**The Gospel of Mark**

**Witness to the Son of God #10**

**Some Hard Sayings of Jesus**

**The Last Day and The Cry of the Innocent**

***End of class and Dinner Dec. 6***

*Class note: We will meet this week Nov. 15, and then Nov. 29 for our final class on Mark, but will not meet Nov. 22 (Thanksgiving week). Our end of class carry-in dinner is Wednesday, Dec. 6, in the E91 Friendship Room. Sign-up sheets for food will be at class, or email me if you are coming and what you are bringing. All are welcome! – Bob*

**Did Jesus know the Last Day?**

- Signals in the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 13

*Mark 13:4 “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled…”?*

*Mark 13:32 “… But of that day and that hour knows no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.”*

- Signals from the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 24:

*Matthew 24:3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”*

*Matthew 24:36  “…But of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”*

**Many Signs**

Note that in the intervening verses in both Matthew and Mark, Jesus is able to tell the disciples the many signs that will signal the nearness of the second coming, yet according to the final verse, it seems that He apparently does not know the exact hour it will happen. Was Jesus really ignorant of the time of His own second coming, yet able to relate the many signs of it?

**The Biblical use of the verb “to know”**

1. This verb is one of the most used verbs in the Bible about 2,000 times.
2. *“Adam knew Eve”* (Gen 4:1) was the sexual union, ( Num 31:17); see also that *“David did not know the woman”* (1 Kings 1:4)
3. The two disciples of Emmaus, “*their eyes were opened and both knew Jesus*” (Luke 24:31) - recognition
4. God says to Jeremiah “*before you were formed in womb, I knew you”* (Jeremiah 1:5) - creation
5. The intimate relationship with God is called, *“O Lord you have known me … and also all my ways”* (Ps 139:1-4)
6. The sin of Israel according to Isaiah, *“Israel did not know”* God
7. Even the course of cosmic events was called, *“the sun knows its setting in the west”* (Psalm 104:19)
8. To know the voice of the shepherd Jesus is to know Him personally (John 10:14)
9. The denial of Peter three times, “*you did not know me*” (Luke 22:34)

**The Social Background of Weddings**

1. In the old Jewish wedding custom, the bridegroom's father arranges the wedding (Matt 22:2). During a period of betrothal, the bridegroom prepares a bridal chamber at his father's house while the bride waits at her house. It is only when the bridegroom's father is satisfied with his son's preparations that he gives his permission to his son to go and get the bride, and bring her to the bridal chamber. The groomsmen would then precede the groom to the bride's home, blowing the shofar trumpet and shouting that the bridegroom was coming. The bridesmaids would join the procession and light the bridegroom's way with lamps, as this happened at night. Jesus refers to these wedding customs in Matthew 9:15 - “*And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.*” (Mark 2:19-20, Luke 5:34-35)

2. The wedding feast is hinted at in (John 14:2) “*in my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.”* In John 14:3 Jesus says, *“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”*

3. Jesus gives a vivid illustration of how the kingdom will be in Matthew 25:1ff –

*“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, “Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him.” Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, “Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.” But the wise answered, saying, “Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.” And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, “Lord, Lord, open to us.” But he answered and said, “Truly I say unto you, I know you not.”*

*(Matthew 25:13) Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man comes.*

If we keep this in mind, then Jesus was not saying He is ignorant of the hour of the second coming, but rather, He cannot reveal it, neither can angels, because according to the wedding protocol, it is reserved for the Father only to announce that the preparations of his son are complete, and the time for the wedding has come.

**Jesus’ Cry of Innocence: “Why have you forsaken me?”**

Those who like to speak of the Father’s anger or wrath on his son on the cross normally quote the first verse of Psalm 22:1. This is false, very false because Psalm 22 as a whole does not even hint to divine wrath. The Hebrew way of prayer is not the same as that of Christians living in the West.

**The exclamation: “Why?”**

Let’s first consider Psalm 2:1,

*“Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and his anointed…”*

This is quoted in Acts 4:25 as well as other Psalms quoted on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:25ff). The rise of the wicked against the righteous is among the common themes of the Psalmists:

“*Why, O LORD, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? In arrogance the wicked persecute the poor-- let them be caught in the schemes they have devised.”* (10:1-2)

But this prayer does not end with the cry of the Psalmist but with:

*“****12*** *Rise up, O LORD; O God, lift up your hand; do not forget the oppressed.* ***13*** *Why do the wicked renounce God, and say in their hearts, "You will not call us to account"?* ***14*** *But you do see! Indeed you note trouble and grief, that you may take it into your hands; the helpless commit themselves to you; you have been the helper of the orphan.* ***15*** *Break the arm of the wicked and evildoers; seek out their wickedness until you find none.* ***16*** *The LORD is king forever and ever; the nations shall perish from his land.* ***17*** *O LORD, you will hear the desire of the meek; you will strengthen their heart, you will incline your ear* ***18*** *to do justice for the orphan and the oppressed, so that those from earth may strike terror no more”*

**Needing to hear from God**

One Psalm that was sung in the Temple does not say that God has actually forgotten David, but the crisis demands the revelation of God’s vindication. Psalm 13:

***1*** *How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?* ***2*** *How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?* ***3*** *Consider and answer me, O LORD my God! Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,* ***4*** *and my enemy will say, "I have prevailed"; my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.*

***5*** *But I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.* ***6*** *I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me.”*

The title of Psalm 18 reads: “*A Psalm of David the servant of the Lord,”* who addressed the words of this song to the Lord on the day when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul, saying

***1*** *He said then “I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge,* ***2*** *my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. 3 I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; so I shall be saved from my enemies.*

***4*** *The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of perdition assailed me,* ***5*** *the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me.*

***6*** *In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.*

***7*** *Then the earth reeled and rocked; the foundations also of the mountains trembled and quaked, because he was angry.” (18:1-7*)

This should help us to understand the same cosmic phenomena at the Crucifixion of our Lord, the darkness and the earth’s crack. It is futile for us to see in the “Cry of the Innocent” the sense of God hiding his face especially in the words of Psalm 26 where God’s vindication is the core of the prayer. The most beautiful Psalm 27 has the same desire. It starts with *“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?*”, but then the Psalmist prays,

***7*** *“Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me!* ***8*** *‘Come,’ my heart says, ‘seek his face!’  Your face, Lord, do I seek.* ***9*** *Do not hide your face from me….”*

The revelation of God and his hiddenness is what frightens a Hebrew, for his prayer or song is centered around seeking God’s grace and mercy, the “***Khesed***”

**Chrysostom on The Cry of the Innocent**

If we read the gospel account in Matthew 27 and read also Homily 88 (below) of St John Chrysostom on Matthew 27:45ff, we can see a different scene.

*"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, and said, “Eli, Eli, lima sabachthani*?

*That is to say, my God my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that said, this man call for Elias. And straight way one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink.*” This is the sign which before He had promised to give them when they asked it, saying, "*An evil and adulterous generation seek after a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas*; " meaning His cross, and His death, His burial, and His resurrection. And again, declaring in another way the virtue of the cross, He said, "*When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am He."* And what He saith is to this purport: "When ye have crucified me, and think ye have overcome me, then, above all, shall ye know my might."

For after the crucifixion, the city was destroyed, and the Jewish state came to an end, they fell away from their polity and their freedom, the gospel flourished, the word was spread abroad to the ends of the world; both sea and land, both the inhabited earth and the desert perpetually proclaim its' power. These things then He meant, and those which took place at the very time of the crucifixion. For indeed it was much more marvelous that these things should be done when He was nailed to the cross than when He was walking on the earth. And not in this respect only was the wonder, but because from heaven also was that done which. They had sought, and it was over all the world, which had never before happened, but in Egypt only, when the Passover was to be fulfilled. For indeed those events were a type of these.

And observe when it took place. At midday, that all that dwell on the earth may know it, when it was day all over the world; which was enough to convert them, not by the greatness of the miracle only, but also by its taking place in due season. For after all their insulting, and their lawless derision, this is done, when they had let go their anger, when they had ceased mocking, when they were satiated with their jeering, and had spoken all that they were minded; then He shows the darkness, in order that at least so (having vented their anger) they may profit by the miracle. For this was more marvelous than to come down from the cross, that being on the cross He should work these things. For whether they thought He Himself had done it, they ought to have believed and to have feared; or whether not He, but the Father, yet thereby ought they to have been moved to compunction, for that darkness was a token of His anger at their crime. For that it was not an eclipse, but both wrath and indignation, is not hence alone manifest, but also by the time, for it continued three hours, but an eclipse takes place in one moment of time, and they know it, who have seen this; and indeed it hath taken place even in our generation.

And how, you may say, did not all marvel, and account Him to be God? Because the race of man was then held in a state of great carelessness and vice. And this miracle was but one, and when it had taken place, immediately passed away; and no one was concerned to inquire into the cause of it, and great was the prejudice and the habit of ungodliness. And they knew not what was the cause of that which took place, and they thought perhaps this happened so, in the way of an eclipse or some natural effect. And why dost thou marvel about them that are without, that knew nothing, neither inquired by reason of great indifference, when even those that were in Judaea itself, after so many miracles, yet continued using Him despitefully, although He plainly showed them that He Himself wrought this thing.

And for this reason, even after this He speaks, that they might learn that He was still alive, and that He Himself did this, and that they might become by this also more gentle, and He said, "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*" that unto His last breath they might see that He honors His Father, and is no adversary of God. Wherefore also He uttered a certain cry from the prophet, (Ps 22:1) even to His last hour bearing witness to the Old Testament, and not simply a cry from the prophet, but also in Hebrew, so as to be plain and intelligible to them, and by all things He shows how He is of one mind with Him that begat Him.

But mark herein also their wantonness, and intemperance, and folly. They thought (it is said) that it was Elias whom He called, and straightway they gave Him vinegar to drink. But another came unto Him, and "*pierced His side with a spear*." What could be more lawless, what more brutal, than these men; who carried their madness to so great a length, offering insult at last even to a dead body?

But mark thou, I pray thee, how He made use of their wickedness’s for our salvation. For after the blow the fountains of our salvation gushed forth from thence*. "And Jesus, when He had cried with a loud voice, yielded up the Ghost."* This is what He said, *"I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again,"* and, *"I lay it down of myself."* (John10:18) So for this cause He cried with the voice, that it might be shown that the act is done by power. Mark at any rate saith, that "*Pilate marveled if He were already dead:"* *and that the centurion for this cause above all believed, because He died with power.*

This cry rent the veil, and opened the tombs, and made the house desolate. And He did this, not as offering insult to the temple (for how should He, who says, "Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise," but declaring them to be unworthy even of His abiding there; like as also when He delivered it over to the Babylonians. But not for this only were these things done, but what took place was a prophecy of the coming desolation, and of the change into the greater and higher state; and a sign of His might.

*– St. John Crysostom*

**The meaning of the cry?**

The cry “Why have you forgotten me?” is often used by David and others, in times of oppression and distress. (See Psalm 42:9.)

Some have taken occasion from these words to depreciate the character of our blessed Lord. "They are unworthy," say they, "of a man who suffers, conscious of his innocence, and argue imbecility, impatience, and despair." This is by no means fairly deducible from the passage. However, some think that the words, as they stand in the Hebrew and Syria, are capable of a translation which destroys all objections, and obviates every difficulty.

The particle ***למה*** (lamah), may be translated, “to what - to whom - to what kind or sort - to what purpose or profit”: (Gen 25:32; Gen 32:29; Gen 33:15; Job 9:29; Jeremiah 6:20; Jeremiah 20:18; Amos 5:18); and the verb ***עזב*** (azab) signifies to leave - to deposit - to commit to the care of. (Genesis 39:6; Job 39:11; Psalm 10:14, and Jeremiah 49:11).

The words, taken in this way, might be thus translated: “My God! my God! to what sort of persons hast thou left me?” The words thus understood are rather to be referred to the wicked Jews than to our Lord, and are an exclamation indicative of the obstinate wickedness of his crucifiers, who steeled their hearts against every operation of the Spirit and power of God

**Mark the Alexandrian Deacon**

“By saying “why,” Jesus declared his innocence. No one who is guilty or is under the divine judgment can question God and ask God why? By saying why have you forsaken me, Jesus was quoting the opening of Psalm 22 that ends with the glory of the one who suffered.

“Why have you forsaken me?” should then mean “Why did you let me fall into the hands of those wicked men?”

***Pope’s Notes***

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