

### ***The Life of Jesus 3***

#### The Man and His Mission

(Mark 8:27-9:13)

Jesus now led his disciples to Caesarea Philippi. A turning point has come in his ministry. The Gentiles have been very receptive but Israel only in a mixed way. As they journeyed to this Roman city some 50 miles north of Galilee, Jesus asked them, "Who do people say that I am?" Surely the disciples had discussed that Jesus was the Messiah. But Jesus had never said it plainly. They told Jesus how some claimed He was John the Baptist, or Elijah, or one of the other prophets. "But what about you?" he asked. Peter answered, "The Christ (Messiah)." Now it was out. What would Jesus say? He told Peter how blessed he was that the Father had revealed this to him. But like his miracles and healings, he told them to tell no one.

The zealot movement had started in the town of Gamla just half-day walk from Capernaum. Simon may have even come from this town. That gave the Northern Galilee a reputation for militant Zionism. Anything that gave the impression that Jesus was trying to set up an earthly kingdom, he avoided.

To clarify for the disciples how different his leading was from that of the zealots He began to explain what He was about to suffer. This fit in clearly with Isaiah's prophecies of the Messiah as a suffering servant. He told them of his death and resurrection. But Peter would not hear it, and began to rebuke Jesus. The man Jesus just praised as having a revelation from God, He rebukes as being inspired by Satan. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." That was the problem with their thinking. They wanted an earthly kingdom. How like us today as we pray for the physical and expend so much effort on what will perish. Jesus recognized the source of Peter's thoughts, as He had heard them before. This was just what Satan had tried to tempt Jesus with those 40 days after his baptism.

Six days later Jesus leads Peter, James and John up into a high mountain to pray. Some believe this to be Mount Hermon, as its base is at Caesarea Philippi, while others think they were on their way back at Mount Tabor. If we think about the sequence of events, we recognize that first they verbalized who they believed Jesus to be. Then Jesus tells them that entails something they weren't expecting – his death. Those six days may have been a time for the disciples to adjust their thinking, to reconsider what they were getting into. I imagine if I was one of them I would have needed some encouragement and even revelation to continue.

There on the mountain, Jesus suddenly becomes as white as white can get. Two men appear and begin talking with Him, Moses and Elijah. They were like all Biblical characters in the face of this supernatural event, terrified. Peter, never able to just be quiet, says, "Teacher, we will built three shacks for you." And then a cloud envelopes them. To the Jew this immediately brought to mind when Moses ascended on mount Sinai and God came down in a cloud to meet with him. A voice came from within the cloud saying, "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" I don't know about other people but can say if for myself, if I was there and witnessed this I would throw away all my old ideas and follow this guy.

This is the second time God spoke in an audible voice during the life of Christ. The first was after his baptism, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." This first message was for the Son. The second was for Peter, James and John. The difference in the second utterance, 'listen to Him'. They needed to know they were not the ones coming up with the plan. It was Jesus they needed to listen to not their kinsman, not the religious leaders, not even their past understanding of what the Messiah was suppose to be like. Just listen to Him! I think they needed to witness this miraculous event to let go of their old conceptions and understand God was with them in the flesh. He knew what was going to happen.

Jesus tells them not to tell anyone until He had risen from the dead. Mark says they discussed among themselves what that might mean. No longer are they arguing what that means but trying to figure out what will happen. They next ask about the prophecy of Elijah coming first. They are examining what they believe about the Messiah and adjusting to what He has told them. Jesus reminds them that John came in the spirit of Elijah. Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him."

As they came down out of the mountain to rejoin the other disciples, they found them arguing with Pharisees. There were Jewish communities around this Roman city. The disciples could not cast a demon from an epileptic youth. Jesus cast it out and told them this kind of demon needs to be confronted with prayer. As the enter back into the region around Galilee Jesus keeps his return to the region a secret for awhile so He could tell his disciples again about the upcoming betrayal, death and resurrection. They still could not comprehend it. It seems this whole trip to the North was to get them to change their perspective on who he was and what his mission was about. To a point it did seem successful but after it all came about it would really sink in. (Mark 9:30-32)

What was the focus of the trip to Caesarea Philippi?

Did the disciples understand?

Do you think sometimes we get things stuck in our minds and can't hear what the Lord is really trying to tell us?

How can we avoid that?

Lessons at Capernaum

Mark 9:33-50 Matthew 18:1-35 Luke 9:46-50

On the road they were arguing and Jesus asked what it was about. They said nothing for they were arguing about who would be the greatest in Jesus' kingdom. Jesus told them if they wanted to really be great they had to become a servant. And then in show of humility and love for man he sat a child on his knee and told them that whoever received a child in his name received him, and whoever welcomes him welcomes God.

John told of a run in with a man who was casting out demons in Jesus' name. John asked if he was right to tell the man to get on board with them or quit using the Master's name. Jesus expressed a great openness when He said, "No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me,<sup>40</sup> for whoever is not against us is for us.<sup>41</sup> I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward." Mark 9:40-41 (NIV) Returning to the subject of children Jesus taught them that whoever caused one of them to sin would be better off drowned in the oceans depths.

Jesus saw sin and its consequences for what it really was. He taught them that anything that causes you to sin must be removed from your life. Hell was a very real place to Jesus. He warned them that there the worm does not die, and the fire can't be put out. He was so intent on making it clear that He told them they had better be maimed than to be sentenced to hell.

The Pharisees were sure to notice Jesus acceptance of women followers and how He cared for them as He did the men followers. Ever anxious to find him at odds with the Law, they asked him about divorce. Moses had allowed for divorce, but Jesus took them further back in the Law and pointed out that it was God that put a couple together and we should not undo what God does. Later the disciples seemed to think this a bit harsh. But Jesus made it clear that He meant it by adding that the divorcee that remarries commits adultery. (Mark 10:1-12)

Again little children became the focus when mothers carrying their little ones swamped Jesus to have Him bless their children. The disciples tried to protect their Master, rebuking the women. Certainly Jesus could not waste his time on these little ones. Here is One who meets Moses and Elijah on a mountain and they expect him to stop for children! But Jesus stopped them and reminded

them that we all have to be as accepting and trusting as a little child to enter heaven. He took them up in his arms and blessed them.

How does a person's attitude toward children speak of character?

Do you have time for children?

How did Jesus deal with the Pharisees' abuse of the Law?

Batanea

I cannot imagine how Jesus must have felt. The religious leaders as a whole had rejected Him, the people sought Him for miracles and healings, and even his disciples just didn't quite seem to get it. Everyone wants power and position and can't understand that God's way is contrary to that of the world. What is held so high in the world is despicable to God. Even the secular leaders were after Jesus. The Pharisees wanted Jesus out of the Capernaum area, and told him about Herod Antipas wanting to put Jesus to death. Jesus told them that a prophet could not die outside Jerusalem. (Luke 13:31-33)

Jesus left Galilee to the other side of the Jordan. The tetrarch Philip ruled the area and Jesus was free again to assemble crowds. Matthew 19:1,2 tells us "large crowds followed him, and he healed them there." According to John this was after they left the Feast of Hanukah (Dedication) in the winter of 29 AD. John 10:40-42 John says that "And in that place many believed in Jesus." The area is known as Batanea. John the Baptist ministry was in this area. The city of Kochaba held genealogies of David's descendants. It is possible that Martha and Mary had a second home here and that the story of Luke 10:38-42 took place here. On hearing that Lazarus their brother in the Bethany home was sick they returned to Bethany. That would account for how they knew where to send for Jesus. He may have been staying in that home – the Bethany beyond Jordan.

When the time was right Jesus went to join them. Perhaps it was on the way there that the rich young ruler approached Jesus. (Mark 10:17-31) Jesus response to him that God alone was good is used by some to say Jesus did not consider himself equal with God. It may be that Jesus was testing the man's declaration to see if he was declaring Christ to be God or just stretching the use of the term. He asked what he should do to gain eternal life. The man thought he had kept all the rules that Jesus pointed out. Notice thought that Jesus did not ask him about the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment, the condition of the heart desiring what is not his. Jesus jumps right to the man's security blanket, his wealth. Jesus is in the last few weeks of his life. If the man truly desires to be his disciple it means a drastic forsaking of all he holds dear to follow Jesus now. The man went away sad knowing he could not let go of his wealth. To him it was an idol that kept him from all out obedience.

John alone tells us of the events in between the meeting with the Rich Young Ruler and the Triumphal Entry. John 11:1-44 Jesus' friends Martha and Mary send a note to Jesus from Bethany near Jerusalem to tell Him that his friend Lazarus is ill. It may be that Jesus was staying in their "Bethany beyond Jordan" home, if the women had two homes. That would account for them knowing where to send the note. The time of four days in the tomb also coincides with the time it would take to get from the Bethany in Batanea to Bethany near Jerusalem. This was the third resurrection Christ performed. It was this awesome display of power right near the heart of the Jewish religious center that finally convinced the leaders that they must take his life. (John 11:47-52)

Jesus knew that his time had come. The dead power based leaders who used the letter of the Law to control people's lives were going to have to stop this man who was exposing them with his life and teaching. The Passover was coming shortly and Jesus knew as the Lamb of God that He would be the Passover Lamb. He hid in the village of Ephraim until six days before the Passover.

Not far outside of Jericho a blind beggar named Bartimaeus cried out when he hears Jesus of Nazareth is passing by, "have mercy on me son of David." The crowd tried to hush him but he cried all the louder. Jesus called for him. When he approached Jesus asked what it was He could do for him. Bartimaeus asked for his sight. Jesus told him his faith had restored it and immediately he could see and followed Jesus.

John 12:1-9 Then they returned to visit Lazarus, Martha, and Mary on his way to Jerusalem. Mary anointed his feet with nard and wiped them with her hair. Judas was quite upset with this "waste". Jesus told them that it was for his burial. That would take place in just one week. A large crowd gathered not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, a man who had come back from four days in the grave.

Mark 10:32-45 The disciples were fearful of what was about to happen as they approached Jerusalem. The last time there was filled with tension and all the powers of the world – the positions of religious and governmental power- felt threatened by Jesus. Jesus warned them again of what was about to happen. This time he adds that they will hand him over to the Gentiles.

One more time James and John give Jesus a chance to correct their idea of power and position. They ask to sit on his right and left in the Kingdom. So again Jesus explains the difference of the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of man. Man loves position over, to order and direct for their good. The great

ones in the Kingdom of God serve others, just as Jesus had served them and even give their life as He was giving his.

Did Jesus know where when and how He would die?

Why did the disciples have such a hard time understanding?

How do you think the rich man's life would have changed had he followed Jesus?

How do we tend to harbor those ideas of position like James and John did?

### Jerusalem – the Last Days

Of Jesus three years of ministry, this last week occupies a third of Mark, almost half of John. As Jesus approached the city he wept. If only they had welcomed him into their hearts. Jesus could see ahead the destruction that awaited the city. How history would be different if the Jewish nation recognized the Messiah and received Him instead of holding out for their own desires and expectations.

(Luke 19:29-44) On Sunday, Jesus sent two disciples ahead to get the foal of a donkey. This is a mysterious affair – either Jesus miraculously knew where to tell the disciples to go to get the colt or there was some kind of pre-arrangement. The colt had never been ridden, but it readily yielded its back to its Creator.

The Law commanded the Israelites during the Feast of Tabernacles to take palm fronds, leafy branches and poplars and rejoice before the Lord. Although this was not the time of that Feast they had done this before and were now rejoicing before the Lord who was physically present before them. The cloaks laid in the path were meaningful also. A common person only had one or two cloaks and they would be a treasured possession. Are ours laid before Jesus?

The shouts went up, Hosanna! Which means 'Save now!' It is a word of praise. It says, "You are able to save us, please do so!" And this was exactly what Jesus had come to do. They may have been quoting Ps 118:25,26. Luke 19:37 says the crowd consisted of disciples and that they were joyful and praising God for the miracles they had seen. Pharisees asked Jesus to rebuke the people but Jesus replied, "If they were silent, the rocks would cry out." Jesus entered the Temple but the hour was late so they returned to Bethany. (Mark 11:11)

(Mark 11:11-25) Monday morning as they journeyed to the Temple they passed a fig tree. The fig tree is a symbol for the nation of Israel. Jesus was hungry and went to see if there were any figs. Seeing none he cursed the tree. Jesus had gone to his own – the Jews – and as John said, "his own received him not." He

had hoped to find fruit in Israel. John the Baptist had called for fruits worthy of repentance. But Israel had not received him.

At the Temple He upturned the money exchangers tables and drove out the animal vendors as He had done two years earlier. I can just see the money hungry exchangers groping around for their coins on the ground not wanting one to get away. The temple tax had to be paid in a certain currency so those travelling to Jerusalem had to exchange their money. But this court was for the Gentiles and was meant to be a place the nations could come for prayer, not a bazaar. Are we seeing Jesus desire to reach the Gentiles even in this house cleaning?

Mark 11:27 – 12:40) Under the porticoes He began to teach and the people heard him gladly. The Pharisees and Saducees (normally at odds but joined now together against a common threat) threw their best trained debaters against him. The questions were meant to catch Jesus in something that would incur the wrath of Rome, or turn the people against him, or a blasphemy for which they could prosecute him. The question of taxes was thrown at him. If He answered not to pay – they could take it to the Romans. If He said to pay then the people would oppose him. Jesus in his wisdom told them to give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.

Frustrated they threw question after question but time after time He turned the tables and exposed their hypocrisy until they finally gave up. This last week of teaching in the Temple was probably also the setting for his parables about the vineyard rented out to workers. When the owner sent to collect his rent the abused him. He sent collector after collector and the renters still refused and even killed the messengers. Finally he sent his son. They killed him too. What will the owner of the vineyard do when he comes? The religious leaders surely knew this was directed at them. They were convinced that they must kill him to retain their power and regain the revenue being lost from another Temple house cleaning. Still they feared the crowds would turn on them. The common people tolerated the extortion and the pride but they might not if the leaders openly tried a man they respected.

This time may have been his last efforts to speak to these leaders about where their hearts are really at. Matthew 23 is an attack so searing they must have been steaming under their ecclesiastical collars. "Woe to you hypocrites!" and then He would expose their twisting of the Law and their flagrant disregard for the spirit of the Law. Was He insuring his demise or just finishing his Father's business as the time had come?

He also taught his disciple privately about the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. The disciples noted how magnificent the buildings were. It is

hard to imagine as this was probably the greatest achievement of Herod the Great who was a world renowned architect. Over the stones and panels a gold veneer shown in the sun. The bright tapestries and beautiful colors must have been stunning. Jesus response was a discourse on the end. The Jews of that time believed in a day of judgement so Jesus teaching was not a surprise, but the mention of the destruction of the Temple was. Jesus prophesied that not one stone would be left on another. Matthew 24 and Mark 13 relate his picture. Some note that two separate questions were asked and perhaps alluded to in the answer. The first, when will these things be? By this it is meant the stone walls torn down. The second, and of the end of the world? This would refer to the great battle of Armageddon. Others believe this is all one event fulfilled in 70AD.

During the nights He would go to the Garden of Gethsemene (Luke 21:37). Gethsemene on the Mount of Olives was probably a walled olive grove with an entrance door right across the Kidron valley from the city. The spring nights can still be quite chilly and people slept in their clothing. The next morning He would head back to the Temple to teach again. On the way they noticed the fig tree had withered up from its roots, prophetic of the soon coming destruction of Jerusalem.

(John 13:12-17) On Thursday, He gathered his disciples in an upper room. It may have been the home of a wealthy disciple that was not in the inner 12. They lay around the table as was the custom when dining. But no one had washed their feet. Perhaps the servant of the house was away with his master. Jesus grabbed a towel and basin and began to do the lowly servant's job. As He washed their feet He again explained that serving was the way to lead. This last week had many personal messages for the disciples too. John records many of them in chapters 13-17. It is not recorded but one or two of the disciples must have taken a lamb and sacrificed it for the group and then brought it to the meal.

(John 13:18) As they ate the dinner Jesus broke the news that one of them was about to betray him. This meal of Passover was celebrated in a certain manner. Bitter herbs were dipped in a bowl of salt water. It was customary to recline at a low table propping the head with the left arm and eating with the right. John (on Jesus right) leaned back, his head on Jesus chest, and asked, "who is it?" Jesus said, "It is the one who dips with me in the dish." Judas (probably to Jesus left, the seat of honored guests) then dipped his herbs with Jesus. "Is it me?" Satan entered Judas and Jesus told him to do his deed quickly. The others thought Judas was giving aid to the poor since he was the treasurer of the group.

After Judas left Jesus instituted communion. Normally at the end of the Passover the last taste of food was to be the lamb. Jesus did something different which would become a tradition even among the Jews. Instead of



finishing with lamb he took the bread and broke it. "This is my body which is broken for you. Take, eat, in remembrance of me. Today Jews call this last bite of bread the Aphikomen. Then he took a cup of wine and called it his blood, the blood of a new covenant. The covenants of the Old Testament were always sealed with blood. The Jews considered themselves in a special covenant with God. In fact, what we call the Old and New Testament would be more correctly translated Old and New Covenant. The old one was based on obedience to the Laws God had given. This new one was based on Christ's sinless life in our behalf, his atoning death in our place, and his blood poured out as payment for our sin.

(John 13:31-38) Then Jesus warned Peter that Satan planned to sift him like wheat. But Jesus said, "I have prayed for you that your faith does not fail. And when you are converted strengthen the brothers." He also warned him that he would betray him before the cock crowed. Peter declared that he would die for Jesus. They sang a hymn (the last of several psalms sung during Passover meal) and retired to the Garden. John's chapters 14- 17 tell of his teaching to them before the betrayal. Jesus declares Himself to be the way to the Father and promises the Holy Spirit in chapter 14, There is the parable of the vine and branches in 15. In 16 the work of the Spirit and warnings of difficulty to come. Chapter 17 records Jesus prayer for unity and for his disciples.

It had been a long day. When they got to the Garden, most of the disciples probably bedded down in the limestone cave of the olive press. Jesus asked Peter James and John to come pray with him. They followed and Jesus went on ahead. They could hear him praying in agony and make out some of the words. He was asking his Father to take away the cup if it was possible but in the end asked that the Father's will prevail over his own. Surely they too tried to pray, but they just could not keep their eyes open. Jesus woke them and warned that the spirit was willing but the flesh weak. They noticed the perspiration on his head was mingled with blood. Today doctors call this condition hematidrosis. It is caused by severe stress and makes the affected area very tender. He looked so sorrowful. Again they tried to pray but failed.

(John 18:1-11) The next time Jesus woke them they could hear a noise in the distance. Approaching the Garden was a group with torches. As they got closer they could see Judas in the lead. He approached Jesus and kissed him on the cheek. "Do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" Jesus asked. "Who do you seek?" Jesus of Nazareth came the reply from the Temple Soldiers. "I AM" he answered. The force of it knocked them to the ground. They arose and somewhat confused and Jesus asked again. "Who are looking for?" "Jesus of Nazareth," came the response. "I AM, if you are looking for me then let these go." Peter could see Jesus was in charge but was turning himself over. He drew his sword and with a swing took off the ear of the High Priest's servant. Jesus

stopped him, picked up the ear and restored it to the man's head. He put out his hands for them to bind. Peter and the others slid back into the shadows and watched as they led their Master away.

What was Jesus lesson at the Passover meal and how can we apply it today?

What did the absence of leaven in the Passover bread represent?

How did that apply to Jesus saying it was his body?

Do you go to prayer when you face difficulty?

Why did Jesus stop Peter from fighting for their lives?

Why did Jesus expression "I AM" floor the crowd that came to arrest him?