

FACE LIKE FLINT

Mark 10:32-34

INTRODUCTION

TEXT: Mark 10:32–34 (ESV)

³² *And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him,*

³³ *saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles.*

³⁴ *And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.”*

OBSERVATIONS OF THE TEXT (IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER)

Jerusalem at Passover is the destination

Most of the ministry and life of Jesus takes place in the Northern region of Israel, around the sea of Galilee. But, from time to time, for various festivals, Jesus would travel to Jerusalem where the temple is located. At this time, the trip to Jerusalem creates nervous anxiety because, after three years of ministry, the chief priests and scribes who rule the Jews have coalesced in their opinion of Jesus. He must be eliminated. He must be destroyed. He has become very popular among the Jewish people, but He is not one of them. They reject any claim made of Him that He is from God, therefore, He spells trouble for the nation that the Romans will soon tamp down. If Jesus can be eliminated, the problem will be eliminated. But priests and scribes cannot send armies to Galilee to arrest Him, because they don't have armies –and in the Galilee, His people will likely rally and protect Him. But in Jerusalem, there are many ways to scheme against Jesus.

The disciples and the apostles have little interest in entering into that fray, however, anticipation and excitement over the possibility of Jesus taking over occupies their minds also. In any case, to travel to Jerusalem at this time is a fearful undertaking.

Jesus is leading them.

The text spells out that Jesus was walking in front of the others, leading them along. He is fearless walking into danger. The disciples are generally “amazed,” and “afraid,” (the text says). He appears to them to be fearless in the face of possible danger. Had they understood properly what He had told them –and what He would soon tell them—they would be even more amazed. He knew where He was going and what awaited Him. For Him, suffering was not a possibility but a certainty. Jesus' understanding is spelled out in the prophesy of the Messiah in Isaiah 50 that says:

I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. But the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. –Isaiah 50:6-7

He expected to be struck, have his beard pulled from his face, to be spit upon and disgraced –but He set His face like flint. He was walking right into a buzz-saw without blinking.

Jesus has given a specific prophesy to just the Twelve Apostles.

At some point on the journey, Jesus pulled the 12 close around Him, separate from others who may have been following along, and gave them a very specific prophesy of what to expect when they arrived in Jerusalem.

It went like this. Referring to Himself as the “Son of Man,” Jesus listed 7 indignities that He would face:

1. Delivered to chief priests and scribes

Someone was going to hand Him over to the chief priests and scribes. This hints at betrayal. The chief priest and scribes do not capture Him of their own initiative, rather He is handed over. This will be the shocking betrayal that will come from one of the twelve listening to Him at that moment.

2. Condemned to death

Although Jesus is innocent of all crime, He will be condemned to death by the rulers of the Jews. They would hold a trial and hear false accusations, and declare that He must die. But they had no power to put Him to death because they were ruled by the Romans.

3. Handed over to the Gentiles

He would be handed over to the Gentiles. This is the second betrayal that Jesus would face. The first would be when one of His inner circle handed Him over to the chief priests and scribes. The second is here, where His own people, God’s chosen Israel, kicks Him out of their nation and hands Him over to the Romans. This would be akin to Jews of Germany, in WW2, handing over a rabbi to the Nazis. As John wrote in His gospel, He came to His own and His own did not receive Him. As Jesus taught in a parable, the workers in the vineyard, upon seeing the owner’s Son approach, determined to cast Him out and kill Him.

4. Gentiles mocked Him

The indignities that the Romans did to Jesus are well documented. They mocked Him in many ways; calling Him king and beating Him, putting a crown of thorns on His head, etc.

5. Gentiles spit on Him

The great insult of spitting on Him and in His face.

6. Gentiles flogged Him

Of course, Pilate, in order to appease the angry mob led by the chief priests, agreed to scourge Jesus, or to “flog” Him (as the ESV says). This is the dastardly practice of beating a man with a leather whip imbedded with glass and stones in order to rip the skin from His back while causing great pain.

7. Gentiles killed Him

And of course, Jesus was finally stripped of His clothing and nailed, hands and feet, to a cross, where He died. This would fulfill the prophesy of Isaiah that says:

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. —Isaiah 53:4-6

This suffering was not purposeless nor futile. It was necessary for the forgiveness of sins of Adam's sinful race. We were guilty of sin, He was punished. The innocent One, who had done no wrong, became the "Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

Three days later, Son of man rises again.

Last of all, the Son of Man would rise from the dead. Death was not the end of Jesus. The grave was not able to hold him. The redemption, the salvation of mankind was accomplished in the body of Jesus. His body died to pay for sins. All mankind can have their sins forgiven because of His death. New life, life eternal, life without pain or sin was accomplished when Jesus rose from the dead. The Bible says that Jesus died in our place. He was our substitute. In Him, we too died. He rose from the dead as our representative. We too can rise.

And so, in this prophesy, Jesus reveals the work that lies ahead of Him as He heads to Jerusalem. His face is set like flint. He must do this work. His apostles, on the other hand, do not seem to understand nor take seriously what He says. When all these prophesies take place, they will be thrown off course. It will not be until the resurrection that they will remember that all this was told to them beforehand as a proof to them –so that they could relay this proof to the world.

Take-Aways

What would Jesus have us learn from this passage of Scripture? Let me offer three answers to that question:

1. We must understand the importance of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The ultimate purpose of the ministry of Jesus was not His healings, miracles, nor His teachings. Those all are important for us to understand what He was doing, but there is no salvation in healings, nor miracles, nor teachings. The salvation was won by His offering Himself at the cross and dying. Eternal life was won by Him raising a human body, transforming it from mortal to immortal.

The tendency of culture is to turn this equation around and say that Jesus is great because of His wise teachings and good deeds. But His death on the cross? That is a baffling mystery. At best it is shame but a good example of how to suffer with courage. But that tendency is mistaken. Jesus could have sent someone else to teach what He taught. He had often sent prophets to do the very thing. He could have sent someone to do miraculous things, as He had sent Moses and Elijah and Elisha in the past. But Moses was not the incarnate, sinless Son of God. He could not connect God and man by becoming a perfect man and dying for our sins. He was a sinner like all of us.

Only Jesus could come from heaven. Only Jesus could be God, come to live in this beautiful, painful world that He made. Only Jesus could offer His human body as a sacrifice to

satisfy the anger of God at Adam's race. Only Jesus, being the Holy One, could rise from the dead.

Salvation, therefore, is not a work of yours or mine –it is a work of God. You do not attain salvation by your chaste behavior nor your goodness. You attain salvation by placing your life in the hands of Jesus and trusting Him. Only He can save. Only He can forgive your sins. Only He can give you eternal life. Only He can rescue you from the Judgement.

What must you do? Surrender to Him. You must, as an act of your will, lay down your life and follow. You must look for Him and receive Him as your only guide and leader, as your God.

2. We must trust His future prophecies yet to be fulfilled.

Jesus came in fulfillment of many prophecies in the Old Testament. Then, when He walked among men, He told His own disciples specific prophecies, like the ones in our passage today, and they all came true. With this in mind, what about the prophecies God made in the Bible that have yet to come true? When we complete Mark's gospel in the Fall, we will see the prophecies Jesus gives of His return. These prophecies that He gives to us are as certain to happen as the prophecies He declared to the Apostles on the way to Jerusalem.

There will be tribulation and difficulties coming to this earth unlike any that have happened before. There will be a man of lawlessness rising up to deceive many. There will be a gospel outpouring to all the nations. We will be hated by all nations on account of His name. The end will come. He will return in the clouds. These things will happen, as He has said, in the order that He has revealed in the Bible. What's more, we may be very close to these events. People don't like to believe that the end might be near. To say, "The end is near," sounds like a religious cliché—every age has people who say this, and they have all been wrong. True, but the end might still be very near. Jesus promised it would come, and said it would come at a day and an hour that you do not expect. Are you ready? Will you stand in the days of tribulation?

3. We must turn our face towards suffering and difficulties to come, confident in our God.

We began 2020 with a series on how to maintain our sanity in a deranged world. Little did we know that weeks later the entire world would voluntarily destroy its economy because of the threat of a Chinese virus. And since then, things have continued to grow crazier and crazier. Internal American politics is in an uproar in every state. People are protesting in state capitals, and in Minneapolis, people are burning down the city in a wrong-headed reaction to an apparent murder of a black man. China, it turns out, really is at war with us, using finances and technology to infiltrate our economy, while invading our universities and stealing all our learning. At the same time, they are taking over Hong Kong and oppressing millions. Then there is our own presidential elections and political fighting and division on social media and everywhere else. On top of everything else, there are Asian murder hornets on the way!

Can I tell you something? The world is changing faster and faster. The amount of change in nations and peoples that we have seen in my lifetime are greater than the world has seen in all the centuries before. And guess what? You ain't seen nothing yet. We are living in remarkable times. Much of that is good, but much is not. In your lifetime you will live through things that our grandparents would not have imagined.

What should our reaction be? I'll tell you what it shouldn't be: Fear and fighting for safety. Trouble always comes. Trouble will come. But God has placed you in your life, with the

trouble you have, and the trouble that is to come to you and the world. He has not promised to take away your trouble, but to overcome it, and to walk with you through it.

Jesus set His face like flint and marched forward into the fray. But He did not go alone. His apostles and other disciples were right behind Him. He didn't send them away. He led them right into the mouth of the monster. And after He rose from the dead, He sent them to the nations, as sheep among wolves. To be a disciple of Jesus is to face the suffering the future may bring, confident that God has already planned out our steps, and has the outcome in His hand. This is not a time to shrink back. As God's people it is our time to shine. If things get worse in the world, then we are to shine all the more. Safety is not our issue. Our safety is God's business. We march behind Him into the fray.

In the book of Daniel, in chapter 11 and 12, God describes a group of faithful people who will be there at the end of time. They are ones, God says, that have insight. These ones are talked about with prophecies of the anti-Christ and the great tribulation and abomination of desolation. These are faithful ones who are there at the end. He describes them like this:

He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action. –Daniel 11:32

And in the New American Standard:

The people who know their God will display strength and take action. –Daniel 11:32

In the end, who stands? Those who know their God! And what do the people who know their God do? They display strength. But they don't just stand there. They take action!

Christian brothers and sisters, do not fear the troubles that are coming on the earth. You are following the Savior. He will lead you. Be ready to display strength, and to act. We are here to do good without fear. Jesus will lead us into suffering at times. He will! Display strength! Take action!

Daniel 11:32 (NAS): **the people who know their God will display strength and take action.**