

Mark: The Life of Christ and the Powers of Contraction, Parts 11-20  
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PART 11: THE AXIS OF UNDERSTANDING IN ONE SENTENCE, 3:31-35. #1. With one sentence the Lord changes the axes of understanding. "For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother", 3:35. #2. Originally, we all partake of a primitive axis of understanding founded upon human experience of temporal reality. This is why Jesus' mother & brothers came looking for Him. The temporal axis of understanding is primitive but strong. The issue of blood relations is important & sacred. #3. "When His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, 'He has lost His senses'", 3:21. #4. Based upon the primitive axis of understanding (temporal) the Lord's blood relations could not grasp what Jesus was doing, how He was doing it, nor why He was doing it. The primitive axis of understanding had overtaken the world. It indicated that Jesus was insane. Why? Because the Lord transcended the primitive axis of thought, speech & behavior. The gospel was forced into that sea of meaning. Pharisees & scribes were representative of that axis. #5. Then the Lord presented the revealed axis of understanding. This supernatural axis is built on two things: (a) revelation/the word of God & (b) obedience to it. #6. God becomes the supreme reality, deposing the flesh. Revelation deposes the authority of human experience & rationalism. Human will is deposed as the principle motive for behavior. Obedience becomes the chief organizing force of life; the basis for thought, speech & behavior. It generates a contraction between all those who "do the will of God" ("My brothers, sister, mother"). #7. The gospel comes into time in order to redeem the mind/soul. No reduction of revealed truth to a mere doctrinal structure & practice is warranted. It is a fully different axis of understanding man in his setting. #8. It is not uncommon for many believers to attempt to limit the reach of scripture to the primitive axis. The Lord, however, calls us well beyond the primitive & its system of shared values. His kingdom shares a commitment to revealed absolutes! #9. Absolutes become the foundation for unity. Nothing sociological remains. Not socioeconomics, race, tradition, language, nationality nor even blood!

PART 12: THE PARABOLIC RECIPROCAL, 4:1-12. #1. The Lord presents to the reader a particular structure for the generation of a way of reasoning that we may call spiritual understanding. This structure is a generalization from the text; we refer to it as the parabolic reciprocal. #2. "And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teachings, 'Listen to this!...'", 4:2, 3. #3. It is important to acknowledge that the Lord was not implying that truth is to be found in nature. Which truth stands co-equal with the word of God. The truth is not in nature nor in the experience of nature; the truth is in the parable! The Lord did not suggest that the parable & the experience of nature are identical. #4. The parabolic reciprocal: This structure begins with the already revealed word of God, which meaning is then--->mapped on to nature & the experience of nature & from there everything in nature & the experience <---contracts back upon the word of God.

The word of God ---> nature (mapped) <---(contracts)

#5. Spiritual understanding depends upon the parabolic reciprocal. This revealed structure does not start with time, nature nor human experience. #6. Jesus gave the parable of the soils without explanation & stated, "...He who has ears to hear, let him hear", 4:9. The disciples must have been stunned; "As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, began asking Him about the parables", 4:10. They did not grasp the "mystery" of spiritual understanding.

PART 13: THE PARABOLIC RECIPROCAL, 4:1-12. #1. The parabolic reciprocal poses a test of faith. "And He was saying to them, 'To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables'", 4:11. The test is this: Does one have "ears to hear"? #2. "so that while seeing, they may see and not perceive, and while hearing, they may hear and not understand, otherwise they might return and be forgiven", 4:12. #3. The issue is spiritual understanding. How could one "see" & yet "not perceive" or "hear" & still "not understand"? The answer is implicit in the parabolic reciprocal: There was no appeal to revealed meaning & there was no contraction of the mind upon the word of God! #4. Such a fault line in perception & understanding is due to the insistent faith in nature, the experience of nature & of time, apart from the parabolic reciprocal. #5. There was no interest in nor respect for spiritual understanding. Parables were given to be understood; three of the soils were in deficit conditions to produce any crop, 4:4-7. Only the "good soil" (4:8) was fruitful. #6. Those trapped by nature & time were insistent on natural explanations. The parabolic reciprocal does not yield natural explanations but revealed understandings. The "scribes" (2:6) & the "Pharisees" (2:24) had learned no spiritual understanding from the Lord's teaching nor from His mighty deeds. #7. If the contemporary believer is not prepared to seek spiritual understanding & the revealed wisdom it gives, then, that is proof of the rejection of the parabolic reciprocal. Clinging to a preference for natural explanations over revealed meanings, leaves one reading the Bible, but far removed from "perceiving" & "understanding"!

PART 14: THE BASKET, 4:13-25. #1. "And He said to them, 'Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables?'" 4:13. #2. The point of contention was spiritual understanding. The Lord explained the meaning & significance of the parable, 4:14-20. #3. The caution: "...A lamp is not brought to be put under a basket, is it, or under a bed? Is it not brought to be put on the lampstand?", 4:21. #4. What is the basket that obscures the "light" of the word of God? The "basket" represents an act of the will. The Lord was hardly cryptic in His use of parables. He exposed the discrepancy between natural explanations & revealed understandings. #5. It is the act of biblical faith to elevate revealed understanding above & beyond natural explanations. The first 3 soils in the parable exhibit the range of disinterest in the word of God; so they put the lamp under that basket. #6. Only the "good soil" put the lamp on "the lampstand". There are personal consequences attached to how one responds to revelation: "For nothing is hidden except to be revealed...it would come to light" (4:22); "Take care what you listen to...your standard of measure...will be measured to you" (4:24); "For whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him", 4:25. #7. Many Christians in the contemporary suffer from a

condition of self-imposed darkness because the "basket" is the most comfortable treatment of scripture! Think of what is being "taken away"!

PART 15: PARABLES, THE FORK IN THE ROAD, 4:26-34. #1. "and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples", 4:34. #2. The Lord's use of parables is not an appeal to nature for understanding nor for truth. Proof of this is that Jesus "...was explaining everything privately to His disciples". There in, The Lord mapped His own intended meaning upon the temporal elements He had chosen. No ambiguity in the minds of the disciples could have remained. #3. Since the Savior was not trying to elicit truth from nature & in addition He taught the disciples plainly about the meaning of the parables, then, the parables constitute a fork in the road. #4. The parables as presented called for a decision, a personal choice on the part of every hearer. Is one to pursue spiritual meaning or shall one cling to human wisdom derived from human experience? #5. Delineation was made between the phenomenon of revealed understanding & natural explanations. One must choose between them; the fork in the road. #6. In the parables Jesus generates a revealed similitude (a likeness). "...The kingdom of God (is like) a man who casts seed upon the soil", 4:26. The growth of the "kingdom of God" grows by the power of God; like a dead seed that comes to life & produces a "crop", 4:27-29. Natural explanations are of no use. They fall short. #7. The Lord asked a question: "...How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it?", 4:30. The Lord chose "a mustard seed" (4:31); and its unusual development from very small to very large. But the similitude is generated by the word of God & not by nature. #8. "With many such parables He was speaking the word to them, so far as they were able to hear it", 4:33. They did not recognize the fork in the road! The same landmark every reader must acknowledge when the Bible is opened.

PART 16: CONTRACTION: THE GRAND QUALIFIER OF BELIEF, 4:35-41. #1. Belief in Jesus Christ must be qualified in some way because faith (belief) is not purely a subjective response. #2. So the question is, just how is faith in Christ to be qualified? Some are persuaded that the true qualifier of belief is right doctrine, sincerity and genuine emotion. However, the Book of Mark presents qualified belief in specific terms. #3. "And He said to them, 'Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?'" , 4:41. The Lord tells the reader that up to that point the disciples who heard His teaching and witnessed His miracles "still" held no qualified faith in Jesus. #4. This poses the question as to why not? What was lacking? The answer is implicit; the disciples held no belief in the Lord's powers of contraction. They "still" had "no faith" that the material world would always contract back upon the will of Christ, the word of Christ, and the power of Christ. #5. Proof of this generalization was the Lord's response to the immediate circumstances. "And there arose a fierce gale of wind...waves...breaking over the boat...the boat was filling up", 4:37. Those afloat were in a state of panic while Jesus, astern, remained asleep. #6. Awakened, the Lord spoke "to the sea" as if it was human and not an inanimate thing. "Hush, be still"; the wind complied, 4:39. #7. "They became very much afraid and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?'" , 4:41. #8. If one says he/she has faith in Christ yet has no belief that everything in time contracts back upon His will, then whatever he/she calls it, it is not qualified faith. #9. To have faith in Christ is to believe in the Lord's powers of contraction.

PART 17: PARABOLIC REASONING. #1. Jesus' use of parables ushered in a strange way of teaching as far as the disciples and everyone else was concerned, 4:2, 10. #2. However, His purpose was to begin the task of teaching a particular form of reasoning to which all present were unaccustomed. This was a revealed way of reasoning that may be referred to as parabolic reasoning, 4:13-25. #3. In parabolic reasoning, the starting point for thought is the word of God. Then that revealed language manifold is brought to bear upon the temporal inventory, in consequence of which the human mind (thought, speech, behavior) is expected to contract back upon the word of God. #4. Therefore, parabolic reasoning is the generalized way of understanding the world of time, facts and material reality. It is furthermore appointed to govern the relation of the believer to time. #5. Parabolic reasoning reverses the misguided dependence upon human wisdom and human experience. Parabolic reasoning is exquisitely counter intuitive, as it owes no debt to the temporal order. #6. Is it quite possible that many believers do not yet grasp the meaning and significance of the biblical parables? Is there any question that the New Testament parables mark the threshold of a revealed way of thinking about the world and the men and women in it? #7. Parabolic reasoning is the great powerful fortress from which we confront this world of pain, disappointment, and loss. It is the gift of God to every child of His. To those who are devoted to mastering it, parabolic reasoning is an abundant well of ever-increasing spiritual understanding. #8. "For whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him", 4:25.

PART 18: SUPERNATURAL CONTRACTION IS ABSOLUTE, 5:1-20. #1. Anything absolute is irresistible and invulnerable. The "country of the Gerasenes" (5:1) was in for a profoundly disturbing shock. "...immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him", 5:2. #2. Another confrontation between two supernatural powers began when the Lord set foot in that region. #3. A circumstance beyond human resolution: "...no one was able to bind him anymore with a chain...he had often been bound by shackles and chains...torn apart by him... no one was strong enough to subdue him, 5:3, 4. #4. Unbridled fear of the powers of contraction: It is curious that the demons sought out this sharp confrontation on their own, 5:6. And these unclean spirits were profoundly unnerved by the contractive power of Jesus, 5:7. #5. The Lord enforced supernatural contraction upon the unclean spirits. They came out of the man, 5:8. They were no match for the "Son of the Most High God", 5:7. #6. Fear of disembodiment: The showdown had come and "Legion" begged to negotiate. "And he began to implore Him earnestly not to send them out of the country", 5:10. Into the "swine" they went. The term "earnestly" implies that unclean spirits operate according to pure self-interest. Yet they are insecure in the presence of absolute power. #7. All such encounters are about power. The power to force circumstances. But it is disturbing to be caught in the middle. The locals who "observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind" (5:15) "became frightened". #8. There was too much power at one time and in one place, for comfort. "And they began to implore Him to leave their region", 5:17. #9. Absolute power was established again as a factual reality but the meaning of it was lost to them, except for the Gerasene, 5:18-19. We learn from this encounter that nothing is insuperable for the absolute power of God. Nothing! It is upon that absolute power that we must depend. #10. In every

circumstance, situation and state of being, we remember that every source of redemption is downstream from the absolute powers of contraction!

PART 19: THE CONTINUUM OF CONTRACTION, 5:21-43. #1. Two physiological episodes serve as a setting for the study of a supernatural continuum of contraction. #2. One's physiology and that of loved ones is a very precious and fundamental gift. And, of course, human physiology is always highly vulnerable in the world. #3. The first physiology case: "...(a) synagogue official named Jairus...My little daughter is at the point of death...(she) died...twelve years old..." 5:22, 35, 42. #4. Second physiology case: "A woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years...endured much at the hands of many physicians...spent all she had...not helped at all...grown worse", 5:25- 26. #5. Inherent in the language of this text is the appearance of a supernatural continuum of contraction. The Lord lays this continuum across these two grave physiological circumstances and many more in the Book of Mark. We grasp its symbolism as a string of words. #6. This continuum begins with the fountain head of all things, God-->the Holy Spirit linking the Father to -->the Son, Jesus-->who demonstrated and taught the powers of contraction-->faith in the Lord-->a use of language-->the power of God-->human physiology-->resurrection and healing. #7. By what the Lord had already done in this book, hope had taken root in many people. Faith began to be generated in the reasoning of many forlorn souls. #8. Noticeable in this continuum of contraction is its beginning; absolute, invisible and infinitely spiritual--and there was a terminus; temporal, material and physiological. In addition, there was an outcome, which was beyond human and experiential explanation. #9. "Jairus" and the "woman" with "a hemorrhage", were in desperation and both felt compelled to and invited to lay hold of the very apparent reality of this supernatural continuum of contraction!

PART 20: THE CONTINUUM OF CONTRACTION, 5:31-43. #1. The supernatural continuum of contraction becomes more than a religious conception. In this text this continuum, identified by the following sequence: God-->Holy Spirit-->Jesus-->demonstrated contraction-->Faith-->Language-->the power of God-->physiology-->resurrection/healing, became the axis around which the two physiological circumstances revolved. #2. Because of this continuum of contraction, human physiology was no longer a clinical event, nor a physiological event. It, in fact, became a spiritual event. In other words, the substance of the event was changed. #3. The faith of "Jairus" in God, in the Holy Spirit, in the powers of contraction would not allow the reduction of the event to its lowest common denominator, which was the physical. "Jairus" "fell at His feet and implored Him earnestly, saying, 'My daughter is at the point of death; please come and lay Your hands on her, so that she will get well and live'", 5:22-23. #4. Along with Jairus, the "woman" with "a hemorrhage for twelve years" (5:25) adjusted language to the reality of the revealed spiritual axis of the event. "For she thought, 'If I just touch His garments, I will get well'", 5:28. The Lord assured her, "...Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace and be healed of your affliction", 5:34. #5. She refused to reduce the situation to the lowest common denominator. In the case of the deceased twelve-year-old little girl, those attending knew she was dead. #6. The Lord made what some considered to be an absurd observation: "...Why make a commotion and weep? The child has not died, but is asleep", 5:39. "They began laughing...", 5:40. #7. Generalization: The supernatural continuum of contraction stands against the usual human insistence on the reduction of personal circumstance to its

lowest physical common denominator. Everywhere in the Bible that insistence is the hallmark of faithlessness.