

## Jesus' Lonely Road

Devotional Guides For Lent And Holy Week

**Robert C. Bankhead**

Copyright © 2001 by CSS Publishing Company, Inc., Lima, Ohio

### First Week In Lent – The Pilgrimage Begins

Mark 9:2-10, 30-37; 10:2-16

Jesus' pilgrimage to Jerusalem began on the Mount of Transfiguration, where he met with Moses and Elijah, symbolizing God's revelation in the Old Testament, through the Law and the Prophets. Jesus himself was the revelation of God's Incarnate Word in the New Testament. On the Mount the full revelation of the Word of God was gathered.

The inner circle of disciples, Peter, James, and John, who saw the vision of Jesus, transfigured in shining light, failed to understand this manifestation of God. They displayed their opposition to God's will when Peter suggested they build three tabernacles, one each for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, and remain on the mountaintop. Perhaps he was thinking in this way to deter Jesus from the journey to Jerusalem and thus prevent Jesus' death.

When God spoke from heaven confirming that Jesus was God's Son, the Beloved, with whom God was well-pleased, the disciples again demonstrated their withdrawal, falling on the ground in fear, leaving Jesus alone until the vision was ended. When they came down from the mountain, Jesus solemnly instructed them not to tell anyone what they had seen, for he knew they would not understand until after the resurrection.

Jesus and the disciples set out from Galilee. Following the second prediction of the Passion, as they reached Capernaum, the disciples were bickering among themselves over greatness. Using a little child as his illustration Jesus taught them about humility and servanthood.

When they came to the region of Judea, a series of challenges by the Jewish authorities began. The Pharisees set out to test Jesus, challenging him over the laws of marriage and divorce. Recalling texts from Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, on the creation of humankind, Jesus refuted their argument from the Mosaic Law permitting divorce, and declared that any person who divorces a spouse, except for the reason of unchastity, commits adultery. The Jewish leaders meekly submitted and made no further challenge at the moment. Their conflict with Jesus was still vague and unfocused.

Again the disciples failed to understand, and when they were alone with Jesus they asked him to explain. Next they challenged Jesus over his welcome acceptance of small children. Jesus instructed the disciples not to hinder him, declaring that the Kingdom of Heaven belonged to children such as these.

As you reflect on these passages, consider with whom you would have agreed. Would you have favored the Pharisee's obedience to the Law of Moses, or supported Jesus' unyielding denial of divorce? Would you have sided with the disciples over the distractions of children in church? Or would you have welcomed children even at the cost of dignity in the worship service?

This week read and meditate on Mark 9.

Monday — Mark 9:9-13: The role of the prophet, Elijah.

Tuesday — Mark 9:14-29: Jesus' miracle of healing an epileptic child.

Wednesday — Mark 9:33-37: Jesus' teaching on greatness and a child's example.

Thursday — Mark 9:38-41: Teaching on exorcism and compassionate service.

Friday — Mark 9:42-48: On stumbling blocks and deceiving oneself.

Saturday — Mark 9:49-50: The Parable of Salt.