

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.'"

Part 2

5. The Gentiles will mock him, and spit on him, and flog him.

There would be this utterly degrading treatment of a prisoner by the Roman soldiers bored and far from home. We have seen in Iraq soldiers behaving in somewhat the same way with their prisoners. The three actions described get more shocking. First, they mocked Jesus; you remember they dressed him up in a purple robe, and put a reed in his hand as if it were a scepter, and set a crown of thorns on his head. Then they bowed solemnly to him in their derision and yelled with laughter at this wit. He was not fazed; he said and did nothing at all, and even dressed like a clown there was a majesty about him, so then they started to spit on him. They cleared their throats and spat on him in their contempt. The Son of God came to this world and men covered him in spit. The climax was the flogging. While sometimes scourging preceded crucifixion it was more often by itself a punishment. In the case of Jesus it was not part of the procedures for crucifying him but a separate act on the part of Pilate. He added it to Jesus' suffering, but Christ knew that he would. Pilate thought that in seeing the terrible spectacle of a man whipped in that way the chief priests would be satisfied and would let Jesus go. Sometimes men died as a result of such scourging. Our Savior had to endure, as it were, two sentences of lingering death wrought upon him, scourging and crucifixion. He must have been such a strong young man to survive the flogging and then to hang on the cross for that time before he breathed his last. That is what lay before him, Jesus told the Twelve. All the associations of Jerusalem during that Passover are grim, macabre and horrible. Betrayal, midnight arrest, plotting in the early hours of the morning, bribed accusers, darkness over the land, the rent veil in the Temple, the earthquake, and bodies appearing. There at the heart of it all is a sacrifice being made with carnage, blood, death, curse, substitution and propitiation. It is a

6. The Gentiles will kill him.

Jesus did not swoon on the cross, later to revive naturally in the cold tomb, and then to push away the great stone covering the entrance and then emerge to deceive the world by claiming to be the Resurrection and the Life. No! He was half dead from the flogging; he didn't have enough strength to carry the cross up Golgotha, and then the nails and the spear thrust into his side after the hours hanging on the cross finished him off. He was officially dead when they took him down. They wrapped him in grave clothes and they buried him before his body began to decay. They asked for a murderer to be released, and they killed the Prince of Life. In Matthew's account of this incident Jesus tells them that he is going to be actually 'crucified' (Matt. 20:19). That word must have caused the greatest chill of horror for the Twelve.

The cross has lost its dread for us. The cross has become a religious ornament, an ecclesiastical trinket, but in the first century the cross was the Roman gallows, and crucifixion was the dreaded method of public execution reserved for the worst criminals and insurrectionists. The cross was not just any kind of death, it was utterly offensive, something obscene, a barbaric form of execution of the utmost cruelty. "We are going up to Jerusalem where I am going to be crucified," Jesus plainly tells the shocked Twelve. He does not explain why. It was not the time to go into that, talking to men who were unwilling to receive even the fact of his death. So he doesn't give them a syllable of gospel when he mentions his crucifixion. No good news. No explanation. The hard bare fact is stated to be inscribed indelibly on their minds; "I am going to die." The explanation of the cross was reserved for another time when they would be more prepared for it. But that is not the end of the predictions; one more thing he prophesies

7. Three days later the Lord Jesus Christ will rise (v.34)

Matthew and Mark and Luke all record the fact that when Jesus spoke of Golgotha to his disciples he also told them of the coming resurrection. How suitable it was for him

to do that. He tells them that he is going to die, and then their response based on previous Jewish history could be to think, "Then it will all be over. Another prophet dies in Jerusalem. Jesus of Nazareth, our master, was no more successful than all the rest. When will Messiah come.?" However at the end of these predictions Jesus says, "Three days later he will rise again," (v.34). He has crushed them with six words of pain and death, and then, in one living word, he can immediately revive them if they will believe him. They cannot prevent his death, and they are as impotent to prevent his resurrection. All they can do is watch and listen and trust him. He hurts them with the first words but he heals them with the last.

It is important to emphasize this, that our Lord did not rattle these things off to the disciples like items on a shopping list. To tell them all this was the product of a struggle, the fruit of prayer. The graphic portrayals of the agony in Gethsemane make it abundantly clear that the prospect of his death was devastating and crushing. Let's not forget the man part of him being the God-man. His death rose up before him as a period of appalling terror between himself and his return to God. He is still praying in the Garden the night before the Cross with the deepest fervor that if it could be at all consistent with the purpose of redemption that he might be spared. If the Lord of glory with a conscience void of offence is appalled at the prospect of death what does the Valley of the Shadow of Death hold for you those are ungodly and refuse to bow to the Savior?

So those are the seven prophecies that Jesus makes to the Twelve, their destination is Jerusalem, his betrayal, his condemnation to death by the chief priests and teachers of the law, the handing over to the Gentiles, the mockery, spitting and flogging, the killing and the resurrection. Did it happen like that? Yes, exactly like that. Isn't that miraculous? Isn't that fact part of what the Confession calls the "heavenliness of the matter" that makes us esteem this Book as the very word of God?

Corrie ten Boom had a fearful anticipation which she wrote of in her famous book, "The Hiding Place" of her arrest and deportation by the Nazis some time before it actually

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took place. Such things occur; they have nothing to do with godliness or with biblical prophecy. I don't know the explanation for them, but there is nothing in the experience of the church over the last 2,000 years to compare to these seven prophecies of Christ. This is nothing like man's forebodings. This is predictive prophesy. Information given to us about the future. God alone knows about the future.

Examine at these predictions: "We will arrive in Jerusalem;" certainly that could be arranged fairly easily, and then the theme of betrayal seems to have amazed all eleven apostles, but Jesus might have overheard something that they had missed. Then the condemnation by the chief priests - again the disciples had come up against some opposition from them, so it was not impossible that Jesus could work out this from his observations, but then rationalizing these predictions gets complex. The handing over to the Gentiles, the mockery, spitting, flogging, and final crucifixion. - how could the meek and quiet Jesus know about this, or try to provoke it all? Finally there is the biggest stumbling block of all, *the resurrection from the dead* on the third day. How could Jesus plan that? That he would deliberately fake death by this incredible means, of submitting to flogging and to crucifixion, just stopping short of death, twisting his body maybe so that the spear thrust into his side avoided the vital organs, and so on? It would be utterly impossible, and for what reason would he make the attempt? To deceive a world? To become the greatest liar mankind has ever witnessed? Here is someone who claimed, "I am the truth." The Lord Christ had power over the winds and waves, over disease and death, and over men themselves. Why would he need to fake such a death and then pretend to rise from the dead by these elaborate and horrible means? In fact what we have in our text is a totally accurate prophecy of what actually occurred, made some weeks before it all took place as the Lord had said.

Can anyone seriously argue that Jesus fixed it all to prove that he was the Son of God? Yes, some people can believe that, and they are even reading these words.

The Swoon Theory or Resuscitation Theory

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Jesus did not really die, He only swooned, therefore the disciples saw only a revived or resuscitated Christ. Christ was nailed to a cross and suffered from shock, pain and loss of blood. But instead of actually dying, He only fainted (swooned) from exhaustion. When He was placed in the tomb, He was still alive and the disciples, mistaking Him for dead, buried Him alive. After several hours, He revived in the coolness of the tomb, arose, and departed.

The Hallucination Theory

This theory says all of Christ's post-resurrection appearances were really only supposed appearances because actually the people only had hallucinations. In this way, all the post-resurrection appearances can be dismissed.

The Impersonation Theory

This is the view that the appearances were not really Christ at all, but someone impersonating Him. This, the opponents say, is evident because in some cases they did not recognize Him at first (or at all).

The Spiritual Resurrection Theory

This is the view that Christ's resurrection was not a real physical resurrection. Proponents of this theory assert that Christ's body remained in the grave and His real resurrection was spiritual in nature. It was only told this way to illustrate the truth of spiritual resurrection.

I ask you isn't it more straightforward and realistic to believe that Jesus actually said these words? But we live in an age which will reject Jesus Christ without any examination or consideration but will solemnly believe any fantasy on the strength of a column in a tabloid. Joel Beeke was speaking to a taxi-driver in London .He had no time for Joel's gospel; he refused Joel's offer to send him some free books. Then he told Joel that his ambition was to go to Egypt to see the pyramids which, he gravely informed Dr. Beeke, were built by aliens from another galaxy. People believe in anything, but they will not trust the crucified and risen Son of God because then their

lives will have to change. We know why there is this attitude. They are being blinded by the devil. How can I persuade you to think seriously about these words of Jesus? Read them! Think about them! Remember they do not come to us as an anonymous horoscope, like the vague apocalyptic predictions of a medieval writer. The one who preached the Sermon on the Mount said these things. The Jesus of John's gospel said that this was going to happen. The man many of us worship as God, with millions like us all over the world, he is the one who said that these fearful events would happen.

You also remember that there are about 300 Messianic prophecies about the death and resurrection of Christ in the Old Testament and all of those were also fulfilled. You would have to do the same thing with all of those too, persuading yourself that Jesus fixed all the details of his life from his birthplace in Bethlehem, born by a virgin conception, and so on, detail after detail, until his ascension. He was a liar or a lunatic, you have to believe, who yet lived so godlike a life and taught such sublime truths, but he planned his life to harmonize with all of the Old Testament prophecies of rejection, suffering and death to support his false claim to be Messiah.

Of course, what unbelievers say about our text is that it was made up by some people in the early church, fifty or so years later, who actually composed these words, writing back into the life of Christ what happened, because the predictions are so accurate. These sceptics have no proofs whatsoever for that theory. It simply comes out of their humanistic opposition to anything divine and supernatural and authoritative. I would just point out to you this, that the early church were so careful in distinguishing between their own opinions and the words of Jesus. "This is our teaching," they said, "but that is what Jesus himself said." Have you ever noticed that? I am thinking of this spirit powerfully evident in the apostle Paul. At one place he is writing to the Corinthians about the place of virgins, and he says that about this subject, "I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy" (I Cor. 7:25). Then he speaks with the considerable authority of an apostle, but he cannot quote Jesus chapter and verse, as we say, and he tells us that he is giving us his own personal deliberations on the subject. How concerned he was to

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make that distinction, and never to attribute to Christ what were his own apostolic judgments. I am saying to you that that was typical of the early church. They were not a web of deceivers and a team fiction writers who brilliantly embellished certain incidents in the life of a better-than-average faith healer. The teaching and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ needed no embellishment.

Again there is an interesting statement at the end of the Council of Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15, which met to discuss the terms on which Gentiles could be admitted into all the privileges of the church. They come to certain conclusions, and they say, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements . . ." (Acts 15:28). Then they give some rules to Gentile converts to prevent them offending Jewish converts. They confidently took responsibility for their teaching. They could say, "These are our conclusion which we believe the Holy Spirit has helped us to see." They were not men who were trying to deceive people into following them by inventing words and putting them on Jesus' lips. The thought never entered their minds. Such activity would for them have been a blasphemy. Here were men and women of whom many were killed in particularly brutal ways for following Jesus. Would liars lay down their lives for their own lies?

3. THOUGH CHRIST KNEW ALL ABOUT HIS END HE WAS DETERMINED TO GO.

Here we meet a Christ with a resolution of overpowering intensity. There is danger, torture and a horrible death lying before him, yet he sets his face steadfastly to Jerusalem. Might not Jesus have gone somewhere safe until Caiaphas and Annas were dead? Didn't his own mother and Joseph flee to Egypt when he was a baby to avoid the murderers of Herod? Why didn't he go again to Egypt until the heat was off? Why was Jesus Christ determined to go to Jerusalem to face all of this? What was to happen there was obviously immensely important. This must be the greatest crisis of his life. This is the ultimate reason he left heaven and came to earth. If that were not the case surely he would have been wrong to choose death? What happened was indeed the reason he became incarnate, to give his life a ransom for many. In the eternal counsels

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of God between Father and Son, there the whip was spoken of first, and the spitting, and the crown of thorns, and the nails, and the spear, and the tomb - all spoken of in heaven. Nothing was kept hidden away from the Son of God. Long before Beelzebub thought of them, or Caesar, or the chief priests they were known to God in heaven, that they would be used against the blessed Son of God. They were all in the cup which our Lord was given to drink in Gethsemane. There was no other cup for him that that one.

When man fell God might have annihilated the whole human race. He might have done the same with an almighty decree to the very universe itself, turned it all into non-existence, and started all over again. With its sins it had forfeited all rights before God. But the Almighty did not do that; we were to live not to die! Our fall called from God such a display of his attributes, especially his love. He sent his own Son to raise us up to a glory which Adam alone could never have known even if he hadn't rebelled. Man's fall will certainly produce an outpouring of God's wrath that will make all creation tremble, but the coming of Jesus Christ will magnify the mercy and grace of God as nothing else. As Friedrich Krummacher says at the close of his first sermon in his famous book, "The Suffering Savior,

"We sinned, and were exposed to the curse. The Word that was with God, and was God, then was made flesh. The eternal Son became our brother; took upon Himself our sin, in the way of a mysterious imputation; paid our debt to the majesty of the inviolable law; covered our nakedness with His righteousness; presented us, as those in whose stead He appeared, unblameable and acceptable to the Father; excited the hallelujahs of angels at our exaltation; elevated us to a participation of His own riches, blessedness, and privileges; pitched tents of peace for us around the throne of God; and connected us with Himself by the bonds of eternal gratitude and affection. Such is the edifice which the Almighty reared upon the ruins of sins; and of which the disciples, at that time, had not the remotest idea. In the sequel, they recognized the divine method of salvation and of peace; and how happy were they, subsequently, in the knowledge of this 'great mystery of godliness" (Friedrich W. Krummacher, "The Suffering Saviour," Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 2004, pp. 9 & 10),

That was why the Lord displayed this degree of commitment to go to Jerusalem that the Twelve had never seen before. He had a frightening determination to experience all those sufferings. What courage! What heroism our brave young Savior showed. Many

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unlikely people have shown a courage in the heat of the moment. They have dived into the sea to rescue a woman attempting suicide in the cold of the winter. What bravery! But what of the courage of those seeing some grim things looming up ahead and slowly getting nearer and nearer. They have had plenty of time to turn back or evade the issue, but on they go! That is a higher courage. It is a rational deliberate facing of the future, and that is the courage Jesus showed here. He is the greatest hero this world has ever seen. At a time of utter loneliness, when not a person on earth could understand or appreciate what he was doing - in fact they found his words desolating and incredible - he chose the road to death because of his love for us.

Yet the disciples followed the Lord to Jerusalem. They followed him 'astonished', and they followed him 'afraid', Mark tells us (v.32), but they kept following him, and don't all of us know something about that? There is not a Christian who at some stages of his pilgrimage is following Jesus but not understanding at all where Jesus is taking him, following Jesus - because who else can we follow? - but following him astonished and following him afraid.

You hear people saying, "It's great to follow Jesus!" "Now I am happy all the day," they say. You hear them saying that God has a sense of humor, and so on, but there was only a sinking feeling in the stomachs of the Twelve on the road to Jerusalem. "We are going there to all of this . . . we . . .we," he had said, and by the power of his leadership he drew them unerringly after him. The disciple is not greater than his Master. What had he said to them? "If anyone will follow me let him take up his cross, deny himself and follow me." That is the call to true discipleship. The one who calls you enables you by grace to follow him. You will never walk alone. You will walk at times astonished and afraid, but never alone because we are following Jesus.