

Lesson 3

Proper 16

The Holy Gospel: Mark 7:1–13

34. Notes about the Sanhedrin

Mark 6 ended with a summary description of Jesus' "year of popularity" in Galilee (vv. 53–56). Now Mark moves to the time of persecution at the hands of the Sanhedrin and their representatives.

35. What was the obvious purpose for which the Pharisees and their scribes had come from Jerusalem? What was their complaint to Jesus regarding His disciples?

"The tradition of the elders" made its way later into the Talmud and the Midrashim. This tradition included the *haggadah*, exegetical commentary on books of the Old Testament, and the *halachah*, the collective body of law regulating not only religious, but also day-to-day life. The *halachah* consisted of 613 additional rules (*mitzvōt*, or "commandments"); it was thought that following these doable rules would ensure the keeping of the Law. The ceremonial washing of hands before eating was one of these rules.

Through Isaiah, the Lord spoke to people of his own day about their hypocritical approach to the Lord; but Jesus applied Isaiah's words as a prophecy of the Pharisees and their hypocrisy.

36. Identify the two thrusts that define hypocrisy in Isaiah's words. How were they applicable to the Pharisees and scribes in that situation? What do they say to us as disciples of Jesus?

37. "You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men," said Jesus. In His response to them, why did Jesus change their "tradition of the elders" to "tradition of men"?

Jesus boldly pointed to a specific example of the Pharisees' doing this to enrich the temple treasury: their misapplication of *Corban*. Saying "*Corban*," "Given to God," declared that something was vowed to God or to the temple as a sacred gift. (Mark retained the Hebrew word so his Gentile readers would hear the very sound of the vow.)

38. What did Jesus bluntly say the Pharisees were guilty of doing with their misapplication of *Corban* to the responsibility of children toward their parents?

The Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 29:11–19

Chapter 29 of Isaiah’s prophecy is titled “The Siege of Jerusalem.” It pictures the judgment of the Lord against His faithless people in terms of His encamping against Ariel (Jerusalem) and besieging her. This would happen through “the multitude of all the nations . . . that fight against Mount Zion” as the instruments of the Lord’s judgment, and who, in time, would experience their own destruction. But the people and their leaders in Jerusalem would continue to put their trust in the presence of the temple and its daily rituals, and would dismiss the impending doom. Indeed, this was part of the Lord’s judgment of their pride and their faithlessness. Isaiah said, “The LORD has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes [the prophets], and covered your heads [the seers]” (v. 10).

39. How does “the vision of all this has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed” continue that theme and make it even more pointed?

The Lord clearly states what has caused His judgment of His covenant people, whom He disdainfully calls not “My people,” but “this people.”

40. What is pictured by “this people draw near with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, while their hearts are far from Me”? What is pictured by “their fear of Me is a commandment taught by men”?

41. The Lord will do “wonderful things . . . with wonder upon wonder” not in blessing, but as part of His judgment. In this regard, what will be the judgment of the “wise men” and the “discerning men”?

As impending danger approached, King Hezekiah entered into an alliance with Egypt, which he thought would protect his kingdom from destruction. Instead, it stirred up the Lord’s judgment. This is taken up in chapter 30 in some detail. Here it is in a veiled reference: “You hide deep from the LORD your counsel, whose deeds are in the dark, and who say, ‘Who sees us? Who knows us?’ ”

42. How were the political leaders turning things upside down by a political alliance? Why are the words about the potter and the clay pots he has made familiar to us?

Verses 17–19 begin a sudden, unexpected shift to the theme of redemption. “Lebanon” is probably a poetic reference to Assyria, which had conquered all of the area to the north and now threatened Judah.

The forests of Lebanon were renowned throughout the area. Lebanon being turned into a fruitful field instead of a forest, and the fruitful field being regarded as a forest, would be the Lord's judgment against Assyria.

43. Why are "the deaf shall hear the words of a book" and "the eyes of the blind shall see" especially meaningful to us Christians? Why are the meek singled out to "obtain fresh joy in the LORD," and the poor the ones who "shall exult in the Holy One of Israel"?

44. How does this Old Testament Lesson tie in which today's Holy Gospel?

The Epistle for the Day: Ephesians 5:22–33

Paul had urged the Ephesian Christians to draw a sharp line of distinction between the darkness of pagan pursuit of sensuality and their walking in the light in Christ. In that context, he now addressed the relationship between Christian wives and husbands. His words to them—and subsequently to children and fathers, to slaves and masters—show that in every area of life, Christians are called by Christ to new life under His Lordship.

God's first purpose in marriage is seen in Genesis 2. Having created man and having placed him in the Garden to work it and take care of it, God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him" (v. 18). So from the man's rib, the Lord God fashioned his perfect counterpart, the woman, and brought her to the man. Adam said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." And the inspired writer commented, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." God's first purpose in marriage is the companionship that fills out our personalities.

God's second purpose is seen in Genesis 1: "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them. And God said, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth'" (vv. 27–28). God's second purpose in marriage is procreation, the continuing of the human race. Paul pointed to a third purpose in marriage for humanity living in the atmosphere of sinfulness. In 1 Corinthians 7, he wrote, "The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. . . . Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time . . . but then come together again so Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (vv. 3–5). The third purpose in marriage is prophylaxis, providing the proper expression of the sex drive to lessen temptation to immorality.

As Paul addressed Christian marriage in the setting of his writing about living as children of light in the darkness of a sinful world, all three purposes come into play, but especially the first and the third.

45. What does it mean to submit? (See Philippians 2:3–4.) What does Paul say is to motivate that attitude toward others?

Paul wrote that wives are to submit to their husbands ____, just as the Church ____. Paul called the husband the ____ of the wife just as Christ is the ____.

46. What does this say about the headship of a Christian husband? What kind is indicated? What kind is ruled out? What happens when a Christian wife competes with her husband for headship instead of “[submitting to him] as to the Lord”? What happens when a Christian husband is not ready to implement his headship responsibility?

47. If the husband is the “head,” what role does the wife have in a family? Is her role any less important than her husband’s?

Paul then addressed husbands in their headship responsibilities, saying to them, “Husbands, love your wives, as ___ loved the ___ and ___ for her. . . . Husbands should love their wives as their own ___. He who loves ___ loves ___.”

48. May Paul’s words be appropriately rephrased to read “She who loves ___, loves ___”? State it negatively: “Whoever ___ his/her spouse, ___ himself/herself.” Is that equally true?

49. What does the Genesis quotation point to as a basic necessity if a couple were to have a healthy marriage?