

Following Christ Through The Gospels

Part Three

As we progress through the Gospels we are left in no doubt that the Lord Jesus Christ taught His disciples to be relevant in the 'ordinary' set of circumstances. He didn't instruct them in the methods of discussing with the Scribes and the Pharisees, - the educated people of His day. He didn't send them off to preach in some far-flung part of the country, or even to another country. Actually, it wasn't until the Day of Pentecost, - after Christ's death and resurrection, - that they stood and preached *by themselves* in Jerusalem. Jesus taught His disciples in their own environment, using their own day-to-day experiences.

It is significant that each of the Synoptic Gospels (i.e Matthew, Mark, Luke) record the occasion in the boat during the storm (Mt. 8:23ff.; Mk. 4:37ff.; Lk. 8:23ff.). Each of them also registers their lack of faith, Christ's greatness of power, and their corporate adulation of Him. Frightening as that experience was, it merely served as the precursor to Christ's next encounter with the man called Legion (Mt. 8:28-34; Mk. 5:1-17; Lk. 8:26-37). He lived among the tombs, - a total outcast, dirty, angry, noisy and demon-possessed. A frightening spectacle! This man was in total ruins, ... until he met Jesus. Notice that he couldn't avoid Jesus, (v.6); and notice, too, that even the demons that possessed him were powerless in the presence of Christ (vv.6,7). But perhaps the most beautiful point to recognise is that the Lord Jesus Christ made the journey solely for this man! Legion, no doubt, was given a new name for he was made a new creation, and he wanted to follow Christ; but look where Jesus 'called' him to serve, - the hardest mission-field of all, - amongst the people from whom once he had been castigated and expelled (Mk. 5:18-20; Lk. 8:38,39).

On Jesus' return to Capernaum He immediately attracted the great crowds again and "He preached the word unto them" (Mk. 2:2). During His 'sermon' a paralysed man was lowered down in front of Him from the roof above. The man was consequently forgiven of his sin. There were scribes present in the crowd and they immediately accused Jesus of blasphemy (Mt. 9:3; Mk. 2:7; Lk. 5:21). However, He silenced them when, at His command, the man arose from his bed and walked, glorifying God.

Leaving Capernaum, Jesus called Matthew, the tax-collector, - an outcast 'allied' with the Roman invaders, - into His service (Mt. 9:9; Mk. 2:14; Lk. 3:27,28). He further annoyed the Pharisees by fraternising and dining with the 'lowest of the low' - the sinners, the *ordinary*, ordinary people. (Remember that Jesus wore the dress of a rabbi, Mt. 9:20; 14:36). They couldn't understand His actions, so He informed them, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mt. 9:13).

Not only did He cause confusion in the camp of the Pharisees, He also caused consternation among the disciples of John the Baptist. These would have been rugged men. They quizzed Him concerning His attitude to fasting, and how He did not require it of His disciples. He cordially informed them that He had more pressing issues on His mind, and using the scenario of the bride/bridegroom He hinted that He would be 'taken away' and there would be a period of transition (Mk. 2:21,22).

Next, a man called Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, implored Him to come and heal his twelve-year-old daughter. Jesus and His disciples answered his call. *En route* to the man's home, Jesus had again become encircled by the crowd and a little woman, with 'an issue of blood' approached Him and touched His garment, ... *immediately she was healed!* (Mk. 5:25:34) Note v.33, within the context of the Judgement Throne, - none shall escape the all-knowing eyes of God and the irresistibility of His final summons. However, while the woman was being healed, the Jairus' daughter had died, and there was no further point in wasting Jesus' time (Mk. 5:35b). But Jesus told them to believe, and He took the disciples' inner circle, - Peter, James and John, - into the home. How sad, that even in great sorrow, - the death of a child, - the people in that home laughed at and scorned the words of Jesus (Mt. 9:24; Mk. 5:40; Lk. 8:53). However, their laughing was turned into astonishment when the young girl walked out of the room with Jesus, - she was given a new life through Him.

As He was leaving the house two blind men followed Him, crying out for mercy and healing. "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" - a simple question from the lips from the Saviour, yet so demanding. They believed, He touched them, and they were healed. Notice that what Jesus told the two blind men, (Mt. 9:30) He also told Jairus' family (Mk. 5:43) and the leper (Mt. 8:4). He was in the place of meeting all these people at the point of their need.

Finally, in connection with the last point, consider the most important factor in each and every case that we have met so far, - the *personal* faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ that merits the miracle of free and sovereign grace.