

Mark 14:53-72
November 7, 2010
Lynchburg, Virginia

EXHORDIUM

As we have been making our way through the book of Mark, we see the ever increasing revelation of who Jesus is. He is Lord of Heaven and Earth. While we tend to make the mistake that Jesus is only Lord of Heaven, the disciples struggle with making the mistake that He is only Lord of Earth. We see this clearly in this chapter as the drama unfolds surrounding Christ's arrest, trial and crucifixion.

The disciples' hopes for Jesus are crushed and their faith in Him instantly evaporates even while their love for Him remains. Since they never do understand the Resurrection until after it happens, perhaps they are having the same thoughts of Jesus's accusers, that Jesus is confused and does not even know who He is.

Since they fully expected Him to rule in Jerusalem, it makes sense that they see it all slipping away at His arrest. Who could blame them?

In this section, we see Mark's literary genius once again. The enemies of Christ are upon Him seeking to do evil. But right next to them is Christ's disciples, who think much like Christ's enemies. Mark and Jesus is calling upon us to identify with the way Jesus's disciples are continually confused and make wrong choices. We are like the disciples and in order for us to choose to do what is right, we must humble ourselves and serve Jesus and His people.

On this side of Calvary, the Resurrection, The Ascension and Pentecost, we should understand what Mark has been going to great lengths to teach us. Jesus is Lord, not just of the Earth, but also of Heaven. He is not merely a pie in the sky Lord, governing angels and departed saints. Of course, everybody does His will up there. He rules the Earth. But we become disillusioned here as we look around and see so much sin and evil. Even in Christ's Church, there are many reasons to be discouraged. It has been 2000 years and many of the Lord's disciples still do not understand what He is doing in the Earth. But we must remember that His ways are different than our ways. He is doing a great work, here on Earth. And the

fact that He is Lord of Heaven should give us encouragement. He knows what is going on. He knows what He is doing. He is the I AM, all powerful, all knowing God. We can trust Him to do His work here as well as there, not growing weak and discouraged, like Peter.

EXEGESIS

53 And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes.

The chief priests, elders and scribes represent the people. They especially represent the people of power. They do not represent the common people, the people who responded to Jesus. However, they are the representatives of Israel and because of their failure, judgment falls upon the nation.

54 And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.

Again, we have a story interspersed with the outright rebellion of the leaders of Israel contrasted to the confusion and failures of Jesus's disciples. Peter fails miserably in this story but his failure is not the same as the rebellion of the leaders of Israel. Peter finds a place of forgiveness and restoration. The chief priests, elders and scribes do not.

All men fail but what they do with that failure is very important. Wicked men cover it up, make excuses for it, deny it and are judged.. Righteous men confess, repent and are forgiven and restored.

55 And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none. 56 For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together.

It seems that the chief priests and council, seeking to do evil to Jesus and willing to suborn witnesses to that effect, still had scruples about doing all of their wickedness in the correct manner. The law required two or three witnesses to agree and although they were heartily willing to get false witnesses, it was important for the false witnesses to agree.

Before we scoff at their wickedness, we would do well to remember our own hearts who sometimes attempt to justify wicked deeds because we followed the letter of the law in doing them.

57 And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, 58 We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. 59 But neither so did their witness agree together.

This seems to be what Jesus said. In John, he said, Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. In Matthew he said that not one stone would be left upon another. If this temple that took 46 year to build, could be destroyed but rebuilt in three days, no doubt it had to be remade without hands. There is a lot of inference going on. It appears that they could accuse Jesus of causing the sort of insurrection that would lead to outright war and the destruction of the Temple. It also appears that Jesus has a huge God complex. Only God could do what Jesus was seemingly claiming was going to be done.

They actually misunderstood what Jesus was saying. In one instance, He was talking about the destruction of His physical body. In the other instance, He was speaking about the actual destruction of the Temple.

So, because they had to piece together the story to get it to make sense, it makes sense that their pieced together story was not consistent. It seemed like he was saying is not the same as he said.

60 And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? 61 But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?

Who is the High Priest? Is it not Jesus? He does not give answer for Himself since God has spoken about Him. But when pushed, Jesus gives a clear answer. The high priest asks Jesus if He is the Son of God. Jesus's answer is explicit and there is no more need of witnesses to try to condemn Jesus. He makes the claim that they are looking for.

This accusation from Caiphas to Jesus should be contrasted with the accusations aimed at Peter. Jesus is asked, “Do you claim to come from God? Are you His Son?” Jesus knew that the true answer meant certain death. And yet Jesus is a faithful witness. He answers truthfully.

Peter, on the other hand, denies knowing the Lord.

62 And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Jesus quotes from Daniel, Dan 7:13-14 13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

The Son of Man comes after the four great kingdoms to give the kingdom to the Saints to rule forever and ever. Incidentally, the coming in the clouds here is the Son coming to the Ancient of Days. We would assume this is the Ascension and rule of Jesus Christ over the nations.

63 Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? 64 Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death. 65 And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophecy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

The blasphemy was Jesus claiming to be the Son of God. He does so in a peculiar form. He says, ego, emi. I AM. This is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew, I AM. Jesus was claiming to be both the Son of God and Yahweh.

The Jews are often enraged to wickedness in the guise of righteous zeal. If Jesus was who He said He was, He was to be worshipped. But if was a liar, hitting and spitting upon Him were not appropriate responses. Justice can be rendered in a dignified fashion. These Jews reveal their nature even when they are claiming to be righteous.

66 And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: 67 And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. 68 But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.

Peter's denial are famous and we are sometimes shocked that the great apostle would fail so miserably. I grant that the Holy Spirit had not yet come in all His glorious power. There was certainly a new and wonderful outpouring at Pentecost and it gave the apostles and disciples a renewed zeal. But the Lord Jesus Himself had already breathed the Spirit on to the Apostles. They were not devoid of the Spirit of God. This makes Peter's denials all the more shocking. Some act as if the Apostles were not regenerated until after Pentecost but I would not hold to that. They were faithful men and women and yet they sinned and failed miserably.

Perhaps the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost caused them to realize that they could not accomplish God's goals on their own strength. But even after Pentecost, we find disciples and apostles failing and sinning miserably. So, it should be a reminder to us that we must continually walk in the Spirit of God. As soon as we veer off into our own strength or wisdom, we will no doubt fail.

Peter is struggling mightily here. He is no doubt wondering why they have even got to this point. Just a few hours ago he was willing to die with Jesus but now that Jesus is taken away from him and he is all alone, he has no will to stand up for Christ.

You would think the cock crowing here would jog his memory of Jesus's words but it doesn't. He is too lost in misery and hopelessness. Jesus confessed the truth to the High Priest who had the power to condemn Him. Peter is afraid to confess his faith to a lowly maid.

69 And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. 70 And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaeen, and thy speech agreeth thereto. 71 But he began

**to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak.
72 And the second time the cock crew.**

Peter denies he knows Jesus to a servant girl. They recognize his accent and accuse him again but Jesus begins to curse and swear.

Can you imagine the weight of guilt that Peter heaped upon himself? What might he have said? You were with them. No, I wasn't. Yes, I recognize your accent. You are one of them. I don't know Him. I swear to God, I don't know what the hell you are talking about.

And just at that moment, when Peter was most vehement about his denial of knowing Jesus, a cock crew. And it all came crashing down on him.

And Peter wept.

EXHORTATION

And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

Know thyself. Many religious men have made this statement. We should know God and we should know ourselves. We realize that it is impossible to fully know both. Full knowledge like that would make us God and we never will be God. But we should know who God is, what He is doing in the big picture, the way He has revealed Himself as Father, what requirements He calls us to.

We should also know ourselves, that we are prone to failure. We have big ideas, big aspirations, make great resolutions, only to fail. I don't say this to beat you up. It is simply fallen human nature. Even fallen human nature that is filled with God's Spirit.

It is important for us to be honest about this, not so that we quit making big ideas, big aspirations, and great resolutions. We should not quit doing that. Our problem is not that we think too big but that we think too big for ourselves. How can we ever think too big for God? Our problem is that we tend to think about what WE are going to do, and how WE are going to accomplish great things. And the emphasized WE is our bit of the glory

that intend to steal from God. But that is still thinking like Christ's enemies, or at best, His friends prior to Pentecost.

We should want God or even other saints to get the glory. We should acknowledge that left to ourselves, we will most surely mess up and fail. But given fully to God, we will leave the results, good or bad, up to Him and we will not seek to take His glory or exalt ourselves.

Honestly evaluating your own heart is tricky but if you stop looking at your own heart so much it gets easier. Let us begin to learn to look at Christ, seeking His glory. Let us look towards the good of other, seeking to exalt them. Then our own pretensions and failures won't even matter. And the way this all works, in God's economy, is that if you will humble yourself, even your own view of yourself, then God will highly exalt you.