

Article of the Month – July 2013

Missionary Aspects in the Gospels – Mark (2)

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Jesus gives more exact information to them that ask Him specifically.¹ The closer we are to Him, the more understanding of His plans He gives us. Jesus honors them that ask the ‘when’ and ‘how’. Within the body of twelve disciples, there was an inner circle of three: Peter, James and John. At this particular occasion Andrew was with them as well.

The attitude of Christ’s workers should be one of watchfulness and staying alert;² not surprising when we see that some are prone to fall asleep.³

Even unusual acts of love towards the Lord form a legitimate contribution to world evangelism: think about how Mary anointed Him;⁴ how Joseph of Arimathea buried Him in his own tomb⁵ and how the women brought spices to anoint His body after burial.⁶ Their stories are told wherever the Gospel is preached.

Some missions must have a secret nature for obvious reasons. For example, the betrayer was not to know the place where the Last Supper was to be held,⁷ in order to preclude the possibility of early disturbance.

Jesus believed in factual and precise information to be revealed at the proper time and in a discreet way.⁸ In this way He announced His imminent betrayal by Judas. Less attentive people could have easily missed this.

It is acceptable for missionaries to be deeply distressed, troubled and overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death for the sake of their ministries⁹ – with the desire for that suffering to end – as long as they submit their will to God’s will like Jesus did in Gethsemane.¹⁰ This particular aspect of submission has been exquisitely described by Edwards.¹¹ He points out that every committed Christian will sooner or later face his or her own Gethsemane.

¹ Mark 13:3

² 13:5,9,23,33,35,37

³ 13:36; Matt. 25:5

⁴ Mark 14:9

⁵ 15:43-46

⁶ 16:1

⁷ 14:13-16

⁸ 14:18-21

⁹ 14:33,34

¹⁰ 14:35,36,39

¹¹ Gene Edwards, *Exquisite Agony*,

During His interrogation Jesus did not answer any accusations about what He had said or done, but only spoke about who He is.¹² It may well be that missionaries should do the same, if ever they find themselves in similar circumstances.

After the resurrection, the women had a mission to fulfill *to the disciples*, before the latter could fulfill theirs *to the world*. The women were very fearful during that mission of re-mobilization.¹³

Also in this Gospel, the persecution factor is present. Mark experienced that in proclaiming the Gospel and extending the Kingdom, persecution precedes glory.¹⁴ On his first missionary trip he had left Paul and Barnabas prematurely, probably for fear of persecution that might – and indeed did – occur at the mainland of Asia Minor.¹⁵ Fortunately, he later returned to the ministry and was reconciled to Paul.¹⁶

Indeed, sent ones are being persecuted for the sake of the Gospel.¹⁷ This was true in the days of Israel when Jesus and the Prophets before Him were persecuted as it is now for Gospel preachers far and near.

Strong persecution for Christ's witnesses in the End Times¹⁸ runs parallel with more *eschatological signs*.¹⁹ The strange natural phenomena *follow, not precede* the unequalled distress of those days.²⁰ Only *at that time* (i.e. *after that distress*) will all elect from heaven and earth be gathered by the angels.²¹

Some missionaries, like Peter, severely overestimate their willingness and ability to undergo suffering²² whereas when it happens, they prove unable to pay even such a small price as sacrificing an hour of sleep.²³

Certain missionary behavior is undesirable. *Firstly*, ministry-related circumstances, resisted by disciples, can harden their hearts, so that they, like the Twelve, don't recognize Christ anymore as the solution for their precarious situation during their 'night at the lake.'²⁴ *Secondly*, money can distract missionaries and jeopardize ministry – as happened to Judas.²⁵ *Then*, when God's mission to make Israel into an example for the nations was abandoned by legalistic, hypocritical priests and Pharisees, *their* mission turned *against* God, and therefore they didn't notice their errors. *Fourthly*, some missionaries fight the right battle at the wrong time and with the wrong weapons and so work against God instead of for Him, like Peter did with his sword.²⁶ *Finally*, we sometimes betray Jesus because we follow Him at a distance, like Peter did,²⁷ instead of close by.²⁸

¹² Mark 14:60-62

¹³ 16:7,8

¹⁴ 10:37-40

¹⁵ Acts 13:13; 15:36-40

¹⁶ Col. 4:10

¹⁷ Mark 12:1-8

¹⁸ 13:9,10

¹⁹ 13:5-25

²⁰ 13:19

²¹ 13:27,28

²² 14:29,31

²³ 14:32-41

²⁴ 6:45-52

²⁵ 14:10,11

²⁶ 14:47

²⁷ 14:54

Unbelief in these missionaries, even after the announced resurrection, was striking.²⁹ Are we doing better?

²⁸ Rev. 14:4b

²⁹ 16:11,12,14