

Mark 10:32-34 "They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. 'We are going up to Jerusalem,' he said, 'and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death, and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.'"

Mark makes us spectators of a marvellous scene which is a picture of the life of the Christian. Do you see it? Coming towards us on a country road which winds up to Jerusalem is a group of men (with some women also because they have an indispensable ministry to Jesus and his apostles). These people are the disciples of the Lord Christ, and there he is at their head leading them. In fact this is the only place in Mark's gospel where we are told that Jesus led the way. In other words, he is in complete control of this journey; he has decided where they're going, the route they are taking, the speed at which they traveling, the conversations they are going to have and how the distractions they meet on the way are going to be dealt with. He is their Master and it is their delightful vocation to be following him. As their shepherd he knows all this group by name, bringing them along with him hour by hour, day by day. This scene is a picture of what happens to every follower of Christ.

"Saviour, like a shepherd lead us;  
Much we need Thy tenderest care;  
From Thy pleasant pastures feed us;  
For our use Thy folds prepare.  
Blessed Jesus!  
Thou hast bought us, Thine we are.  
We are thine; do Thou befriend us;  
Be the Guardian of our way;  
Keep Thy flock; from ill defend us;

Blessed Jesus!

Hear Thy children when we pray."

The Lord never fails to answer those prayers because he is the good shepherd; he knows his sheep and is known by them

This journey to Jerusalem and Calvary became very important to the early church. They came to call the Christian life the 'Way.' The early church was dynamic, and its leaders were constantly on the move preaching in one place and then another. Those men had been greatly influenced by Jesus' way, the Via Dolorosa, the way of suffering. It was while they were on the way with him that he'd taught them. He had answered their questions to their enlightenment and faith as they walked along, and sometimes they sat on a mountain or by the sea and he sat down too and spoke to them. So Jesus' way eventually became their way too.

So that is the scene here in Mark chapter ten. There are a few interesting little details to notice; first, that there seems to have been three different groups amongst the flock of Christ, all mentioned in verse 32. There are the disciples, the men who have been following Christ for a year or two, and then there is a wider constituency whom Mark calls, "those who followed," people taken up with the Lord but perhaps not able to follow him every day but there on that occasion many from the immediate environs, and then finally there are the Twelve. Christ teaches and leads them all. It is something like a Sunday morning congregation, of members, and adherents, and visitors, Christ has brought us all there to speak to us.

Notice again the way Jesus speaks to them, "We are going . . .," he says (v.33). You see? Not 'I' but 'we'; they had to act in solidarity with him, and they were being drawn into his life to a degree they couldn't dream of. Where he is there they are going to be, in his sufferings, on the cross, in the tomb, risen on the third day, seated with him in

the heavenlies, they are going to be united to him from now on. "We are going up to Jerusalem and we are going to be one for ever," and on this journey he is beginning to show them this.

Finally do you see this other little detail, how Mark points out that on this stretch Jesus and the disciples were actually ascending? "We are going up to Jerusalem," Jesus says (v.33). Jerusalem is only twenty miles from Jericho but in fact it is almost the height of Mount Snowdon above Jericho - a thousand metres. So travelers to Jerusalem are constantly climbing. It is a good picture of the Christian life; we are always battling uphill; we are constantly going against the gradient of the world. Or you can think of how the prisoner ascends the gallows. So keep these pictures at the back of your mind. Here is this group of disciples being shepherded by Christ on the road up to Jerusalem. Now let us turn to what Jesus talked about and the disciples' reaction to what they heard.

#### 1. THE LORD CHRIST KNEW ABOUT HIS END BEFOREHAND.

"I have some things to tell you," he says to the Twelve beckoning them to him, and they prick up their ears and join him. This was a word not for the ordinary disciples but for them, the in-group, the Twelve. They probably reckoned on some words of cheer about the triumphant developments at hand of the kingdom of God, a delegation of new authority. How short-sighted they were to think like that. They hadn't yet come to terms with the terribleness of the fall of man and his wickedness and what would be necessary for man's redemption. So our Lord opens his mouth and they hear once again, and with an increasing desperate sadness, his solemn predictions about the nature of his end. No protestations on their part, and no warmly affectionate outbursts are going to get him to change his mind about this. If they tried to deflect him from Jerusalem he'd take that attempt as interference from the pit, and he'd have been right.

It is obvious from what he tells them that the cross of Golgotha was not going to take Jesus by surprise. Again he warns the disciples exactly what is going to happen. As

they travel to Jerusalem it is not that he possessed some vague sense of unease that things might turn out badly. He knew exactly and minutely what lay before him. All that happened to him was the result of his own free and deliberate choice, and he makes the dying anguish of his end spectacularly clear. Calmly and deliberately he explains to his disciples what was going to take place in a few weeks' time. One by one he outlines the indignities and horrors of his end; "This is going to happen . . . that is going to happen . . ." There is no way any of it could be avoided. Jesus kept back nothing. There was nothing involuntary and unforeseen in our Lord's dying. He was not like a man who find himself going deeper and deeper into trouble. Nothing crept up behind Jesus and pounced on him at the end. He was never the helpless victim of circumstances. As a real man he didn't know what was going to happen to him from day to day throughout his life and he needed to pray for daily wisdom as we all do, but there were few surprises in store for him concerning the last 24 hours of his life. He knew in the most shocking detail that his journey to Jerusalem was going to end on the cross, and that he walked to that city as the promised suffering Servant. Jesus did not take that knowledge in his stride. It was the product of struggle - it was the fruit of prayer. His agony in Gethsemane makes it abundantly clear that the prospect of this dying was devastating and crushing, as a time of appalling terror. He prays with fervor that if it is at all consistent with the purpose of redemption, that he may be spared. This is the Savior found in the gospels; one who was totally prepared to die that accursed death, to be reckoned sin in the place of his people. God the Son had not come into the world to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. This Son of God, who was willing to lay down his life for us, cannot fail to save all who come to him.

There is abundant reference in the gospels to the fact that Jesus controlled absolutely his own life and destiny: "I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again" (Jn. 10:18). That he had come to die he affirmed from the beginning. When he first made reference to the cross, he did so in veiled language. For example, he spoke of a temple, which, if 'destroyed,' would be raised again by him in three days. He spoke of the Son of Man being 'lifted up' as the brazen

serpent was lifted up in the wilderness. He spoke of a grievous event when he the bridegroom would be 'torn away' from his bride. He spoke about 'giving his flesh' for the life of the world. He spoke of 'the sign of the prophet Jonah.' All those allusions, some of them more mysterious than the others, were given by Jesus from the beginning of his ministry. It was not an eventuality to which he steeled himself on realizing that 'failure' was inevitable. It is very important for us to know that Jesus voluntarily lay down his life. When he hung impaled and immolated on the tree he was not simply a helpless victim. He was yielding himself, body and soul, to God, actively reconciling God to favored sinners. He knew that his dying was a weapon that he was wielding to accomplish our redemption. He was not simply suffering the will of God; he was doing the will of God. The cross was not a martyr's stake; it was a battlefield in a war, the scene of a mighty conflict. Incalculable spiritual power was being wielded there. Sin was being rendered impotent, death was being destroyed, the rulers of the darkness of this world were being conquered as Paul writes in Corinthians

"55 "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:55-57, NAS95.

The great turning point, when our Lord stopped speaking secretively and was direct with the disciples, was when Simon Peter confessed in Caesarea Philippi that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. After that the Lord didn't use picture language, but told them what was going to happen as bluntly, and matter of fact, and frequently as he deemed necessary. The plotting had begun. Spies were watching him. The storm clouds were gathering. It was starting to look ominous. He was finishing his work in Galilee and now he heads for Jerusalem to speak there; his final preaching to this wicked city must be delivered. So now he speaks with crystal clarity to the Twelve because they were all still hoping against hope that things would work out very differently, but this is not going to happen. At least now they have gained some understanding, even though they still are not connecting all the dots, that he is not just a wonderful rabbi. He is the promised Messiah from heaven, the Son of the living

two years and more. Soon Jesus will even raise Lazarus from the dead three days after Lazarus had died. So the Savior has been leading them along all the time for this end, that they come to acknowledge that he is God the Son. When they confess that truth Jesus doesn't hold anything back about what lies before them in Jerusalem.

The first time Jesus did that was in Caesarea Philippi, (8:31) a few months earlier, where we are told "he spoke plainly about this" (Mk. 8:32). Then once again Jesus does so after he descends from the Mount of Transfiguration (Mk. 9:31), a couple of weeks further on. Our text is the third occasion, and it is the most comprehensive of them all. How does our Lord know what will happen? You are tempted to say, because he is God, and there is a certain truth in that, but that is not what Jesus himself says. It is because of his knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures. In Luke's record of this event, Jesus speaks like this, that "everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled" (Lk.18:31). "It is in the Book," the Lord says, "my sufferings are recorded there and I have read them for myself. The head of the serpent is going to be crushed by the seed of the woman, but he will himself will be bruised in the process - that will happen to me!"

Christ was well aware that the law was only a shadow of the good things to come. The law could never by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. It was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin. So when Christ came into the world in the body God had prepared him he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He knew that the people of God could only be made holy through the sacrifice of his body once and for all. Jesus knew that. Under the old covenant the spotless lambs had to be slain and be made the burnt offering offered on the altar to atone for the sins of the worshipper. Can you see the slaughtered animal lying there, foul with dust and blood, its throat gashed across, its entrails laid open, steaming its impurities to the sun, awaiting the consuming fire amid the ashes of uncleanness outside the camp. It was a vile thing, and a horrid thing. No one could glance at it without experiencing emotions of disgust; no one could touch it

When the Lord Christ came he knew, "I myself am that Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. I will be consumed by the judgment of a sin-hating God. I shall be that scapegoat driven away from the fellowship of God and perishing outside the camp - that must be my end." When Isaiah described the suffering Servant bearing the sins of many, the one whom the Lord was pleased to bruise, then "I myself shall be that servant whom the Lord was pleased to bruise," Jesus acknowledged. The Lord was aware that everything written about himself must be fulfilled and in that knowledge he lived through his entire life.

Jesus, you'll notice in our text, is even speaking magisterially-kingly to the Twelve as the 'Son of Man' (v.33). That is how he identifies himself, as the divine figure first spoken of in the book of Daniel coming with all the glorious clouds of heaven. So that is the first thing we learn, that this divine Lord knew all about his end beforehand.

What does the Son of Man tell the apostles is going to occur? Seven events:

1. In Jerusalem will be the height of this wickedness.

Men in Nazareth had tried to throw him off a precipice, but it was not to be. It was inappropriate that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem (Lk. 13:33). That city had gained an unenviable reputation as the centre for hatred of its own Lord. Jesus knew the city. He had been there throughout his life with his family for the regular feasts. During the course of his public ministry he had visited the city on two earlier occasions, and on the very first of these he had told Nicodemus that the Son of Man must be lifted up. It was there that this must happen, not in some obscure corner of the land like Nazareth, in a furtive way - a sudden dark assassination, the thrust of a dagger one night and a swift hiding of the body, not that, no not that at all - but in the most public place and in the most official and formal way he is to be killed. He must be lifted up before the whole Jewish nation so that all may see whom they have pierced, and also by whose stripes they could be healed when at Pentecost Jerusalem sinners had the gospel preached to them. The Lamb of God must be slain in the same location as all the sacrificial lambs

2. He will be betrayed (v.33).

As he said those words Judas Iscariot stood facing him with the other eleven. He was a man deliberately chosen by Jesus knowing that Judas would sell him for thirty pieces of silver. He knew that the seeds of betrayal were there in Judas' heart as he was listening to his Master. It was from Jesus' own ranks, from the men upon whom he'd lavished such exquisite pastoral care, that hatred would explode. Why should any of us be surprised that one of our friends has turned against us? We are inconsistent people. Here is Judas betraying with a kiss the very loveliest and the best, preferring money to all he'd seen and heard in Jesus, and so the Savior would be destroyed. As Jesus spoke then here was an opportunity being extended to Judas to convict him of his sin so that he might relent and turn from his ways in repentance, for this was the first time for the Lord to mention the word 'betrayal' to his twelve friends. It was not to be; Judas became confirmed in his plans and Jesus would later say to them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (Jn. 6:70). In Jerusalem's Upper Room he would say, "Assuredly I say to you, one of you will betray me" (Matt. 26:21), but not one of the apostles would suspect Judas.

3. The chief priests and teachers of the law will condemn him to death.

Not the leaders of Israel alone; the mob would cry out, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" but the prime movers in the murder of Israel's Messiah were Israel's chief priests and the teachers of Israel's law. The men one expected to be preparing the people for the coming of the Messiah, who would be most likely to recognize him and welcome him were the ones who most hated him. They hounded him to death. If it had all been left up to Pilate Jesus would have lived to old age. It was the grey-haired elders sitting in a council and nodding their heads gravely who condemned Jesus to death on a cross. It was the high priests who said that one man must die for the people that the whole nation perish not. It was those scribes who had memorized by heart the entire Scripture who used that Scripture to invent plausible reasons for capital punishment.



Jesus had suffered many petty annoyances from them throughout his life but now nothing could satisfy them except his death. Alas for any nation when the wise men governing her know no better use for the greatest prophet God had sent than to condemn him to death.

4. The chief priest and teacher of the law will hand him over to the Gentiles.

We know that the chief priests and Sanhedrin didn't have the authority to condemn a man to the death of the cross. It was a Roman form of execution, and so here is another incredible event, Israel's chief priests, and Israel's teachers of the law hand over Israel's Messiah to Gentile dogs for them to nail him to a cross until he died. One point we want to underline is this, there was not one race alone responsible for the death of Jesus, and when the Jews cried out, "His blood be upon us and our children" then we judge that sort of comment to be typical wild bluster that a mob full of blood lust would make. It doesn't mean that because of those words every generation of Jews from that time must be held responsible for the crucifixion of the Son of God. It does not mean that at all. It was not the Jews who nailed Christ to the cross; it was not the Roman soldiers, it was my sin which did that.

End part 1