

14. Explain the seemingly contradictory answer of the father: "I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mk. 9:24)
15. How did Jesus cast the demon out?
16. What was the effect of the miracle on the eyewitnesses? (Lk. 9:43)
17. Why did the disciples fail to cast out the demon? State both of Jesus' answers. (Mt. 17:20; Mk. 9:29) Explain what He meant by each one.
18. List any Biblical passages which would tend to qualify our understanding of the phrase: "All things are possible to him that believes."
19. List other Biblical examples of demon expulsion that would aid our understanding of demons and demonic possession. Are demons merely bad habits? Must those who are demon-possessed be exceptionally wicked? What other young children have been mentioned as demon-possessed during Jesus' ministry?
20. What is learned about demons from the command Jesus gave to the demon: "Enter no more into him"? Can demons return?
21. What does the phrase "unclean spirit" indicate about the nature or the effect of demon-possession on the one possessed?
22. What is the significance of the reaction of the multitude to Jesus' signal victory over the demon? (Lk. 9:43)

## Section 44

### JESUS MAKES THIRD PASSION PREDICTION

(Parallels: Mark 9:30-32; Luke 9:43-45)

TEXT: 17:22, 23

22 And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be delivered up into the hands of men; 23 and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised up. And they were exceeding sorry.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. Why were people "gathering in Galilee"? (See comment on the textual variation from "abode in Galilee.") Is there a suggestion

here of a mass rallying of the Galileans for a popular march on Jerusalem?

- b. Why does Jesus need privacy to teach His disciples? (Cf. Mk. 9:30) Cannot He do anything He wants to, even teach His followers in the presence of great crowds? What kind of hindrance would the great audiences present to the training of the Twelve?
- c. Is there any connection between this prediction of death and the marvelling of the disciples? (Cf. Lk. 9:43)
- d. Why does Jesus preface this third passion prediction with the words "Let these words sink into your ears"? (Lk. 9:44)
- e. Why were the disciples afraid to ask him about this saying that so deeply distressed them? (Mk. 9:32)
- f. In what sense was it painfully true that the disciples at that moment in their experience did NOT believe the gospel? What, to you, is gospel?
- g. Why should such an embarrassing account be included in the story of the life of Christ? After all, the Apostles are put in a bad light by this sort of thing. Would it not have been better simply to edit the narrative, omitting the spiritual obtuseness of the very men who later were to become the pillars of the Church? What could possibly be gained by this unabashed mention of their shameful fears and misconceptions?
- h. How was "this saying concealed from them"? (Lk. 9:45) Did God hide it from them? Did Satan? Did they do it themselves? If so, how? If not, who did?
- i. Why did the prediction produce a different effect in the disciples this time, as compared to the previous one?

### PARAPHRASE AND HARMONY

Jesus and the Twelve traveled on from the district around the mount of Transfiguration, passing through Galilee. It was a time when people were gathering in Galilee, full of admiration and awe over everything He was doing. It was for this reason that He wished this journey to be kept secret, because He was trying to teach His disciples. He would say to them, "You all get this through your head: the Messiah is destined to be betrayed into the power of evil men. They will execute Him. Nevertheless, though He be killed, three days later He will rise from the dead."

Yet they did not understand. Preconceptions concealed its meaning,

making it impossible to understand and accept. Even though they were crushed with grief by it, they were afraid to ask Him about it.

### SUMMARY

The realism of Jesus demands that, in the midst of great popular enthusiasm, He continue hammering on the major, however unacceptable, theme of His ministry: His death, burial and resurrection. Though He often repeated this prophecy of ultimate victory over apparent defeat, the Twelve saw in it nothing but incomprehensible pessimism. The deep dread that what He predicted might possibly be true so numbed them that they could not bring themselves even to request further information that might have alleviated their pain, for fear that they would receive only additional confirmation of their worst unspoken fears.

### NOTES

#### III. REPETITION OF THE PASSION PREDICTION

##### A. THE PERCEPTIBLE PRESSURE OF POPULARITY

17:22 **While they abode in Galilee.** The American Standard Version revisers decided that the better reading here is "abode" (*anastrefoménon*). However, in the calculation of probabilities of scribal correction, Metzger's evaluation (*Textual Commentary*, 44) is the more sound:

It is probable that the reading *sustrefoménon* (taken to mean "were gathering together") would strike copyists as strange, and therefore would be changed into what seemed more appropriate (*anastrefoménon*, "abode"). The verb *sustréfein*, which occurs only twice in the New Testament, apparently means here "while they were crowding (around Jesus)."

The attentive reader will object (as probably did the one who made the original change in Matthew's copy) that, if the original reading were "they were gathering" instead of "abode," it would make Matthew's affirmation of the presence of crowds ("gathering" or "crowding") contradict Mark's secret journey ("And he would not

have any one know it"). To this it may be countered that even Luke (9:43) seems to contradict Mark by implying the presence of crowds at least in the general area when Jesus made the Passion Prediction. Doubtless this is but faulty harmonization. A better solution is to see that the Lord repeated this prediction several times during this same period. Resultantly, the three Gospels were never strictly parallel because they refer to different aspects of this period. The basis for this solution is as follows:

1. Mark's verbs in the imperfect tense (*éthelen, edidasken, élegen*) affirm that Jesus repeated His Passion Prediction many times during this period, so exact harmonization of the three Gospels is not necessary, even if the wording of the prophecy is comparatively similar each time. Thus, Matthew's "gathering in Galilee" is not even parallel, much less contradictory, to Mark's secret journey.
2. Luke's version is to be closely linked with the epileptic demoniac episode, hence the first of the series of Passion Predictions implied in Mark's imperfect-tense verbs.
3. Matthew's "gathering in Galilee," then, occurred near the close of this journey from the mount of Transfiguration, perhaps as Jesus and His disciples neared, or arrived at, Capernaum.
4. Another solution is the lexical significance of *sustrefoménon* given by Rocci (1784) who interprets this word in Mt. 17:22 as "to roam about together." Accordingly, he would see no crowds whatever, since the last personal reference in the context is only to Jesus and the disciples talking privately. (17:19ff) If this interpretation be adopted, Matthew and Mark would be seen as more closely parallel.

Certainly there is no ground here for accusing the Evangelists of self-contradiction and no basis for emending the text. In fact, there is even another suggestive solution which would see Matthew and Mark as parallel.

Although Rocci personally interpreted *sustrefoménon* in our text as "to roam about together," he points out that *sustréfo* is also a military term meaning "to regroup, to close ranks," i.e. pulling one's forces into a compact unit ready for action. What a picture, if this be thought of as Matthew's intention! With a materialistic coup d'état in mind, the Galileans would be closing rank around Jesus to march on Jerusalem. The Apostles and more spiritually-minded disciples would expect Him to proclaim His Messianic Kingdom there. Jesus

Himself is going to battle in Jerusalem too, but in the only way this war can be won—by dying for sinful man. So, in this Galilean staging area for “the long march” on Jerusalem, Jesus called aside His aides for a private briefing. (Mk. 9:30) Not only “would he not have any one know” about their travel through Galilee toward Capernaum (Mk. 9:30, 33), but He must repeat His incredible message only in the hearing of His disciples. (Lk. 9:43b, 44; Mk. 9:31; Mt. 17:22b, 23) Although He will make several quick trips to Jerusalem before the fated Passover (cf. Jn. 7:10; 10:22f; 11:17f), the final assault actually begins from Galilee. (Cf. Ac. 10:37-39; Lk. 9:51) But before leaving Galilee, the Apostles must understand the true purpose of this final approach to Jerusalem. So He now lays before His men for the nth time the ultimate targets to be reached, but they are not the kind of objectives that anyone else had in mind.

Although Matthew mentions nothing of great crowds, except this possible oblique reference (“while they were crowding” around Jesus), Luke (9:43) connected the first of these Passion Predictions with the liberation of the demonized epileptic boy and the consequent astonishment of the people at the majesty of God, causing them to marvel at everything He did. Therefore, enthusiastic praise and popular excitement are definitely part of the background situation to which the Lord addressed this prophecy of His death. The excitement caused by the healing of the demonized boy in the area of the mount of Transfiguration (Lk. 9:43) may have had only local repercussions. Nevertheless, if the Feast of Tabernacles was not far off (cf. Jn. 7:2), it is not impossible that crowds should begin to form for the trek to the capital. Although the Lord desired privacy (Mk. 9:30), His deliberate return into Galilee and Capernaum in particular brings to an end the “withdrawals” He had begun when He took His disciples to Phoenicia. (Mt. 14:1, 13; 15:21; 16:4f, 13) So, as they return to Galilee and potential popularity, with the hallelujahs of His recent victory ringing in their ears, they must be brought back down to reality.

Incidental proof of Jesus' long absence from Galilee during the preceding period is furnished by John, who, although he does not recount Jesus' withdrawals from Jewish population centers, nevertheless, records the challenge of Jesus' unbelieving brothers, “Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples may see the works you are doing. For no man works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.”

(Jn. 7:3ff) Ironically, this too tempts Jesus to ignore the reality of the cross and keep the popular, enthusiastic approval coming.

Accordingly, Jesus' Passion Prediction, given in these circumstances, means, "Gentlemen, do not let yourselves be taken in by the false hopes of the people nor fall for their mistaken opinions, by forgetting or doubting my declarations. In fact, it is into the hands of ignorant, mistaken men that I am to be delivered, men to whom I am related by blood, men from whom I should expect understanding and faith, loyalty and submission, gratitude and honor!"

Ironically, the basis of the astonishment at the majesty of God evident in everything He did should have furnished the Apostles reasons to accept anything Jesus said, however unreasonable or improbable it might seem. For these are proof that He is "a Teacher come from God, for no man can do these signs unless God be with Him." (Jn. 3:2) But, like Nicodemus who must argue the new birth with Jesus rather than let Him reveal it, the Apostles, too, are left distressed by His teaching. So, rather than strengthen their faith in Him, the miracles psychologically widened the breach between their belief that He is the Christ, on the one hand, and their total incomprehension of His death-predictions, on the other, because of the strident incongruency between these two ideas. The more miracles He did the more He seemed like the Messiah and God's Son, and the less likely seemed His predicted murder!

## B. THE PAINFULLY PRECISE PLAN OF HIS PASSION

**The Son of man shall be delivered up into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised up.** All generals ask men to die for the cause they represent, but Jesus talked about voluntarily dying for His enemies. Now, those disciples who expected a triumphant militaristic Kingdom in which men would be delivered into the hands of the Messianic King, must now learn that **the Son of man is about to be delivered (*méllei paradíosthai*) into the hands of men.** Who delivered Jesus over to His enemies? Judas Iscariot thought HE did, but it was God the Father who handed His own Son over to men. (Ac. 2:23) In Gethsemane Jesus actually handed Himself over! (Study Jn. 18:4-11; Mt. 26:51-54; Jn. 10:18!) While the God-fearing disciples wept bitterly around the cross, they would deem the Passion of Jesus a betrayal by a God who had let

them down at this critical moment by not intervening to rescue Him from such a fate. But the Father had not betrayed them. He handed over His only Son, yes, but not to have done so would have been a betrayal of the entire human race. This is what it means to believe that "God so loved the world that He GAVE His only Son!"

### C. THEIR PERCEPTION PREVENTED BY PERSISTENT PREJUDICE

As we evaluate His planning from our vantage point, we appreciate the precision of His time-schedule. His divine foreknowledge, like all prophecies, is more impressive after the fulfillment. But His disciples were not unimpressed: they were appalled!

1. **They were exceedingly sorry** (*elupéthesan sfódra*), deeply grieved. Although they found no place in their mental framework for the literal interpretation of His words, His persisting in repeating them (Mk. 9:31) hurt them deeply. Whereas they had been shocked before, and indignant that anyone should think of plotting His death (Mt. 16:21ff), now they are crushed with disappointment. Not even the promise of His resurrection can transform this grief into hope. This sorrow proves how unsympathetic they yet were with Jesus' intentions, and proves that they too were yet unbelieving. (Study 11:6 and notes.)
2. "They did not understand this saying and it was concealed from them, that they should not perceive it." (Mk. 9:32a; Lk. 9:45a) Since its obvious, literal sense was totally unacceptable to them, and since they could not decipher any other meaning, they were as unable to understand it as if someone were trying to hide its meaning from them. How could the Messiah they believed Him to be, actually permit His enemies to slay Him when He possessed the supernatural power to annihilate them, assert His God-given right and so prevent such an injustice?
3. "And they were afraid to ask him about this saying," (Mk. 9:32b; Lk. 9:45b) Two motives:
  - a. Fear to be reproved by Jesus for their reluctance to accept it at face value, as Peter had been rebuked. (16:22f)
  - b. Fear to face the horrible truth, hoping that ignoring it would make it go away. This is based on the horrifying possibility that He really intended to go through with every appalling

bit of it.

So they preferred to remain ignorant. And His solitude became complete. (Cf. note on Mt. 11:27)

### FACT QUESTIONS

1. By what route did Jesus return from the preceding incident to Capernaum? (Cf. Mk. 9:20) Where had He been? How do we know Capernaum was His immediate destination?
2. List several reasons why Jesus would have desired anonymity at this time.
3. Who was "gathering in Galilee," according to the better manuscript evidence for Mt. 17:22?
4. Why does Jesus refer to Himself as "the Son of man"? What does this title mean?
5. On what other occasions had Jesus predicted His own untimely death and bodily resurrection?
6. Indicate several motives for His repeating these predictions here.
7. List several factors which collaborated in causing the disciples to fail to understand His remarks about His death. (Cf. Mk. 9:32; Lk. 9:45)
8. Explain their great distress. Explain how "they were exceeding sorry."
9. What reason would explain why they were afraid to ask Him for further explanation? (Cf. Mk. 9:32; Lk. 9:45)

### Section 45

### JESUS QUIZZES PETER ABOUT TEMPLE TAXES

TEXT: 17:24-27

24 And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received the half-shekel came to Peter, and said, Doth not your teacher pay the half-shekel? 25 He saith, Yea. And when he came into the house, Jesus spake first to him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? the kings of the earth, from whom do they receive toll or tribute? from their sons, or from strangers? 26 And when he said, From strangers,