opinion polls to find out "which way the wind is blowing" on an issue before taking a stand.

The church is not immune to this way of thinking. People naturally have opinions on how a church should carry out its mission. That is not necessarily bad in and of itself, and wise leaders are good listeners. But danger looms when popular opinions about the Bible are allowed to hold sway over the facts of the Bible.

People today hold many opinions about Jesus. He is regarded as a myth, a misguided fool, and everything in between. But opinions aren't facts, and the church dare not present to the world the Jesus that the world wants or thinks Him to be. The fact is, Jesus is who He claimed to be: the Son of God. In a world filled with opinions about Jesus, it is imperative that Christians hold to the facts of who Jesus really is. —
A. Eugene Andrews

4. Why did Jesus want His disciples to remain silent about His messiahship (v. 30)?

Even though Peter has confessed a wonderful truth, Jesus commands the disciples to tell no one. Jesus has given similar prohibitions on several previous occasions (see Mark 1:44; 5:43; 8:26; 9:9). Likewise, the demons are forbidden to reveal Jesus' identity (1:25; 3:12).

The need for secrecy seems to be connected with the expectations of the people. When they hear about Jesus' miracles, they overwhelm Him with the sick, the crippled, and the blind (see Mark 1:45). They cannot see that His miracles are pointing beyond present physical needs; these miracles are His credentials as the one who has come from God. When they think about Jesus' identity as possible Messiah, they clamor for Him to establish a kingdom independent from Rome (see John 6:15; Acts 1:6). There will be time later to proclaim to all the world that Jesus is the Christ, but that time is not yet.

To be continued...

*Lesson summarized by Willie Ferrell
Jesus Is All Ministries*



Sunday, March 24, 2024

Lesson 4 - "Jesus Is the Messiah"

(Part II)

Lesson Text: **Mark 8:27-9:1**

Devotional Reading: **Mark 8:27-9:1**

Background Scripture: **Philippians 2:7-8; 1 Peter 5:5**



Mark 8:27-38

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. 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. 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.

Mark 9:1

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.

CHRIST REJECTED (Mark 8:31-33)

5. What ominous prophecies did Jesus make concerning His future (v. 31)? This verse marks 'a turning point in the book. If there had existed hopes for an earthly kingdom established by Christ, they were now dismissed, because at this point "he began to teach them" of His suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection.

Once it was clear that the disciples understood that Jesus was the Christ, He began to unveil to the disciples what was to happen in the immediate future. Rather than being received by the national leaders, Jesus was going to "suffer many things, and be rejected." Indeed, He had already been rejected by many, especially by the Pharisees.

Things were going to get worse, though, as they made the final journey to Jerusalem. The reference to the elders, chief priests, and scribes was another way of saying the Sanhedrin, the highest court among the Jews. Although many of them already opposed Jesus, they had not condemned Him officially as an assembled body. That would happen during the last week of His life, when they finalized their plot against Him.

While the disciples knew that Jesus had enemies, they most likely did not anticipate that He would be killed. That He would be resurrected after three days was completely misunderstood by the disciples. Since He often spoke in parables, they may have assumed that this was a cryptic remark not to be taken literally. It is obvious that when the first reports of His resurrection were heard, they did not believe them.

6. Why did Peter rebuke Christ (v. 32)?

Jesus' announcement was made openly but Peter led Him aside to rebuke Him. The impulsive apostle cringed in unbelief at what he heard, and he quickly let it be known that he was unwilling to accept it.

The other disciples likely share Peter's opposition to what Jesus has said. That's probably why Jesus turns and looks at them (v. 33). Jesus rebukes Peter in front of them all. Knowing that Peter's way of thinking stands between Him and the cross, Jesus says, in effect, "Get out of my way! Don't think you can stop me!"

Shockingly, Jesus then addresses Peter as Satan. But this is an appropriate designation for at two reasons. First, the word satan refers to an enemy; where the Hebrew word is translated "adversary." If Peter stands in the way of Jesus completing His mission, then Peter is indeed an enemy. Second, Peter is repeating a temptation of the devil in the wilderness by suggesting that Jesus does not really need to allow himself to be harmed in order to carry out His mission (Matthew 4:5,6).

Although well-meaning, Peter's words revealed that his concern was worldly. Indeed, the popular concept of a political Messiah was shared by most of the people, including those closest to Jesus. In time, however, they would realize that Christ did not come to establish an earthly kingdom that would do battle with their Roman oppressors (John 18:36).

CHRIST RECEIVED (Mark 8:34-37)

7. What did it mean to take up one's cross in those days? What does it mean today (v. 34,35)?

If the disciples were confused concerning Christ's mission, how much more were the multitudes? Hence, He "called the people unto him with his disciples" to clarify the nature of true discipleship.

To begin with, would-be followers of Christ must be willing to deny themselves to be His disciples. In short, the things of Christ must be first in the hearts of believers. Sadly, many deny themselves nothing and have no distinguishing marks to identify them as true believers. Self-denial means "saying no to selfish interests and earthly securities. Self-denial is not to deny one's personality, to die as a martyr, or to deny 'things' (as in asceticism). Rather, it is ...turning away from the idolatry of self-centeredness and

every attempt to orient one's life by the dictates of self-interest" (Walvoord and Zuck, eds., The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Cook).

Taking up one's cross is not the same thing as bearing the common burdens of life endured by nearly everyone. To be sure, faithful Christians will bear burdens, but that is not what Jesus was talking about.

In the context of the first-century world, taking up the cross had to do with a willingness to die. A cross was not a shiny piece of jewelry or a carefully carved object adorning a place of worship. Rather, it was an instrument of death that was frequently seen by passersby throughout the Roman world. Crosses were where criminals and rebels ended up. No one wanted to have to carry a cross; yet Christ said that His followers might have to go to their deaths for Him. As subsequent history indicates, some early Christians did die on crosses. Others were tortured in a variety of ways (Acts 7:59; 12:1,2; 26:10).

While Jesus' words concerning saving and losing one's life may sound like double-talk, they are not, although they are paradoxical. "From the human point of view, we are losing ourselves, but from the divine perspective, we are finding ourselves" (Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary, Victor).

8. Why did Jesus asks His followers to think clearly about this life in relation to the next (vs. 36,37)?

Imagine that someone could "gain the whole world," win the whole game of life, and "die with the most toys" (as the saying goes). If a person believes that there is no after-life and judgment, it makes perfect sense to him to devote his life entirely to earthly pursuits. Conversely, if there is more to life than meets the eye and if we must give an account of our lives and choices before the Creator of the universe, it behooves us to think differently about the pursuit of worldly goals (Eccles. 12:13,14).

While "soul" can be used variously in the Bible, here in Mark 8:36 it refers to that part of the human being that survives death. To lose one's soul is to lose one's self for all eternity. Christ said, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28).

While there have been a number of political leaders in the history of mankind who have attempted to conquer the world, none of them have been successful in that pursuit. Even those who have had some measure of worldly success eventually have to relinquish all their earthly acquisitions (Ps. 39:6; Jer. 17:11).

On a smaller scale, there are many people who have sold out to the world, the flesh, and the devil. Some, in fact, sell out rather cheaply. Consider, for example, the rich fool (Luke 12:16-21), the prodigal son (15:11-13), or the rich man who went to hell (16:19-31). All of them sold out because of money.

CHRIST RETURNING (Mark 8:38—9:1)

9. Why would Christ refer to His generation as "adulterous and sinful" (Mark 8:38)?

That Christ referred to the people of His day as an "adulterous and sinful generation" was characteristic of how the He-brew prophets spoke. Since Israel was depicted as married to the Lord, any worship of false gods was seen as spiritual adultery (Jer. 3:6-10). Of course, there were people in Jesus' day who were involved in immorality, just as there are today (Heb. 13:4).

To be ashamed of Christ in the world in which we find ourselves is to put ourselves in a position where we will be denied by the Lord at His second coming (Matt. 10:32,33). Since Christ had begun to speak openly about His death and resurrection (Mark 8:31), He also revealed that He would come again. While Christians may debate the details of the Second Coming, all true believers are confident that Christ will return (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thess. 4:13—5:6; 2 Pet. 3:1-13; Rev. 19:11-16).

10. What do you think seeing the kingdom of God coming with power meant (Mark 9:1)? Why?

Some of those listening to Christ would "not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." Some—like Jesus and Judas—would taste of death before long. Perhaps in the multitude listening to Christ, some would also die in the near future. What, then, did the Lord mean when He spoke of the kingdom coming with power?

Many believe that this refers to the transfiguration, an event to be discussed in next week's lesson (Mark

9:2-13). Others believe it refers to the coming of the Spirit on Pentecost and the subsequent establishment of the church. Still others suggest that Christ was alluding to His resurrection, as the kingdom was certainly present in the King when He arose. A few even take this to mean the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

CONCLUSION What Kind of Messiah?

People in the first century can be criticized fairly for wanting a Messiah on their own terms. They were more interested in His miracles than in His message. They were eager for Him to overthrow Rome, but they did not necessarily want Him to rule in their hearts.

But what kind of Messiah do we expect Jesus to be? Do we expect that He provide health and wealth? Do we think He should be the "heavenly genie" that grants all our wishes? Let us learn from Peter's experience that we do not dictate to Jesus. He is God's Messiah, on God's terms.

What Kind of Disciple?

A true disciple does not ask, "Am I happy with Jesus?" Instead, he or she asks, "Is my Lord happy with me?" True discipleship has its costs, but it also has unimaginable rewards. Therefore, the true disciple will echo Peter, "You are the Christ—and You are my Lord."

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Nothing is more vital than rightly identifying Jesus and submitting oneself to Him (Mark 8:27-30).
2. Jesus was not a victim but a willing sacrifice (v. 31).
3. Our own preconceived ideas can cause us to misunderstand God's plan and thereby give aid to the enemy (vs. 32,33).
4. True discipleship is a costly choice (vs. 34,35).
5. Every man must choose which is more important: the temporal or the eternal (vs. 36,37).
6. A man's spiritual choices have everlasting consequences/results (8:38-9:1).

PRAYER

Father, we thank You for sending Your own Son to be the Messiah who would give His life for us. Help us to be faithful disciples. May we never be ashamed to take our stand with Jesus and the truth of the gospel. We pray in His name, Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Take up your cross today.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

In preparing for next week's lesson, "Called to Believe the Resurrection", study Matthew 28:1-15.

*Lesson summarized by Willie Ferrell
Jesus Is All Ministries*



Sunday, March 31, 2024

Lesson 5 - "Called to Believe the Resurrection" Part I

Lesson Text: **Matthew 28:1-15**

Background Scripture: **Matthew 28:1-15**

Devotional Reading: **I Corinthians 15:12-22**



Matthew 28:1-15 (KJV)

1 In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. 2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: 4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. 5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. 6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. 8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. 9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. 10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me. 11 Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. 12 And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, 13 Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. 14 And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. 15 So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

TODAY'S LESSON AIMS

- **Learning Fact:** To retell Matthew's record of the discovery of the empty tomb.
- **Biblical Principle:** To compare and contrast the reactions of those who became aware that Jesus' body was missing.
- **Daily Application:** To prepare a testimony based on the truth of the resurrected Jesus.

INTRODUCTION – The Greatest Discovery

An online search for the 10 most significant discoveries in history reveals many lists. Most include breakthroughs in the field of medicine—development of antibiotics such as penicillin, etc. Eventually, however, death comes to everyone (Hebrews 9:27). That is why the greatest discovery of all time happened on the day we celebrate as Easter Sunday.

The great discovery that was made by those who came to Jesus' tomb after His crucifixion was the absence of something: Jesus' body. Never before and not since that morning has the absence of something conveyed such a profound message. Today's lesson introduces us to that message.

Lesson Context: The Plot to Kill Jesus

The events in last week's text from Matthew occurred at a point when the Jewish religious leaders were plotting to arrest Jesus. But they did not want to create a public disturbance by doing so (Matthew 26:3–5). To their delight, the leaders found among Jesus' disciples an ally for the scheme: Judas Iscariot (26:14–16).

After the Passover meal, Jesus led His disciples from the upper room to the Garden of Gethsemane. That was a place to which He had brought them often.

Therefore the location was known to Judas, who guided those who arrested Jesus there (Matthew 26:47; John 18:1–3). There followed the series of appearances before the Jewish ruling council (the Sanhedrin; see last week’s Lesson Context) and Pilate that resulted in Jesus’ crucifixion.

Lesson Context: Keeping Jesus’ Body Inside

Of the four Gospel writers, only Matthew records the concern of the chief priests and Pharisees that Jesus’ disciples might attempt to steal His corpse. Their concern was based on being aware of the claim of “that deceiver” that He would rise from the dead. A missing body meant that a resurrection could be claimed. Therefore, the chief priests and Pharisees recommended to Pilate that steps be taken to ensure against such a hoax (Matthew 27:62–66). Pilate agreed. The results of that effort are considered in today’s lesson.

All four Gospels record the actions of devoted women who returned to Jesus’ tomb to honor Him after His death. We say “returned” because they had been there when Jesus’ body was interred (Matthew 27:61; Mark 15:47; Luke 23:55). Their intent was to finish the hurried job started by two others (John 19:38–42) in anointing His body with various preparations (Mark 16:1; Luke 23:55, 56; compare 2 Chronicles 16:14).

Amazing Sight: Matthew 28:1-4

1. What happened that Resurrection morning at the tomb of Jesus? (Matthew 28:1-4)

It was the first day of the week, “The Lord’s Day”, or Sunday. Came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, the mother of James and Salome (Mark 16:1). Late on Friday evening, they had watched the sepulcher (Matthew 27:56). Now, after the Sabbath, they came with spices (Mark 16:1) in the hope that they could anoint the body. These disciples would not break the Sabbath, even to preserve the body of their beloved Lord. They thought He was dead. In fact, they wondered how they would move the huge stone that blocked the entrance to the tomb (Mark 16:3).

Then, *behold, there was a great earthquake and the angel of the Lord descended from heaven.* The angel who rolled the stone away, did not come to let Jesus out of the tomb, but to reveal that it was empty and that He was gone already!

The angel sat on the stone, and his face shone like lightning and clothing was as white as snow. *The keepers* (guards) stationed at the tomb experience both the sight of the angel of the Lord and the sudden terror of the earthquake. They *shake* as much as the earth does! The overall shock of what they witness leaves them paralyzed with fear or unconscious. The phrase *they became as dead men* does not mean they actually died, because some of them report the stunning series of events to the religious leaders in Jerusalem (Matthew 28:11, below).

Assuring Words: Matthew 28:5-8

2. What did the angel say to the women? Matthew 28:5-8

Mary and Mary Magdalene were without a doubt in shock at what they just experienced.

The angel then spoke reassuringly to the frightened women by affirming awareness of their mission to Jesus, which was crucified and buried. The angel then said, but Jesus was not there; He had risen.

Luke 24:4 records the appearance of “two men ... in shining garments,” later described as “angels” (24:23). Matthew chooses to include only the angel who speaks to the women. The angel invited the women to look into the inner burial chamber and see where His body was lying. Jesus had been raised from the dead, just as He said would happen.

What Do You Think?

How can you better prepare yourself to offer evidence for the fact that Christ rose from the dead? Why is it important to do so?

Digging Deeper

YouTube the 47 minute "Cole Case Christianity" video by J. Warner Wallace to learn how a homicide detective approaches these questions. Compare and contrast your approach with his.

Now (v. 7 of today’s lesson) the women who had come to anoint a dead body were given another task—proclaiming the Resurrection to the frightened disciples. The disciples had deserted Jesus in the hour of trial, but the angel’s words held hope of renewal and forgiveness. The disciples had deserted Jesus, but they were directed to meet Jesus in Galilee. This was exactly what Jesus had told them during the Last Supper (26:32).

There is something to be said about the faithfulness of these women. These women deserved to be the first witnesses of the Resurrection of Christ: during life they ministered to Him, and in death they were not divided. They attended Him to the Cross, notwithstanding their attachment to Him exposed them to the most imminent danger; and now they come to pay respect at His tomb. Their devotion to Jesus was rewarded.

their recent desertion (compare Matthew 26:56; John 20:17).

*Lesson summarized by Gabrielle Ferrell
Jesus Is All Ministries*

Now (v. 8 of today's lesson) the women went from being depressed about Jesus' death to listening and seeing an angel tell them He was alive. The angel told them to go back and tell His disciples as fast as they could, so that they would know to expect Him.

Meeting Jesus: Matthew 28:9, 10

3. What happened to the two women while on their way to tell the other disciples about Jesus? (Matthew 28:9-10a)

It's likely that women had many emotions running through them at the same time, but they had to act quickly. However, the women's surprises are not finished. Before they can complete the task of telling Jesus' disciples, they meet Jesus Himself!

Jesus said, "All hail!" which can be translated, Grace. What a marvelous greeting for the Resurrection Day! The women fell at His feet, took hold of Him, and worshiped Him. We are told nothing about Jesus' appearance, but we can see that the women recognize Him. There must have been some fear in their hearts, for He immediately assured them by saying, "Be not afraid."

4. What did Jesus tell the women to do next? Why? (Matthew 28:10b)

The news of His resurrection needed to be spread to His disciples, and with His appearance there would be no doubt, so Jesus told them to go into Galilee where He would meet them together. Not only had the angel commissioned them, but the Lord also commissioned them. The phrase "my brethren" indicates the special closeness that still exists despite



Sunday, April 7, 2024

Lesson 6 – “Called to Believe the Resurrection”

(Part II)

Lesson Text: **Matthew 28:1-15**

Background Scripture: **Matthew 28:1-15**

Devotional Reading: **1 Corinthians 15:12-22**



Matthew 28:1-15 (KJV)

1 In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. 2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: 4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. 5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. 6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. 8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. 9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. 10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me. 11 Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. 12 And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, 13 Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. 14 And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. 15 So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

Arranged Cover-up (?): Matthew 28:11-15

5. What else was going on as the women made their way to Galilee? (Matthew 28:11)

“The watch” (soldiers) who were charged with guarding the tomb to keep the body in it (Matthew 27:66) have failed. Pilate (the governor) had put the soldiers at the disposal of the Jewish Sanhedrin (*the chief priests*) so they went and reported what happened with Jesus first to them (see v. 14).

6. What was the reaction of the chief priests to Jesus' resurrection? (Matthew 28:12-14)

There was a meeting of the Jewish ruling council because the successful plot to kill Jesus has not ended their “problem.” Now another problem has developed. The religious leaders' worst fears had been realized (27:63-64)—Jesus' body had disappeared from the tomb! Instead of even considering that Jesus' claims had been true and that he truly was the Messiah risen from the dead, the leaders decided to bribe the soldiers in order to explain that Jesus' disciples came during the night and stole his body. This may have seemed like a logical explanation, but they didn't think through the details. Why would Jesus' disciples, who already had run off on him at his arrest, risk a return at night to a guarded and sealed tomb in an effort to steal a body—an offense that could incur the death penalty?

And if they had done so, would they have taken the time to unwrap the body?

If this had occurred while the guards were sleeping, how could the guards possibly have known what had occurred? If this truly happened, why didn't the religious leaders arrest the disciples in order to prosecute them? The story was full of holes and the guards would have to admit to negligence on their part, so getting them to spread this rumor required a bribe. The religious leaders assure the soldiers no negative consequences will befall them. Should Pilate hear of what has occurred, the leaders promise that they can and will protect the soldiers from suffering consequences (28:14).

7. What is meant by “this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day” (Matthew 28:15)?

Matthew's Gospel is generally considered to be the earliest of the four Gospels. Scholars date its writing to about A.D. 50 (or perhaps even earlier). Thus, the phrase *until this day* indicates that the lie has been circulating for some 20 years as Matthew writes.

This lie, *this saying*, falls apart immediately when we consider the eventual martyrdoms of the apostles (particularly after they spent time with Jesus after His resurrection, as well as being filled with the power of the Holy Spirit themselves, see 28:16-20; Acts 1:6-8). People are known to be willing to die the deaths of martyrs for two things: (1) for truth and (2) for a lie believed to be true. But people are not willing to die for a lie that they know is a lie. But that doesn't stop twenty-first century skeptics from creating other theories to explain away the account of Jesus' resurrection.

What Do You Think?

How should responses to common misunderstandings of the gospel message differ from responses to biased misrepresentations?

Digging Deeper

Distinguish between situations that call for no response (example: Mark 14:60, 61a) vs. an explanatory response (example: John 4:19–26) vs. a pushback response (example: Mark 12:18–27).

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Nothing or no one can stop the power and plan of God! (Matthew 28:1-4)
2. We are called as disciples of Jesus to tell others about His love, grace, and forgiveness! (vs. 5-8; 18-20)
3. When Jesus calls us to do something or go somewhere for Him, He promised to always be with us! (vs. 9, 10, 20)
4. It's worth repeating... Nothing or no one can stop the power and plan of God! (vs. 11-15)

CONCLUSION

No “Fake News”

The phrase “fake news” became a part of the vocabulary during the 2016 American presidential campaign. Certain news outlets were accused of creating stories that had no basis in fact in order to further an agenda. Christians may similarly be accused of propagating “fake news” regarding the resurrection of Jesus. The idea is that Christians accept on faith something that cannot be proven to be an actual event of history.

But the resurrection can be proven true, as this lesson has demonstrated. Yet getting people to see the truth can be a slow process. This calls for prayer and patience. Even Jesus' own disciples were not convinced at first. When the women reported to the disciples what they had found and not found at Jesus' tomb, "Their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not" (Luke 24:11). The apostle Thomas (in)famously declared, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25).

Why would men who were slow to believe news of a resurrection end up trying to make it appear as though one had happened if it had not? No one, neither the women nor the disciples, was anticipating that Jesus would arise. They were not spending the days following His death planning how they could perpetrate a hoax on the public.

Paul's declaration in 1 Corinthians 15:20 is the one that followers of Jesus gladly embrace and proclaim: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." Fake news—no; actual news—absolutely!

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, how thankful we are that on this Easter Sunday and every day we can celebrate the triumph of Jesus over death. Use us to tell others this good news of our Risen Savior. We pray this in His name, Jesus. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

We serve a Risen Savior!

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

In next week's lesson we will see that Jesus came in power and great glory. Study Mark 13:14-27, "Coming of the Son of Man."

*Lesson summarized by Gabrielle Ferrell
Jesus Is All Ministries.*



Sunday, April 14, 2024

Lesson 7 – “Coming of the Son of Man”

(Part I)

Lesson Text: **Mark 13:14-27**

Background Scripture: **Mark 13:1-27**

Devotional Reading: **2 Peter 3:3-14**



Mark 13:14–27

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. 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 show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. 23 But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things. 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.

LESSON AIMS

- **Facts:** to show some of the signs that will precede the second coming of our Lord Jesus to earth.
- **Principle:** to show that Jesus is coming with power and great glory.
- **Application:** to realize that if the Bible teaches us that Jesus is coming soon in glory, we must do all we can to be ready.

INTRODUCTION

It has been said that the theme of the Old Testament is that Christ is coming, the theme of the four Gospels is that Christ has come, and the theme of the rest of the New Testament is that Christ is coming again. There is basic truth in the approach.

Discussions concerning the Second Coming always elicit significant debate among those who profess to believe the Bible to be God's Word. Sadly, more fire than light is often generated! Even so, those who accept the divine origin of the Scriptures do not always agree about the details of end-times events. Since these things have not yet occurred, we must be cautious about being too dogmatic concerning our preferred understanding of the last days.

Two extremes must be avoided. First, some find that the study of last things, or eschatology, should be avoided because of the controversial nature and the uncertainty of the topic. Second, some develop tunnel vision regarding prophecy and fail to study anything else, thus avoiding serious study of other important Bible doctrines.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Time: A.D. 30 Place: Mount of Olives
(overlooking Jerusalem)

Today's text is part of a long discourse that Jesus gave to His disciples in the week leading up to His crucifixion and resurrection. In the days preceding, Jesus was acclaimed by the crowds as God's king (Mark 11:9,10). He took action against those doing business in the temple courts (11:15-19). And He gave a vivid picture of the religious leaders' rejection of Him and of the judgment that God would bring on them in response (12:1-12).

In this setting, Jesus told His disciples that they could expect the magnificent temple structure to be destroyed (Mark 13:2). Expecting that Jesus was about to assert himself as God's king, the disciples likely believed that the destruction of the temple would mean that God would immediately replace it with a greater temple that would fulfill His promises (Isaiah 56:7). Surely the destruction of the temple must mean that God's glorious reign was about to be revealed in full!

But instead of speaking about glory, Jesus warned about difficulty and hardship. In the paragraphs just preceding today's text, Jesus cautioned His disciples to expect more of what they had experienced in the past: wars, earthquakes, famines, and persecution (Mark 13:3-13). Yet in the midst of all that, they could remain confident that God would be with them and would be victorious (13:26,27). (Parallels to today's text are Matthew 24:15-31; Luke 21:20-28.)

GREAT ABOMINATION (Mark 13:14)

1. Why is this section of Scripture called the Olivet Discourse? (Mark 13) Mark 13 (with parallels in Matthew 24 and Luke 21) is called the Olivet Discourse because Jesus spoke about Jerusalem's destruction "as he sat upon the mount of Olives" (Mark 13:3). As they sat overlooking the city (from the Mount of Olives), His closest disciples asked Him when these things would take place (Mark 13:4). Jesus began by telling them that false Christs would arrive (v. 6), "wars and rumours of wars" (v. 7) would occur, and earthquakes and famines would be frequent. These signs, however, were just "the beginnings of sorrows" (v. 8). This would be followed by the intense persecution of the faithful (v. 9).

2. Where do we first read of the abomination of desolation in the Bible? What are some possible meanings of this? (Mark 13:14)

We now come to one of the most significant signs mentioned in this discourse: "the abomination of desolation" (Mark 13:14). Not only is it significant; it has also been the subject of seemingly endless debate!

As to the entire chapter, the chief interpretive question concerns whether Christ was primarily talking about the Jerusalem of His day, or the Jerusalem of the end times, or both! While some Bible students tend to lean one way or the other, most think that Jesus was dealing with both the Jerusalem that would be destroyed in A.D. 70 and a rebuilt Jerusalem after that time, perhaps including an end-time temple.

Daniel (8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11) first speaks of the abomination of desolation, so Christ was not delivering new revelation to His disciples but interpreting what had already been foretold. Many believe this refers to events that will occur during the Great Tribulation. Some suggest Daniel's prophecy referred primarily to what occurred during the Maccabean period, when the Syrian king, Antiochus Epiphanes (ruled 175-164 B.C.), desecrated the temple by erecting an image of Zeus in the temple and sacrificing swine on its altar.

However, since Christ spoke "but when ye shall see the abomination of desolation" (Mark 13:14) as something future, it could not have had its primary meaning in a past event. Christ understood the abomination of desolation to be a person, most likely Paul's "man of sin" (2 Thess. 2:3), "who opposed and exalted himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (v. 4). This person is the end time Antichrist...He will make a covenant with the Jewish people at the beginning of the seven-year period preceding Christ's second coming" (Alvord and Suck, eds., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Cook).

GREAT AFFLICTION (Mark 13:15-20)

3. Why could some prophecies of Mark 13 not relate to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70? (see v. 19)

Verses 15-20 vividly describe the terror involved; no other tribulation is equal to it, "neither shall be" (v. 19). It, therefore, must be the Great Tribulation of the book of the Revelation.

If Christ had been referring only to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, these events would have been the worst that the world has ever seen. But Jesus indicated that this future time of affliction would be worse than anything ever seen in world history. That being so, His words have an ominous end-times ring.

Since these last days would be so catastrophic, the Lord would actually shorten them. Otherwise, no one would be "saved" (v. 20), likely a reference to physical survival, not salvation from sin. "For the elect's sake," that is, for those who are redeemed, God has "shortened the days" of this time of testing. "God set limits on the duration of the end-time Tribulation... While all this proved true indirectly in A.D. 70, the language of this verse suggests God's direct intervention in judgment, an unmistakable characteristic of the end-time Tribulation" (Alvord and Suck).

4. Who are the elect and why would the Lord shorten the days of tribulation for them? (v. 20)

Jesus' words in verse 19 echo those of Daniel 12:1; coupled with Daniel's warning is a promise that God will faithfully deliver His people from the threat. Jesus makes the same point here. The coming siege of Jerusalem will be awful. But for Jesus' followers, the siege's awfulness will underline God's power and faithfulness. God will act as only He can to spare His people the full force of the siege's destruction.

The term elect is important in this verse. The word means "chosen" and is used in the Old Testament to refer to Israel as God's chosen people (Isaiah 45:4). Here Jesus uses it to identify His followers as the chosen people of God. As such, they can rely on God's provision in all circumstances, even the most extreme imaginable.

For His people, God has shortened the days of the upcoming disaster. Clearly, only God can control the

events of history in a way that can be described as shortening the days. The full measure of His divine power will be at work to protect His people in their time of trouble.

To be continued...

*Lesson summarized by Renee Little
Jesus Is All Ministries*



Sunday, April 21, 2024 Lesson 8 – “Coming of the Son of Man”

(Part II)

Lesson Text: **Mark 13:14-27**

Background Scripture: **Mark 13:1-27**

Devotional Reading: **2 Peter 3:3-14**



Mark 13:14–27

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. 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 show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. 23 But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things. 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.

WARNING OF FALSE MESSIAHS (Mark 13:21-23)

5. Why should Christians be on guard against false prophets? (v. 21)

During the coming hardships, Jesus' followers can easily believe that He is not in control of events. The crisis can induce them to look elsewhere for God's deliverer. So Jesus warns the disciples beforehand of the temptation to follow another. Others will claim to have found the Messiah.

Both from antiquity and likely intensifying as we approach the end of time, "false Christs and false prophets shall rise." Christians are to be on guard against such deceivers and not be gullible enough to believe those who might proclaim that they have found the Christ or received some new revelation from God (Gal. 1:8,9).

In our day there are those who either claim to be Christ or avow some new insight from on high. It seems that the more bizarre a false teaching is, the more people want to believe it. Of course, this is nothing new. Anyone who has studied church history knows that there are many examples of both deceivers and those being deceived. That this is an ongoing problem among God's people is seen from the many warnings given concerning false teaching throughout the Scriptures.

6. Do you think the signs and wonders of false prophets are real or fake? Why? (v. 22)

Of particular importance is the fact that these spiritual counterfeits claim miraculous powers. If they do show "signs and wonders" (Mark 13:22), it is either mere trickery or done by the power of Satan. "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:13,14). That a person can perform miraculous signs does not necessarily mean he is a true child of God (Matt. 7:21-23).

7. Why are warnings about false teachers always relevant? (v. 23)

False teachers, whether ancient or modern, have one goal: to deceive God's people, "the elect" (Mark 13:22). Since Satan has already deceived most men, they are not his primary targets. That Jesus included the words "if it were possible" seems to say that true believers will not be deceived by these pretenders.

As they say, forewarned is forearmed. Hence, Jesus' declaration that He has told us of these things in advance would serve as a reminder both to early disciples of Christ and to those of us who came along later. "Mark closes with another exhortation to remain alert and on guard; we must do our own part to resist the temptations of the false prophets" (Barker and Kohlenberger, eds., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Zondervan). In short, we must not assume that because we are among the elect, we have no role to play in protecting ourselves and our churches from religious charlatans.

As an aside, it might be noted that many false teachers through the ages have claimed special insight concerning the end times. This should not keep us from studying Bible prophecy, but it should cause us to listen cautiously to those who claim knowledge about prophetic themes that they claim have been kept hidden from others until they wrote a book on it!

GREAT APPEARANCE (Mark 13:24-27)

8. What events will precede Jesus' return? (vs. 24,25)

While "tribulation" can be used of any time of testing or of affliction in general, it is used here of the Great Tribulation, which will precede Jesus' return. The Greek word rendered "tribulation" in Mark 13:24 is translated "affliction" in verse 19. Daniel 12:1 says, "There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (cf. Jer. 30:7; Rev. 7:14).

"After that tribulation" (Mark 13:24) indicates that Jesus' coming would closely follow this time of trouble. "If these verses apply exclusively to the events of A.D. 70 then Jesus Christ should have returned shortly thereafter. That He did not return then supports the view that verses 14-23 refer to both the destruction of Jerusalem and the future Great Tribulation before Christ will return" (Alvord and Suck).

Just prior to the return of Christ, cataclysmic events will occur in the heavens. How this will be interpreted by people viewing them is not stated (cf. Rev. 6:12-17). While such events might cause some to think the end is near, others will go about their daily business as in Noah's day. "For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:38,39).

As to stars falling and heavenly powers being shaken (Mark 13:25), this "may refer to: (a) physical forces controlling the movements of the celestial bodies which will be thrown out of their normal course, or (b) spiritual forces of evil, Satan and his cohorts, who will be greatly disturbed by these events" (Alvord and Suck).

9. When Christ returns, who will see Him? What events will occur? (vs. 26,27)

After all of the aforementioned events have occurred, "then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory." Or as Revelation 1:7 says, "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."

Christ's coming in power and glory is vividly described in Revelation 19. In spite of the fact that "the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, [will gather] together to make war against [Christ]... and against his army" (v. 19), they will be decisively defeated by the King of kings. Then the beast and the false prophet will be "cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone" (v. 20).

Concerning the elect, angels will gather them together "from the uttermost part of the earth" (Mark

13:27). As in the parable of the tares (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43), both wheat and tares grow together until the harvest, which is "the end of the world...As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world." In other words, we dare not wait until the end of time to try to get ready to meet God. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

As Christ brought the Olivet Discourse to a close, He reminded His disciples of two things. First, just as the leaves of a fig tree indicate that summer is near, so these signs indicate the nearness of Jesus' return (Mark 13:28-30). Second, since no one knows the precise time of Christ's coming (v. 32), we must be **waiting**, **watching**, and **working** until that day (vs. 33-37).

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. God's people are not exempt from suffering and difficult times (Mark 13:14-16; cf. 2 Tim. 3:12).
2. A time of great tribulation is coming to the earth (Mark 13:17-19).
3. God's grace toward His people is evident even in the midst of tribulation (v. 20).
4. Beware – false christs are even now trying to deter us from following the real Christ (Mark 13:21-23; cf. 1 John 2:18).
5. Count on the fact that Jesus is coming again to rule and reign in power and glory (Mark 13:24-26).
6. When Jesus comes again, He will finally unite all His children from all the ages (v. 27).

CONCLUSION

The Lord Will Deliver Centuries of history give us certain advantages over Jesus' disciples. As we read His words, we know how accurately He spoke. Wars, famines, and earthquakes have continued in every era. False Messiahs try to turn believers from their faith. Jerusalem indeed was destroyed by the Romans. Jesus was right about all of that.

But just like Jesus' disciples, we daily confront a world filled with evil. We find ourselves victims of that evil. We are tempted to give in to despair. Like the disciples, we need the assurance that God does not abandon His people. Whatever trouble we face,

we are not forsaken. The Lord can deliver us just as He did them. And when He returns, He returns for us. He will reign supreme, and His people will be the beneficiaries.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, give us endurance as we face hardships. Give us confident hope for Your promised return. Give us trust in Your provision always. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen!

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

In next week's lesson we will explore spiritual leadership and the qualifications for the task. Study 1 Timothy 3:1-13, "Qualifications for Spiritual Leaders".

*Lesson summarized by Renee Little
Jesus Is All Ministries*



Sunday, April 28, 2024

Lesson 9 – “Qualifications for Spiritual Leaders”

(Part I)

Lesson Text: **1 Timothy 3:1-13**

Background Scripture: **1 Timothy 3:1-13**

Devotional Reading: **1 Peter 5:1-5**



1 Timothy 3:1-13

1 This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; 3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; 4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) 6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. 8 Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; 9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. 10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. 11 Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. 12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. 13 For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

LESSON AIMS

- **Facts:** to show some of the qualifications needed to be a spiritual leader in the church.
- **Principle:** to realize that spiritual leadership means godly leadership.
- **Application:** to accept that spiritual leadership in the church is a serious responsibility.

INTRODUCTION – The Leadership Industry

Billions of dollars are spent every year in the quest for good leadership. People buy books, attend seminars, pay for consultations, and earn degrees—all to make themselves better leaders. Meanwhile, businesses, schools, governments, nonprofit agencies, and churches spend countless hours and dollars to find or train effective leaders. At election time, candidates spend fortunes promoting their leadership skills while voters complain about the lack of true leaders.

We are surrounded by a leadership industry. What is gained by all this effort? Most would say that good leadership is still not common. We have been disappointed too many times by our leaders. We have probably been especially disappointed by our own leadership failures.

Where can we turn for a better perspective? Does Scripture tell us the secret to leadership? As we observed last week, the church is God’s assembly and household, appointed to uphold and defend His truth in a contrary world. He has therefore set standards for its leaders that go beyond the usual human skills of leadership. They must exhibit His own character to represent Him accurately to the world.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Time: A.D. 62

Place: unknown

The books of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus, were written by Paul to give his associates in ministry direction in strengthening the church. Timothy was working with the church of Ephesus where a form of false teaching had damaged the church (compare 1 Timothy 1:3; 4:1–3; and 6:20, 21). That teaching threatened the core of the gospel: that all people are

sinners, all equally in need of God's grace through Jesus Christ. Sound leadership was imperative in such a circumstance. So, in 1 Timothy 3, Paul instructed Timothy on the kind of leaders the church needed.

We might expect that Paul would advise Timothy on the actions that leaders should take: how they can evaluate the past, assess the present, and make sound plans for the future. But Paul focuses first not on what leaders do, but on who they are. Paul gives not an action plan for leaders, but a portrait of character.

In this light, today's passage provides lists of qualities that church leaders need to possess. Such lists were common in Paul's time. They were not intended to be complete, point-by-point checklists. Rather, they suggested a full picture of the needed qualities. (Some students prefer the stronger word qualifications, the implication being that failure to meet any one item of the list disqualifies a candidate from the leadership position in question.)

We can compare the items on these lists to brush strokes in a fine oil painting. If we examine each brush stroke, we can precisely identify its length and color. But to understand it fully, we need to see how it fits into the context of the picture as a whole. So it is with Paul's list of leadership qualities. We should identify each term carefully. But to understand them as Paul intended, we need to see how each quality fits with the others.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR BISHOPS (1 Timothy 3:1-7)

1. What does the term "bishop" mean? What else is this office called in the New Testament? (1 Timothy 3:1)

In his discussion of the offices of bishop and deacon, Paul wrote nothing about how these offices were instituted, how many officials there should be, or the precise nature of their work. He focused, rather, on qualifications for those who occupy them. And because they are honorable positions, the demands are high. Attention is drawn first to the office of "bishop." The Greek term refers to an overseer. It emphasizes authority.

The term bishop may be confusing. Today, the title bishop has come to refer to a person who has authority over many congregations in a church

hierarchy. But the term that Paul uses applies to leaders in all kinds of settings in his day. In the church, it is used interchangeably with the term translated "elders" in Titus 1:5 (compare 1:7). We see the terms brought together in Acts 20:17, 28 and 1 Peter 5:1-4: those who are elders—those with spiritual maturity—provide oversight for the church, like a shepherd caring for a flock.

Beginning with the solemn declaration "This is a true saying" (1 Tim. 3:1; cf. 1:15), Paul assured Timothy that one who sets his heart on this office "desireth a good work." The word for "good" includes the meaning "honorable." Since the office is the highest in the congregation, it carries dignity, and the qualifications are high.

2. What personal spiritual traits should an elder exhibit? (vs. 2-5)

What Paul emphasizes is not organizational models or leadership duties, but the leaders' character. Those who lead the church toward maturity in Christ need to be people who are themselves growing toward that maturity. Their lives need to reflect the character of Christ himself. Thus, the description of the ideal church leader begins with characteristics of genuine godliness.

A bishop, or elder, first must be "blameless." It is appropriate that this is mentioned first. While he cannot be perfect, there should be no occasion for people to find fault with him. His overall demeanor should be exemplary.

Second, he must be "the husband of one wife" (literally, "a one wife man"). Many have tried to determine whether this phrase indicates a specific marital situation. For example, does it refer to a man who is married only once and is still married to his first wife? Such attempts do not succeed in explaining the phrase in its original context, however. In this setting, it probably indicates a character trait: a man who is faithful in marriage, who is chaste in relationships with the opposite sex. Such discipline is not only obedient to God's will, it also reflects God's own faithfulness to His people.

To be vigilant, sober, of good behaviour continues the portrait of mature godliness. Individually, the terms indicate someone who is restrained and controlled, someone who leads an orderly life.

To be given to hospitality indicates a person who is generous in caring for and encouraging others (compare Titus 1:8; 1 Peter 4:9). Hospitality is vital in the first-century church (compare 3 John 8; contrast 2 John 10). But hospitality also reflects God's own actions: He grants us a home in the world and welcomes us into His family.

3. Why is the ability to teach important for a church leader (v. 2)?

An elder must also be able to teach. He should be spiritually endowed with the gift of teaching God's people. Teaching is an important element in pastoral ministry (cf. Eph. 4:11) that too often is overlooked. The Christian faith is based on historical facts, and this basis can be passed from one generation to the next only by teaching (2 Tim. 2:2).

To be apt to teach indicates that teaching is always a key function of the church leader. But in the context of this letter, the emphasis is probably less on the ability to give an interesting lesson and more on sound understanding of the gospel. For the church to stand unified against false teaching, it needs leaders who understand thoroughly and accurately the saving message. The leader needs to know what genuine spiritual maturity is in order to be able to lead others to that maturity.

(Continuing with verse 3)

- Not given to wine (1 Timothy 3:3) obviously indicates shunning intoxication (compare Proverbs 20:1). The Christian is not to be controlled by alcohol or other substances, but by God's Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).
- No striker indicates the person who refuses aggressive conflict, whether physical or verbal. Those who have been reconciled to God by the death of Jesus live by God's peace. That quality is underlined with the terms, *patient* and *not a brawler*.

- Not greedy of filthy lucre and not covetous speak to a leader's attitude toward possessions (Matthew 6:19–21; 1 Timothy 6:6–10).

4. What relationship should an elder have with his household? (vs. 4,5)

It is interesting that Paul points to the home, not some other sphere like business or the military, as the testing ground for leadership qualities. An elder must also have an orderly household. He must assume full leadership over his family, making sure his children show proper respect and obedience.

Paul reasoned that if a man cannot manage his own household, he cannot oversee the church. He argued from the smaller to the larger institution. The home, though extremely important, is not as sizable a sphere of government. An even greater challenge lies in ruling God's church. One whose home is chaotic is likely to have a chaotic church as well.

Some cautions to laypeople, however, are in order. They are not to expect more of a pastor's children than they expect of their own. Even the best trained children will lapse. So, if their own children are imperfect, they should expect imperfections in pastor's children as well. Another caution is not to expect so much from a pastor that he has no time for his family. Overwork is one great cause of family disorder.

To be continued...
Lesson summarized by Renee Little
Jesus Is All Ministries



Sunday, May 5, 2024

Lesson 10 - "Qualifications for Spiritual Leaders" (Part II)

Lesson Text: **1 Timothy 3:1-13**

Background Scripture: **1 Timothy 3:1-13**

Devotional Reading: **1 Peter 5:1-5**



1 Timothy 3:1-13

1 This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; 3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; 4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; 5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) 6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. 8 Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; 9 Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. 10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. 11 Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. 12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. 13 For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

5. Why is it inappropriate for a new convert to be a pastor? (v. 6)

Paul also urged that an elder not be a novice, or neophyte. He is not to be a recent convert to the faith. This does not rule out young men exercising a local church ministry, but they should be believers long enough to have gained some spiritual maturity. This is why these overseers are so often called elders.

The new convert's greatest danger is pride. Having responsibility and gaining recognition too soon can breed an undue sense of importance. In the original language, Paul pictured pride as a rising smoke, befogging or beclouding the spiritual senses. The person so affected lives in a fantasy world of self-centeredness and cannot judge issues clearly.

The proud neophyte falls under the same judgment reserved for the devil. Satan was condemned because he yielded to pride, and the novice is prone to fall under God's condemnation as well. Pride usurps the credit that God alone deserves, and He will not let this go unpunished. Ministers need to keep a constant guard against this subtle but damaging folly.

6. What results when a church official has a poor reputation in the community? (v. 7)

An elder also "must have a good report of them which are without." His good reputation must extend outside the Christian assembly to the non-Christian public. At first glance, this seems to contradict Jesus' prophecy that the world would despise His followers and speak well of false prophets (cf. John 15:18-16:3).

Paul was speaking of a different matter, however. The world may, indeed, despise Christian leaders and even persecute them. But unbelievers should have no just criticisms to bring against them. Their reputation should be blameless before all (cf. Rom. 12:17-21). To be ambassadors of the gospel to the world, they must be respected by the world (see 2 Corinthians 8:21).

The overseer who fails to live up to this standard, lays himself open to the world's reproach and "the snare of the devil" (1 Tim. 3:7). Here the devil is seen laying a trap for the Christian leader. It may be a temptation to lie, steal, lose his temper, be greedy, or be sexually immoral. If he falls into the trap, his reputation is gone - and with it the reputation of the church he leads. It is therefore imperative that the gospel minister seek to maintain an impeccable reputation with outsiders.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR DEACONS (1 Timothy 3:8-13)

7. What is the origin of the office of deacon? Paul introduced deacons without explanation, giving the impression that the office was well-known to Timothy and the Ephesian church. "Likewise" alerts us to the fact that their qualifications are similar to those of elders.

The term translated "deacons" means "servant," or "helper." The present passage is the only one that deals with deacons at length as a group. They are mentioned along with overseers in Philippians 1:1, and other passages mention the spiritual gift of "ministry," or "helps" (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28). Many believe deacons are the same as the officials appointed in Acts 6 to deal with the temporal needs of widows. But whatever their duties, they must meet the same spiritual standards as overseers.

8. What are the personal requirements for the office of deacon? (vs. 8,9)

As with the discussion in verses 1-7 above, Paul's focus on the deacons is not so much on what they do, but the kind of people they are. Like the elders, deacons must reflect the transforming power of the gospel. They are to be distinguished by their serious behavior, their honesty, their self-control, and their reliance on God's provision.

Deacons must, first, be "grave" (1 Tim. 3:8) - that is, dignified, serious-minded people who call forth respect. They must not be "doubletongued," starting dissension by saying one thing to one person and the opposite to another. They must not be drunkards or lovers of money. "Filthy lucre" refers to profit gained by shady means. All these personal requirements indicate their need for self-control; they are not to be dominated by base passions.

In addition, deacons must hold "the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience" (1 Tim. 3:9). The mystery is God's newly revealed truth in the gospel of Christ. Deacons are to adhere to this truth, being sound in their doctrine. They must also enhance the glory of the gospel by maintaining a "pure conscience."

The idea here is of a conscience kept tender toward the will of God, with the result that one follows His will in personal conduct (cf. 1 Tim. 1:5). Paul earlier urged Timothy himself to maintain a good conscience (v. 19) and warned that those who threw it aside had made a shipwreck of their faith. Deacons, therefore, were to keep their faith intact by exercising it in the context of a consistently lived life.

9. How must an individual prove his capability for the office of deacon? (v. 10)

Deacons need character that has been demonstrated over time, with observable actions. Just as newly converted persons should not be eligible to become overseers, so they should not be considered for the office of deacon. "Let these ... first be proved" implies a passage of time during which the congregation may observe them and become convinced of their capability. Only after proving themselves faithful in lesser tasks should these men be chosen to be deacons.

Like the elders, deacons must reflect the transforming power of the gospel. They are to be distinguished by their serious behavior, their honesty, their self-control, and their reliance on God's provision.

10. What did Paul mean by "their wives" and what qualifications are specified? (v. 11)

Paul next enumerated qualifications for "their wives." If, indeed, this verse refers to deacons' wives, they ought to complement their husbands' ministry through their own godly character. However, since "their" is not in the original text and "wives" can also be translated "women," some see this group as a separate class of "deaconesses." Since these women are not actually called deaconesses, they were probably not a formal group. They may have included deacons' wives in addition to other women who fulfilled ministries similar to those of deacons.

Whoever they were, they too were to have high qualifications. Their demeanor was to be serious, not

frivolous; their speech restrained, not malicious; and their habits of life trustworthy, not hypocritical.

Meanwhile, deacons, like elders, are expected to have a stable family life. They are to be faithful husbands of one wife and conscientious fathers who keep their children under control (1 Tim. 3:12).

11. What rewards for faithfulness are promised to deacons? (v. 13)

Paul enumerated two related rewards for those who have served well in the office of deacon. First, they "purchase to themselves a good degree," or respect. They obtain a high standing in the eyes of both God and the church as they exhibit progress in their spiritual journey.

They also gain for themselves great boldness, or confidence, in their faith in Jesus Christ. Here Paul was referring to openness, assurance, and freedom of speaking. The faithful deacon will increase in confidence before God and man and will stand unashamed at the judgment seat of Christ. Though the office of deacon is secondary to that of overseer, the standards are high and the rewards commensurate with them.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. To desire an office in Christ's church is a good thing; it shows a desire to serve (1 Tim. 3:1).
2. A leader in the church should be known as a positive influence in the lives of others (v. 2).
3. To be worthy to govern the church, an elder must first govern all aspects of his own life well (vs. 3-5).
4. Pride is a constant enemy, especially of the inexperienced Christian (v. 6).
5. The devil rejoices to entrap a church leader in public reproach and scandal (v. 7).
6. All officials of the church must be held to the same high standards of conduct (vs. 8-13).

CONCLUSION – Becoming Christlike

If we are surrounded by interest in leadership, we are also surrounded by frustration with leadership. People are inclined to find fault with those who lead. Sadly, the church is infamous for criticizing her leaders. If the church is not doing well, we do not want our share of the responsibility, so we pin the blame on others.

Today's passage forbids us from doing that. The qualities for the church's leaders belong in the lives of all Christians (see Ephesians 5:3,4,18, etc.). If the church is not yet what it should be, the solution is not to blame leaders. It is to become better Christ-followers.

PRAYER

Lord, make us, Your church, conformed to Jesus' image. We pray in His name, amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Reflect the Lord's character.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

Next week's lesson, "Prepare for Leadership," will show some important facts that spiritual leaders must keep in mind as they lead the church. Study 1 Timothy 4:6- 16.

*Lesson summarized by Renee Little
Jesus Is All Ministries*



Sunday, May 12, 2024

Lesson 11 - "Prepare for Leadership" (Part I)

Lesson Text: **1 Timothy 4:6-16**

Background Scripture: **1 Timothy 4:6-16**

Devotional Reading: **Philippians 3:17-4:1**



1 Timothy 4:6-16

6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. 7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. 8 For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. 9 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. 10 For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. 11 These things command and teach. 12 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. 13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. 15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. 16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

LESSON AIMS

- **Facts:** to show some important facts that spiritual leaders must keep in mind as they lead the church.
- **Principle:** to know that effective spiritual leaders are aware of what is truly important and watch their lives and teaching.
- **Application:** to understand that for effective leadership in the church, one must prepare with care and caution.

INTRODUCTION

How does one prepare for leadership? There is no single answer to this question because different types of leadership are needed in different fields of work. In addition, different personalities respond to different kinds of challenges. So the path to leadership takes varying routes.

There are, however, certain themes common to preparing for leadership. One is the mastery of the knowledge and skills required in one's vocation. For some this comes through formal education in college or training in technical schools and programs. For others it takes the form of apprenticeships or training on the job.

AIMING AT NOTHING

There is an old story about a man who passed by a curious looking barn. On the side of the barn were painted several targets, each with an arrow exactly in the center of the bull's-eye. The man saw the farmer standing nearby and remarked, "Someone must be a very good archer, to have hit all those bull's-eyes." The farmer replied, "Well, not really. My son shoots those arrows in the barn and then paints a target around each of them, wherever they strike."

Many people live that way. They aim at no special target in life; they simply accept whatever happens. They aim at nothing; they hit it every time, and pretend that what they end up with is just fine.

Followers of Jesus cannot afford to live aimless lives. Our Lord became a man and died for us to achieve a goal: to make us his forgiven people, now and forever. His goal is now our goal. Having received salvation in Christ, we should want our lives to reflect that salvation, to be conformed to his will.

And we should want others to enjoy the same kind of life.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The background for today's lesson is the same as that of our two previous lessons, thus that information need not be repeated here. One item that can receive additional attention, however, is the presence of the so-called mystery religions in the area around Ephesus, the city where Timothy ministered. Such religions taught that one can have an exalted spiritual status by learning secret knowledge and observing special rules about abstaining from certain foods and from marriage. Apparently, some of this thinking had infected the church at Ephesus.

In response, Paul discussed the revealed nature of the Christian "mystery" extensively in his letter to the Ephesians (see Ephesians 1:9; 3:2–11; 5:32; 6:19). Further, Paul specifically gave Timothy instructions to pass on to that church regarding how to live together and choose leaders in ways that reflect the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the passage just prior to today's text, Paul warned that the kind of false teaching the church confronted was exactly characteristic of "the latter times." From the perspective of the gospel, such times began with the resurrection of Jesus. So, the struggle with false teaching was serious. It represents the battle of the end times.

That description of false teaching raises questions. What should the church's leaders do to counter such teaching? What strategy should leaders employ in this battle? The answer is to focus our aim on the right target and understand the right means of hitting that target.

OVERCOMING THE EFFECTS OF FALSE TEACHING (1 Timothy 4:6-11)

1. How was Timothy to counteract false doctrine? How was he qualified to do this (1 Timothy 4:6)?

Paul counseled Timothy on how to counteract the false teachings. Timothy's duty was to "put the brethren in remembrance of "these things" (1 Tim. 4:6). "These things" included all that Paul had just revealed – that false teaching would come; that it would foster ascetic practices; and that God does not favor such teaching and practices.

God's blessing is not to be found by avoiding certain foods or abstaining from marriage or in any other practice that is unrelated to the good news of Jesus (compare Colossians 2:20–23). Timothy's aim is to direct his people back to the truth and away from such teaching.

By directing his people back to the truth, Timothy would be accounted a worthy servant of Jesus Christ. Timothy was qualified to accomplish this task because he was a servant of Jesus Christ. As one who leads the church, Timothy is no less and no more than a servant of Christ. Being Christ's servant means first of all being devoted to training oneself in the true gospel teaching.

Therefore, his sound teaching must be based on the fact that he was regularly feeding on the truths of the faith and on sound teaching. To instruct the church, the minister himself must have understanding. The idea of being nourished speaks of an ongoing process. The truths of the faith are the truths of the gospel, and sound doctrine contrasts with the falsehood encountered.

2. What were these false teachers offering (v. 7)?

Compared with the good news of Jesus, what the false teachers offer is utterly worthless and ridiculous. The fact that their stories are profane means that they are devoid of anything connected with God. "Old wives' fables" are "myths." That phrase is used in Paul's time to express the complete worthlessness of a story or idea. Of course, everyone knows that men as well as women can circulate such falsehoods, as can the young as well as the old. These myths perhaps seek to embellish the stories of the Old Testament to promote the false teachers' concepts (compare 1 Timothy 1:4; Titus 1:14).

A person who gives attention to such myths will necessarily give less attention to the right objective: true godliness. The term "godliness" means the kind of life that shows proper respect for God. Timothy should pursue godliness as an athlete pursues fitness through exercise. Sports and physical fitness are an interest in Paul's culture just as they are in ours (compare 1 Corinthians 9:24). The comparison stresses that godliness, like athletic fitness, increases with diligent practice.

3. How is godliness superior to bodily exercise (vs. 8,9)?

Paul pointed out the superior value of godliness by contrasting it with bodily exercise (1 Tim. 4:8). When he said that "bodily exercise profiteth little," he was not disparaging it but pointing out its limited usefulness. It is limited in the kind of benefit it brings (bodily) and in the duration of its benefit (a little while). But godliness "is profitable unto all things"—that is, in all directions. The godly person is a better person in all realms.

Godliness also has a more durable value—holding promise for both present life and the life that is yet to come. The value of physical exercise ends when we pass from this body, but godliness has value forever. And this eternal value is not just for the benefit of the godly minister himself; it extends to all who are influenced by him.

In verse 9, as well as 2 Timothy and Titus, Paul labels a number of statements as “faithful or true” (1 Timothy 1:15; 2 Timothy 2:11; Titus 3:8). These seem to be memorable statements that encapsulate key truths. These statements need to be considered carefully and remembered well. So Paul applies that label to his previous statement about the benefits of exercising toward godliness. There can be nothing more important than pursuing what is best in life: genuine spiritual maturity.

4. What motivates and enables us to labor and strive for godliness (v. 10)?

Because godliness is the greatest good one can pursue, it is worth pursuing no matter the difficulties. Thus, Paul uses terms that emphasize the effort that godliness deserves.

Why should anyone pursue such a difficult task? Paul gives the reason: who God is and what He has done. The phrase the living God stresses that the Christian’s trust is in the true God who is active in the world, not in idols that have no reality. This true God has done something extraordinary for us: He gave himself for the sake of all people, so He is the Savior of all. But for that salvation to be effective, the sinner must accept it. Therefore, God is more

particularly the Savior of those that believe. If the true God has done this great thing, what in life can be more important than responding to what He has done?

What Do You Think?

In what ways have you or those you know suffered reproach for the cause of Christ? What has been the result?

Talking Points for Your Discussion

- Verbal abuse
- Financial hardship
- Physical abuse
- Discrimination

To be continued...

*Lesson summarized by Horace A. Hayes
Jesus Is All Ministries*



Sunday, May 19, 2024

Lesson 12 - "Prepare for Leadership" (Part II)

Lesson Text: **1 Timothy 4:6-16**

Background Scripture: **1 Timothy 4:6-16**

Devotional Reading: **Philippians 3:17-4:1**



1 Timothy 4:6-16

6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. 7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. 8 For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. 9 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. 10 For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. 11 These things command and teach. 12 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. 13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. 15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. 16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

5. Why is consistent teaching essential to steadfastness in the church (v. 11)?

Paul concluded this exhortation (recommend strongly) with the words "These things command and teach" (1 Tim. 4:11). "These things" refers to all that has preceded—warnings against false teachers, encouragement to godly living, and trust in the living Saviour-God. The present imperatives "command and teach" stress the need for continual reminders.

Christians base their faith on God's revelation in history, and their spiritual stability depends on consistent teaching of it. Timothy needed to know, as all pastors today, that his responsibility did not end with exhortations and commands. He had to teach God's truth consistently so that believers would understand the basis for their faith.

Rightly understood, the good news of Jesus is a matter for the head and the heart, always leading to action.

OVERCOMING THE LIMITATIONS OF YOUTH (1 Timothy 4:12-16)

6. In what areas did Paul urge Timothy to be a personal example (v. 12)? Timothy was charged to do this in several areas. First, he was to set the pattern for speech. He had to be careful what he said, whether in public or in private conversation. James had reminded those who aspire to teach that they will be strictly judged for the things they say (Jas. 3:1,2), and every young minister should guard his tongue.

Timothy was to be an example "in conversation" (1 Tim. 4:12). "Conversation" in the King James Version is not a term for speech. The Greek word used means "conduct." The overall tenor of the young minister's life was to be worthy of imitation, just as Paul's was (cf. 2 Thess. 3:7,9).

Timothy also was to be an example of love. Love is indispensable to the Christian life. Timothy would teach about it often. But would he practice it? Young church leaders often seek to establish their authority through harsh and combative behavior. But this will only produce an adverse reaction. Real spiritual leaders gain followers by exhibiting Christ's sacrificial love (John 13:34,35).

The next virtue Timothy was to exhibit was faith ("in spirit" does not appear in most manuscripts) (1 Tim. 4:12). The word used can mean either "faith" or "faithfulness." A young pastor may exhort his people to trust God; but does he trust Him? He urges them to be trustworthy; is he dependable himself? Only as he displays these virtues can he expect his congregation to follow his teaching.

Finally, Paul urged Timothy to exemplify purity. One who teaches the highest moral standards must avoid the slightest suspicion of impropriety. Purity must characterize the mind as well as the body, for the body acts out what the mind envisions. Timothy's life as a Christian leader is to be so compelling that others will be actively challenged to pursue the kind of life that he lives. By leading such a life, Timothy can overcome the reservations that some have about his youth (compare Titus 2:15).

7. What areas of public ministry did Paul call Timothy to focus on (v. 13)?

Having stressed teaching with authority in verse 11 and teaching by example in verse 12, Paul now addresses the importance of teaching by word. This verse combines three terms to describe such teaching. Reading refers to the verbalizing of Scripture publicly. Because books in the ancient world are scarce and expensive, private reading is unusual.

Instead, books are read out loud to groups of people. Among first-century Christians, that means primarily reading from the Old Testament Scriptures. By the time that Paul writes to Timothy, it probably also means reading from earlier letters of Paul and perhaps even one or more of the Gospels. That reading is to be combined with exhortation, which indicates verbal encouragement to right actions. The message read from the Scriptures always demands life-change. Timothy must encourage the church to act on the implications of the scriptural message.

The word doctrine may sound difficult and forbidding, but it simply means "teaching." Teaching based on the Scriptures will stand in sharp contrast with the speculative teaching of the false teachers. Sound teaching is based on the gospel message, not on fanciful stories claiming secret knowledge (v. 7,

above). Scriptural teaching always points the way to the godly life that Paul describes.

This combination of scriptural reading with encouragement and teaching based on it is very familiar to us. It represents the kind of teaching and preaching that continues in the church today, the very thing you are doing right now in your class. Teaching the biblical message and encouraging people to live by it are absolutely central to Christian leadership.

8. What is a spiritual gift? What did Paul urge Timothy to do with his (v. 14)?

Timothy's public ministry was related to the spiritual gift God had given him, and Paul urged him not to neglect it. The word Paul used refers to an ability graciously bestowed by the Holy Spirit for special service (cf. 1 Cor. 12:1-11). Though gifts are divinely bestowed on all Christians, it is their duty to cultivate and use them for God's glory.

We do not know what gift Timothy had, but it undoubtedly enabled him to carry out the duties just enumerated. Paul did reveal how the gift was stowed — "by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery (the Christian elders who formally recognized Timothy's spiritual gifts)" (1 Tim. 4:14). God had revealed prophetic utterance (by Paul or other leaders) that Timothy had this gift (cf. 1:18).

This prophetic recognition was also accompanied with official blessing. The elders of the church had laid their hands on Timothy as an external confirmation of his gift. Paul apparently took part in this ordination (2 Tim. 1:6).

9. What benefits come through ministerial steadfastness (vs. 15,16)?

As a Christian leader, Timothy's constant preoccupation needs to be the priority of a godly life and faithful teaching. The term translated meditate can mean "think about constantly" or "put something into practice constantly." Either way, the point is clear. The same idea is in the phrase give thyself wholly to them, which more literally is simply "be in them." Timothy is to see his call to leadership as his very life, the center of all that he does.

By living this way, others will see Timothy's own growth in godliness and will be challenged by it. Profiting refers to "making progress." As Timothy

grows in Christlikeness, those around him will feel his influence deeply.

In his steadfastness Timothy would achieve a double purpose: he would save both himself and his listeners (v. 16). Timothy will stand with God, the Savior of all people (v. 10), by living and leading in this way.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. It is a pastoral duty to warn against those who seek to impose non-biblical rules (1 Timothy 4:6).
2. A Christian teacher must not allow himself to waste time arguing about unbiblical ideas and merely human traditions (v. 7).
3. True spiritual exercise is found in Bible study, prayer, moderation, charity, and love for others (1 Tim. 4:8,9; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 5:9).
4. God's power to save should motivate us to work and serve diligently (1 Tim. 4:10,11).
5. One is qualified to lead God's people not by his age but by his wisdom (v. 12).
6. Reading Scripture is essential for our encouragement and instruction (vs. 13- 16).

CONCLUSION – What Leadership Is All About

It has been said that leading by example is not just the best way to lead, it is the only way. When the church fulfills the will of God, it is always led by those who reflect the saving gospel. They know the destination to which God has called his people, and they are moving toward that destination while they encourage others to join them.

Some of us know that we are leaders in the church. We have accepted responsibilities that involve teaching, guiding, and directing others to grow in

God's Word and work. In this passage we can hear God's call to be **deliberate** and **diligent** in pursuing godliness.

Some of us think that we are not leaders. But in fact, every Christian has the position and the power to lead in some regard. You may be the only available example of a Christ-follower to some family, friends, and coworkers. The Christian faith **does not** have ranks.

Every Christian is a sinner saved by grace, a pilgrim on the way to a destination. Living out that truth is what Christian leadership is all about.

PRAYER

Great God, we ask You to lead us to true godliness, being more like You. As You have saved us, we ask You to empower us to lead others to the same salvation. In the name of Jesus who died to save us, Amen!

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Pursue spiritual maturity.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

In next week's lesson we will discuss how to treat others: family, believers, and church leaders. Study 1 Timothy 5:1-22, "Worship Inspires Service."

*Lesson summarized by Horace A. Hayes
Jesus Is All Ministries*



Sunday, May 26, 2024

Lesson 13 - "Worship Inspires Service"

Lesson Text: **1 Timothy 5:1-8**

Background Scripture: **1 Timothy 5:1-22**

Devotional Reading: **1 Thessalonians 5:12-14**



1 Timothy 5:1-22

1 Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; 2 The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity. 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. 5 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. 6 But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. 7 And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless. 8 But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

LESSON AIMS

- **Facts:** to show how true worship and active service in the church are closely related.
- **Principle:** to be aware that if a church worships together, it is very likely to work together to transform the church and the community.
- **Application:** to find out how the local church can be actively involved in transforming the community around it.

INTRODUCTION

In this excerpt of Paul's letter to Timothy, he is instructing Timothy on the proper way to manage relationships within the church. The church is full of people who need to be handled with care so they can properly respond to God's love. The way we manage relationships in the church can build God's Kingdom or tear it down. Special focus should be placed on the relationship of the leader with the flock. Paul

encourages Timothy to treat everyone in the church with respect and love.

There should be great sensitivity placed on how older men and women should be treated. He encourages him to take care of those who cannot take care of themselves. It is ultimately the churches responsibility to take care of those in needs. In the times we live in, there are many government programs that provide assistance for those in need. However, providing for someone's physical and social needs without addressing their ultimate need of God's love, is an empty response. We have to minister to the whole person in order to have a lasting impact on their lives. Lastly, he encourages him to use caution when situations arise where respect, love and faithfulness have not prevailed.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today's text continues Paul's instruction to his young associate Timothy, who worked with the church in the great city of Ephesus. Today's text requires us to grapple with certain challenges that Timothy faced that have not yet been addressed in this series. One such challenge was that of economic disparity. Like any city, Ephesus had people who were rich and poor, powerful and vulnerable. Among the most vulnerable were widows, a major subject of today's lesson. Men held the rights to most property, and women had few opportunities to support themselves. Consequently, women who lost their husbands could find themselves destitute.

Leadership is a great challenge in such settings (compare Acts 6:1): Leaders have difficult, time-consuming work. Sadly, leaders can also exploit their power for selfish ends. The text also deals with these issues, so that the church's compassionate witness can remain pure and clear.

How to Treat Fellow Believers (1 TIMOTHY 5:1-8)

1. Why is it improper for a young minister to rebuke an older man (1 TIMOTHY 5:1)?

The term elder can take two distinct senses: "older man" and "church leader." Here it clearly the first meaning, as it contrasts with "younger men" in the second part of the verse, as well as elder and younger women in verse 2 (below). The term rebuke suggests the image of striking punishing with words. The young leader should try to overcome his youth with unrestrained aggression. To do so is inconsistent with the good news: God has not treated sinners in that way.

Instead of a harsh verbal attack, Paul instructs Timothy to intreat him as a father, which indicates positive, loving encouragement. Just as a respectful son will not attack his father, so should the young leader treat older men, even when they need guidance. Leviticus 19:32-reveals that the need for such respect is not a new thing.

Likewise, younger men should also be encouraged as family members, like brothers. Even with those who are his age or younger, Timothy should lead aggressively, but compassionately.

2. How was Timothy to treat older and younger women? (v. 2)

The instruction continues with corresponding advice about older and younger women. Timothy was to treat older women like mothers. Their position is parallel to that of older men. As younger men are to be treated as brothers, so younger women are to be seen as sisters. However, Paul here added a significant caution: Timothy must act with absolute purity.

Male church leaders operate in dangerous territory in their relationships with women in the church. The power of leadership can be used by unscrupulous leaders to take sexual advantage of women easily. This truth has been demonstrated far too often in many sad cases. Timothy's actions toward women, younger and older, must reflect pure motives.

Leaders must be careful to live blamelessly, giving no just cause for criticism. Discretion must guard against all appearance of evil. Unguarded

relationships, even when no intimacy is intended, can damage reputation and ministry.

3. What characteristics make a widow eligible for church support (v. 3)?

To be widows indeed means to have genuine needs that cannot be met through family, as the following verses will show. To give support to such needy folk is part of the church's expression of God's love, so Paul endorses it a firm command here (compare Acts 6:1- 6).

God is a champion and protector of widows. The Old Testament law provided for their support, and Jesus dealt kindly with them. New Testament churches followed with the same pattern, giving financial support to those widows who needed it.

4. Who has the chief responsibility in supporting elderly widows (v. 4)?

When a widow has family members, they are to provide her care, as is the custom in the culture of the time. The word nephews in the King James Version translates a term that means "descendants," here indicating grandchildren.

For family members to care for a widow is to "show piety," or genuine godliness. This is not just a social convention. Honoring the God of the gospel means expressing generous compassion in practical ways. Thus, caring for a needy widow is acceptable to God because it is an action modeled on God's loving actions toward us.

God is not the only one honored by such actions. So are the parents and grandparents who are cared for. To "requite" them literally means "to pay them back." Of course, nothing can fully pay back a parent, any more than a follower of Christ can pay back God for His grace. But by caring for the needy widow, the children and grandchildren honor parents and grandparents by imitating God's generosity.

5. How did Paul next picture what a "widow indeed" is like (v. 5)?

Paul's description of the true widow focuses on what her economic state can mean for her spiritual condition. People of faith who are in physical need come to a vivid realization: they have nowhere to turn but to God alone.

This verse specifies the widow who is desolate, that is, one who is without family to support her. Such a person turns to God in trust. That trust is expressed in constant supplications and prayers in asking God for help.

This instruction makes sense when we realize that the church's support of widows is not just of a material nature, but of spiritual benefit as well. By supporting the needy widow, the church becomes the means by which God answers the widow's prayers. Her trust in God is vindicated by the church's actions. By contrast, for the church to support a widow who has other means of support is not so much an answer to prayer as it is a means of enabling her selfishness or that of her relatives.

In contrast with the prayerful, needy widow of verses 3–5 is one who lives in “pleasure” (v. 6). Such a person is “dead while she liveth.” She is dead spiritually, with no interest in devotion to God. Paul’s implication is that she has no right to the church’s aid.

Timothy is to make Paul’s instructions (these things) clear to everyone (v. 7). In regard to widows’ support, everyone must understand what the church does (and does not do) and why. The reason is that all may be blameless, above common criticism. Paul’s concern is not merely that money is not wasted. Rather, the support of widows must encourage growth in godliness for them and their families.

This is practical compassion. It begins by meeting obvious material needs. It aims not just at providing those necessities, however, but also in leading people to know the true God better and follow His Son more closely.

In verse 8, Paul again stresses the responsibility of relatives to care for family members. By a noble custom of the time, observed even by pagans, families care for widowed relatives. A Christian who refuses this duty, thinking that the church will pick up the slack, thus acts worse than even an infidel. To ignore needs in one’s own family is to deny the Christian faith, which is grounded on the generous love and grace of God.

In the verses that follow that are not in today’s text, Paul gives more specific instructions about caring for widows. The specifics are related to the situation of the Ephesian church. But all reflect a concern to encourage widows and their families toward faithful, godly behavior, as well as providing for physical needs. Jesus had harsh words for those who used clever logic to avoid supporting their parents (Mark 7:9–13).

Conclusion - The Language of God's Love

How, can the church demonstrate the love of God to a sinful, loveless world? The answer in our text is clear enough: church members demonstrate God's love in the way they interact. Church members are to be known for their love and respect for each other, not by the petty arguments and jealousies that seem all too common.

The church demonstrates God's love with practical generosity for those in need. Our concern is not just the physical need, but also growth in faith and godliness. Just as the first-century church cared for needy widows, we can work together to care for those who are vulnerable.

To accomplish this ministry of practical compassion requires that the church have dedicated leaders whose lives reflect God's love with growing purity. They know the language that speaks God's love to the world that needs to hear it.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. The church is a family that owes one another both love and respect (1 Timothy 5:1,2).
2. Those who receive help from the church have a special obligation to live in holiness (vs. 3-5).
3. One who professes Christ but pursues only pleasure betrays his or her testimony of faith (vs. 6,7).
4. The church must not be burdened to provide for those who can be supported by their own families (v. 8).

PRAYER

Father God, help us to appreciate everyone You have placed in our church family. Help us to appreciate the impact we have on others’ lives as well as the impact they can have on our lives. Teach us how to love

without conditions and respect without bias. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” –Jesus (John 13:35).

*Lesson summarized by Octavia Treadway
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NOTES:



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