



UNIT 9 LESSON 7
MARK 10:1 - 11:26

THE END OF THE ROAD.

This Lesson takes us into the City of Jerusalem and the last events of Jesus' earthly ministry, before the Cross. We divide the study passage into three sections:

1. Chapter 10:1-31. Is there any benefit in forsaking natural pleasure for Jesus?
2. Chapter 10:32-52. Can we share Jesus' cup of suffering?
3. Chapter 11:1-26. What is the fate of the tree without figs?

1. IS THERE ANY BENEFIT IN FORSAKING NATURAL PLEASURE FOR JESUS?
Chapter 10:1-31.

- a) In Chapter 10, on his way to Jerusalem, five different groups or individuals come to Jesus with requests. Of these five (the Pharisees, the children, the rich man, James and John, Bartimaeus) only two receive what they want.

The first section on divorce is also recorded in Matthew 19:1-12. No doubt Jesus often taught on this subject. (See Matthew 5:31,32). It was a burning issue for the people since the status of marriage and women depended on the attitude the community had towards divorce. In Jewish law at the time of Jesus, divorce was a simple matter, but it rested entirely in the hands of the man. The basic law is stated in Deut. 24:1. But the real problem was this, What is meant by "a matter of uncleanness?"

The Pharisees of this period were divided into "schools," known by the name of their leading rabbi. The School of Shammai said that this phrase referred to adultery only. But another school, the School of Hillel, said that the phrase was anything at all in the woman's behaviour that displeased the husband.

Of course, this later view came to be more popular than the conservative, with the result that some women hesitated to marry at all because of the insecurity of marriage. Jesus' words are to be seen in the light of all this. He did not align with either of the Rabbinic schools mentioned. He went behind Moses' Law, to the Universal Law of God (vs. 5,6), (see Gen. 1:27; 2:24) and implied that Moses' Law, so far from permitting divorce, merely sought to regulate a practice which had crept in and was in danger of becoming widespread, and extremely detrimental to society.

- b) The key to verses 13-16 is Jesus' reaction to the disciples' scolding of the children. He was angry. This is a strong word. He had already taught them a little regarding children (Mark 9:33-37).

The disciples had a wrong estimate both of the worth of a child and the nature of the Kingdom. It is not necessary for a child to become an adult before participating in the Kingdom; rather, the adult must be converted, turn back and become a child (cf Mt. 18:3). The Kingdom is not a matter of achievement or merit; we must receive the Kingdom of God as a gift, and this is where the child has an advantage. The point is



not that he or she is innocent or humble, which the child may not be, but that he or she is receptive and willing to be dependent upon others. The child has no status in his/her own right, but can still receive the Kingdom.

- c) The third incident in this section (Mark 10:17-31) reveals the disciples' natural attitude towards the rich. Surely the rich and privileged must have a good chance of God's blessing. This is a reflection of the ordinary human reaction that would be expected from a group of penniless disciples. They also have the Hebrew idea that prosperity is a sign of God's blessing.

Jesus turns the tables on that idea, but the disciples have a way out of that too! "We have left everything!" (v.28). But they do not really understand that leaving all includes accepting persecution (v.30).

This story about the rich young ruler must have made a great impression upon the early church. It is found in all three Synoptic Gospels. Here is the only man in the whole of the New Testament of whom it is said that he went away sad from the presence of Christ. He could not be a disciple of Jesus for this demanded total committal, which he was not, as yet, ready to give. His reaction shows clearly Jesus had laid his finger on the spot; his wealth was indeed the thing that was holding him back from the Kingdom of God.

- d) The teaching in v.29-31 highlights the fact that Jesus taught a great deal about the manner of the disciples' behaviour, and style of life.

There is a strong link with Jesus Himself. He is not to be separated from His teaching, as we may separate other ethical systems from their founders or teachers. To follow Jesus, that is, to accept His style of life (and not merely to imitate Him) is the Christian pattern, "the way". Many of the statements about sacrifice and loyalty that we find in the N.T. are specifically related to the historical moments of Jesus' life and ministry. They may not be repeated in just that way for every disciple, but similar kinds of situations arise daily.

2. CAN DISCIPLES SHARE JESUS' CUP OF SUFFERING?

- a) For the third time Jesus speaks to the Twelve about his Death. The scene is portrayed simply, but the tension of the moment is clear. Jerusalem has become not merely a city, but the place of the climax. The Twelve and the people in general sensed the importance of Jesus' mission. If there was only the human aspect to the incident, it would compel us to honour Jesus. He went on ahead in calm serenity knowing full well what was ahead. He even took time to explain it all again to his followers, and with such bad news for them he still managed to inspire them to follow him further.
- b) The request of James and John comes as an awful shock in the context of Jesus' resolute approach to Jerusalem. The interaction within the group of the Twelve is noted with frankness - v.41. The implications of this are interesting. Within the space of a few verses, Peter, James and John have all been to the Mount of Transfiguration, but have all been depicted as failing rather badly. Yet these men were the prominent ones in the early church when these incidents were first recorded in writing and published.



Verse 45 is the climax of the section - that service is the way to greatness. This verse has allusions to Isaiah 53:11, 12 and the title, Son of Man re-occurs. In the early centuries of the church, the "ransom" or redeemed idea was a popular way of thinking about the death of Jesus and its benefits. The idea that Israel had been redeemed or set free from bondage in Egypt was a well known one in the Old Testament, and it came to be applied in a general way to God's saving activity. (See Psalm 49:7). But in the early church people got on the wrong track when someone asked, to whom was the ransom paid? The obvious answer is, the devil. But that is clearly dangerous, for then you get the idea of God bargaining with the devil.

William Barclay gives this explanation of "ransom".

"It means that the cost of our salvation was the Cross of Christ. Beyond that we cannot go, and beyond that we do not need to go. We only know that something happened on the Cross which opened for us the way to God." (Daily Bible Study Bible, Mark's Gospel, p.269).

- c) The final incident in this section deals with the healing of blind Bartimaeus. It is the last healing recorded in the Gospel. There could be significance in the fact that this Gospel records the healing of another blind man (8:22-26) at the opening of a long section on the meaning of the Messiah. The compiler could be emphasising that blind eyes were being opened to the significance of Jesus. The incident in 10:46-52 immediately precedes the entry into Jerusalem, the goal of Jesus' ministry. Furthermore, verse 52 is couched in terms suggestive of discipleship - faith, following Jesus on the way.

3. WHAT IS THE FATE OF THE TREE WITHOUT FIGS? Chapter 11:1-26.

The final section for study in this Lesson covers the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, the cleansing of the temple and the cursing of the fig tree.

Although the Synoptic Gospels only record one visit of Jesus to Jerusalem, John's Gospel gives details of other visits. (2:13; 5:1; 7:10).

Note: Riding on a donkey was not a sign of humility but rather the sign of a royal person coming in peace rather than war.

- a) Read Mark 11:12-14 and 20-26 together. This is a difficult incident. Some scholars feel that it is an enacted parable which warns against show without reality. This may point directly to the Jews and the temple worship in particular. Some say it is an acted drama in which the fruitlessness of the Jewish people in apprehending the Messiah is rebuked. Perhaps the destruction of the temple is foreshadowed.
- b) In verses 15-19 Jesus upheld the sanctity of the Temple by seeking to enforce the laws about trespassing on the Court of the Gentiles, a popular short cut across the city. As for the trading, any visitor to a religious shrine is liable to find the same situation as is here depicted. Special money was required for use in the ritual, and the money changers operated on a monopoly which was controlled by the officials, the Chief Priest himself no doubt being one of the main robbers in the Temple. Read the full context of the references which Jesus used to justify his action -Isaiah 56:7; Jeremiah 7:11.

**QUESTION 1:**

Mark 10:1-12. What does Jesus emphasise as the plan of God concerning marriage? According to verse 9 whose work is being destroyed by divorce? What further teaching does Jesus give the disciples on this subject? How do you know Jesus does not have different standards for men and women?

QUESTION 2:

Mark 10:13-16 Why would the disciples rebuke those bringing children to Jesus? How does Jesus use this incident to teach his disciples about the Kingdom of God? What does it mean to receive like a child?

QUESTION 3:

Mark 10:17-31. What are the two parts of the command Jesus gives the man? What does his failure to obey reveal about the one thing he lacks? What is his god? How does Jesus startle his disciples?

QUESTION 4:

Mark 10:32-34. What new details does Jesus give to the Twelve concerning the events which lie ahead? Compare with Mark 8:31 and 9:31. What basic elements appear each time?

QUESTION 5:

Mark 11:15-18. What reason does Jesus give for his actions in the temple? What does the phrase "all nations" imply? How would the profiteering in animals and in currency exchange in the Temple affect those who had come truly desiring to worship God? What reaction is there to Jesus' expression of authority in cleansing the Temple?

QUESTION FOR GROUP STUDY:

In Mark 10:17-31 how does Jesus startle his disciples? Why is it hard for those who have riches to enter the Kingdom of God? What riches do you have and how may they stand in your way? How is salvation possible?