

## ALONE WITH JESUS (Mk. 4:10,11)

One of the most productive activities of the Christian is to diligently and earnestly study the Word of God. This was how the Saviour taught His disciples. Following His ministry with the multitudes by the shores of the Sea of Galilee, He took them 'to the one side', **Mk. 4:10** And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. **11** And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all *these* things are done in parables: **12** That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and *their* sins should be forgiven them. **13** And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables? It was the responsibility of the disciples to study at the feet of Jesus to understand what was happening around them.

There has been a judgment brought upon the people of Galilee, and of Israel, ... and like any judgment, this judgment had consequences. Here was the problem. ... They were waiting for a Messiah, however, the Messiah was standing in front of them and they refused to acknowledge and accept Him as such. ... They were attracted to Him. They came from near and far. They filled the synagogue to hear Him. They crowded round the house and pushed their way in. They brought people to Him suffering from all types of illnesses, and He healed them. Even the demon-possessed were miraculously set free. ... All the people who ever came near Him were captivated by His presence, **We** never saw it on this fashion (Mk. 2:11), they declared.

And they listened to what He was saying, and they gave the correct analysis, **Jn. 7:46** Never man spake like this man. ... Sadly, though, what they heard was not penetrating their hearts! They were blind to recognising Who Jesus truly was and, they would not receive Him as their Messiah, and they brought a judgment upon themselves. *That* judgment was afterwards privately explained by Jesus to His disciples, when He had retreated to the quiet place, - **11** And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all *these* things are done in parables: **12** That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and *their* sins should be forgiven them. He used Old Testament Scriptures to explain what was happening. That is why we need to know our Old Testament when we come to study the New.

Jesus had been preaching the Gospel throughout the countryside, - preaching the Gospel was at the centre of His ministry, **1:14** Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. His healing ministry was not the priority ...

The priority was the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the people of Galilee, Judea, and throughout the land of Israel for the angel had announced prior to His birth, His Name shall be called Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins (Mt. 1:21) ... *That* was what drove Jesus in His proclamation of the Good News of God's saving grace ... to see His people saved. ... But they would not *see* it!

It is like telling people today about Jesus, and how He died on a cross to save them from their sins. They say to you, "Yes, we believe that" ... but it is quite obvious they don't accept it because if they did Jesus would be their Saviour and Lord. Instead, they give Him little thought, except when the hard times in life come along. What they believe about Him is shrouded in their self-conceived imaginations ... and that is how these people were in Galilee. ... And that why it is so important to study the Word of God, as we are doing, because we see that Jesus had to contend with an uninterested people ... similar to today! Consequently, it was not given to them to know [the mystery of the kingdom of God](#) and so, Jesus judged them by speaking in parables they would not understand.

In the Old Testament, that was how God sometimes spoke ... in parables. When He called Isaiah to be a prophet He first of all told him, [Is. 6:9](#) Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. [10](#) Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. ... Isaiah, you are to go out to those people and give them a message they will neither listen to nor understand. ... They will not understand it because I will judge them with the sin of unbelief and rejection ... lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed! They had 'crossed the line' of God's mercy, He had 'shut the door', and they would only hear Jesus speaking in parables they couldn't understand because He wasn't going to explain them! [Mk. 4:34](#) But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

This was a turning point in Christ's ministry, - when He would speak words the crowds would not understand. When *Matthew* writes about the sower and the seed, he is writing mainly to a Jewish readership, and he makes the point that Jesus regularly referred to the Old Testament. In Mt. 13 we read, [34](#) All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: [35](#) That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from

the foundation of the world. ... That is a reference to Ps. 78:2, *I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings [hidden judgments] of old.* ... To any of the disciples who may have been thinking, “Jesus, why don’t you speak to the people so they will be able to understand what you are saying”, Jesus was telling His disciples, “No, the reason I’m speaking in parables is so that they *don’t* understand ... and that is God’s judgment upon them!”

Let’s think about that ... Let’s apply that model to our present day ... No matter how much you talk to the unsaved, they don’t understand. Even the loveliest people ... you explain to them the Gospel as simply and as sincerely as you possibly can ... but they do not see it. You might think you are getting somewhere with them, and then when they open their mouths, you see how much of a mystery it continues to be with them. ... It is as if you are speaking in a foreign language! What did Jesus do though? Did He change the message? No, He didn’t. Did He change His approach and informalise His message? No, He kept it the same. ... And what was the consequence? The consequence was that the people continued in their unbelief.

But, did He not have a responsibility to *make* them believe? ... Let’s be very clear, God makes no one to believe! A person comes to believe as the consequence of the Holy Spirit in an extraordinary way demonstrating to them the truth of the Gospel. The Holy Spirit then follows up by showing them their sinful and hopeless condition before God. Such is the measure to which their eyes are opened that they become so overwhelmed by their deep and profound conviction of sin that they *must* turn to Christ and be saved. ... God’s salvation is a work of His free grace! ... Judgment, therefore, falls upon those who reject that grace ... and the people in Galilee who listened to Jesus but rejected Him as Messiah came under His judgment so that He would no longer speak to them plainly, but in parables.

Jesus was also reminding His disciples (Mt. 13:10ff.) of how parables in the Old Testament were associated with judgment. For example, they would have remembered how the prophet Nathan told King David a parable about a rich man who stole a poor neighbour’s sheep (II Sam. 12) ... It exposed David’s adulterous affair with Bathsheba, and God’s judgment followed, with the death of their baby. Similarly, judgment followed when Gideon’s son Jotham told a parable to the men of Shechem because they had chosen the murderous Abimelech to be their king (Judges 9). Ezekiel 17 is another example of a parable announcing judgment, and also Is. 5 and 6.

So, here in Mk. 4, when Jesus began to speak in parables, He was warning that judgment was coming on Israel for their rejection of Him. They had refused to acknowledge the Son of God, *God ... the jealous God* (Ex. 20:5), and He would not hold them guiltless (Ex. 20:7) ... They were an offensive people upon whom His judgment would inevitably fall.

Recently, we studied the Mosaic Covenant ... that was the covenant these people in Jesus' day were familiar with, and living under. In that Covenant, - also known as the Sinai Covenant, - it comes to a climax in Dt. 28 where we read, <sup>1</sup> And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe *and* to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: <sup>2</sup> And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. ... The great promises continue until verse fifteen, and then it takes a different strain, But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee ... and there then follows a whole litany of judgments that will befall the nation. ... **Is. 46:11** yea, I have spoken *it*, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed *it*, I will also do it.

As we have been saying in our studies, the Mosaic Covenant was a conditional covenant, that is to say, it was dependent on both signatories keeping the agreement. If either signatory was in breech, the agreement was annulled. ... If Israel broke the covenant, the covenant was finished ... And Israel *did* break the covenant, and as far as God was concerned, the covenant was ended ... and the nation of Israel came under judgment. This judgment was further exacerbated by the people's rejection of Jesus ... the people whom He came to save. ... Nothing had changed since the time of Moses to the time of Jesus ... The people of God, - the nation of Israel, - was under God's condemnation ... and that was why He sent His Son to be their Saviour.

In the Law of Moses, the Covenant stipulated judgment ... **Dt. 28:45** Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee ... And that is what happened when one after another, - the Babylonians, the Medo-Persians, the Greeks ... and then during the time of Jesus, the Romans, - conquered the people of God, <sup>46</sup> And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever. <sup>47</sup> Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God

with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all *things*; **48** Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all *things*: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee. **49** The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, *as swift* as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand [*cf. Hab. 1:6* For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, *that* bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces *that are* not theirs. **7** They *are* terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves. **8** Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle *that* hasteth to eat] ... **62** And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude; because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the LORD thy God. **63** And it shall come to pass, *that* as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. **64** And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, *even* wood and stone. **65** And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: **66** And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life. ... They were conquered as a direct judgment for rejecting God ... but still, they hadn't learned for when Jesus came, they continued to reject God's Son ... and they are even rejecting Him to this very day!

The next chapter (Dt. 29) reminds them of God's goodness in taking them out of the bondage of Egypt ... and how they treated Him with their gripings and their groanings ... and yet He hadn't forgotten the great unconditional covenant He had made to the fathers of their nation, **13** That he may establish thee to day for a people unto himself, and *that* he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. ... You see, the people whom Jesus had been speaking to, by the side of the Sea of Galilee, would not acknowledge Him to be their Messiah, - yes, they came to Him and recognised Him as a miracle-worker because it suited their needs, but they would not accept Him as their Messiah, sent from God. Yet, God, - on the basis of His eternal and unconditional covenant with Abram, - had promised over thirteen hundred years earlier, **Dt. 30:1** And it shall come to pass, [*notice ... there is no 'if'!*] when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call *them* to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee, **2** And shalt

return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; <sup>3</sup> That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee. <sup>4</sup> If *any* of thine be driven out unto the outmost *parts* of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: <sup>5</sup> And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. [*No ... there is no 'if'!*]

Yes, of course, the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, and the Greeks had ransacked their city ... but they still had their temple, even though it was in ruins ... and the Jews to whom Jesus was speaking would not even countenance a time when their temple would no longer stand. They believed their temple would stand for ever ... Not so, said Jesus. Sitting outside the temple with His disciples He prophesied, **Mk. 13:2** Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. ... Why not? What was going to happen? He then foretold the dawning of a terrible event in their history ... an event that was as the ultimate consequence of their rejection of Him, **Lk. 21:20** And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. <sup>21</sup> Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. ... *Run!* ... <sup>22</sup> For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. ... And indeed, they were surrounded by the armies of the Roman General Titus in 70AD, and their beloved temple was torn down. All that is left of it is its western wall, - Titus allowed it to remain as a reminder to the people of Israel his god was mightier than their God! The people were scattered ... Some of them went to the fortress of Masada, from which many, - rather than be caught by the armies of Titus, - jumped off the cliffs to their death. Others were scattered ultimately throughout all the nations.

Jesus said, **Lk. 21:22** For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. What vengeance was He speaking about? It was the judgment of God upon the nation of Israel since when they broke the covenant of Moses, it came to its damning conclusion with their rejection of the Saviour ... **Is. 63:3** I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people *there was* none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. <sup>4</sup> For the day of vengeance *is* in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. <sup>5</sup> And I looked, and *there was* none to help; and I wondered that *there was* none to uphold:

therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. <sup>6</sup> And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.

Does that mean Jesus was finished with them? Was there any point in Christ going any further? He had started to speak to them ... but they would not understand, so why continue? ... While Jesus was sitting outside the temple with His disciples, - just a few hours before He would be arrested, - He prophesied about an event that would take place some forty years into the future, **Lk. 21:23** But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. <sup>24</sup> And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations ... and that is exactly what happened to them! ... That was what God had foretold in Dt. 28:64, And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other, - that was His conditions under the Mosaic Covenant. However, under the New Covenant (Jer. 31-33), - based upon His covenant with Abram, - He promised, **Dt. 30:5** And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it ... and that was what Jesus confirmed also, **Lk. 21:24** And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. ... ‘until’ ... It is only a simple word, and yet how important! ... Many miss it *but it is there!!* ... **Mt. 23:37** O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, *thou* that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under *her* wings, and ye would not! <sup>38</sup> Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. <sup>39</sup> For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord ... Rom. 11:25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. <sup>26</sup> And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: <sup>27</sup> For this *is* my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. <sup>28</sup> As concerning the gospel, *they are* enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, *they are* beloved for the fathers' sakes.

It must have broken the heart of Jesus as He watched His beloved people turn their backs on Him. As in days gone by, His Father had been so good to them ... but they had turned their backs on Him, as they were turning their backs on Him just now. It must have been agonising for the Saviour as He saw these people walking towards a terrible judgment ... a judgment they could have avoided if they would have accepted Him.

We are talking about Israel here ... but we could so easily turn it round to consider all the opportunities our nation has been blessed with, but it also has turned away ... It has changed its laws that used to be built upon God's Law. As a nation, we are turning further away from Him ... and we too are ripe for His judgment!

But we could even also apply it 'closer to home' ... into our own hearts. How often has God presented the Gospel and its hearers have refused to listen! Like the Jews in Jesus' day, they have taken from Him but given Him nothing in return ... ripe for judgment! There is not a one who has heard the Gospel and rejected it that can blame God for the eternity they will end up in! You see, Jesus stopped speaking to these Jews who would not listen! ... What a judgment when you can still listen to the Gospel with your ears and yet you no longer hear it in your heart! ... That is what was happening to these people. They had come under God's condemnation.

We have covered a lot of ground ... and yet we are not moving very far through the Gospel of Mark. That is how it ought to be though. God has much to say to us in these days, and we are often in so much of a hurry we don't take the time to listen ... but we *need* to listen! If we don't listen to God's Word and take it in, we shall be no better than the people to whom Jesus began speaking in parables! ... And they fell under His judgment!!

We need to heed the Word and study it, **II Tim. 2:15** Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. It means to search the Scriptures (Jn. 5:39). They are a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path (Ps. 119:105). ... These people in Mark 4 were oblivious to the significance of the times in which they were living, - *Jesus was with them!* ... I believe we are also living in times of great significance because the signs in God's Word indicate He is coming back soon again to be with His people, - Jew and Gentile, redeemed and saved by His precious blood, **Titus 2:13** Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

These are just a couple of verses, but I trust we realise and appreciate how precious they were to those He called His disciples, **10** And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. **11** And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God. ... May the Lord bless His Word and encourage His people through its study. Amen.