

WHO IS THIS?

by Ray C. Stedman

Today we begin the last section of the first half of Mark's Gospel. You will remember that when we began these studies we divided this gospel into two major divisions: The Servant Who Rules, and the Ruler Who Serves. The theme of this last section of the first division is given to us in the words of the disciples when Jesus stilled the storm on the Sea of Galilee. As he rose from sleep and commanded the wind and waves to cease, and the storm subsided and there came a great calm, the disciples in amazement said to themselves, "Who this is this?" A little later when Jesus went to Nazareth, his hometown, and was with the people among whom he had grown up and whom he had served as a carpenter until he was thirty years of age, when they heard his words they said something similar: "Where did he get all this?" It is striking that the unbelieving citizens of Nazareth, and these believing disciples who had accompanied Jesus now for almost a year of ministry, asked the same question about him: "Who is this?"

It is evident that our Lord seems to feel it is now necessary for the disciples to begin to answer this question. So throughout this section he engages in a deliberate campaign to teach them who he is. This forms the theme of the section -- "Who then is this?" When the disciples come to the end of the section, they will have arrived at the answer to this question.

We begin at Chapter 6, Verse 7, with the sending out of the twelve disciples on a special mission:

And he called to him the twelve, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics. And he said to them, "Where you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. And if any place will not receive you and they refuse to hear you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet for a testimony against them." So they went out and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them. {Mark 6:7-13 RSV}

This ministry of the twelve disciples supplies us a number of principles of Christian ministry. Certain aspects of their ministry were governed and controlled by the local situation, as we will see. If you want a more detailed account, read Matthew's Gospel. But in this brief survey Mark gathers up three important facts which he highlights for us.

First, Mark emphasizes the power these disciples exercised. Jesus sent them out, and he gave them authority over all unclean spirits. I do not know how he did this, but it is evident that our Lord was able to impart to them power which he himself possessed, and which they were able to exercise at a distance from him. Much later, in the Upper Room, as he is about to leave them he says, "Another Comforter, another Strengthener, will come," {John 14:16}. This implies, of course, that one was already there -- it was he. He himself supplied the power and authority they needed for this ministry.

I love to think these things through in my imagination, and I hope you do too when you study your Bible. I can imagine with what uncertainty these disciples must have tried this out. There must have come a time when each one of them was confronted with a demon-possessed individual, and frightened and uncertain, they tried this out. They commanded the demon to depart in the name of Jesus. What a relief it must have been to see that the demons obeyed them! For when they came back, Matthew tells us, they were rejoicing that the demons were subject to them. Now, this was done in the name of Jesus; they did not go out on their own, they did not magnify themselves. They went in the name of Jesus, and in that name they had power over all the evil spirits.

Second, Mark brings out the fact that this power was expressed in unity. They did not go out all by themselves; our Lord never sent anyone out to do something alone -- he sent them out two by two. Matthew

gives us the list of who went with whom. Andrew went with Peter, his brother. James went with John, his brother. And so on down through the list. I have always felt sorry for Simon the Zealot, because his partner was Judas Iscariot! Yet is it not amazing that when these twelve were sent out, Judas was included, and Judas, too, was given power to cast out demons in the name of Jesus and to heal the sick. In fact, in Matthew's account, Jesus even told them to go out and raise the dead. They were empowered to do all these mighty works in his name. This ought to give us pause when we see power and influence being exercised in the name of Jesus by people today. It does not in any way guarantee that they are genuine disciples, for here was an unbeliever, one whom Jesus called a "devil from the beginning," whom he knew from the very beginning to be just that, but who nevertheless exercised a ministry of great power along with these other disciples. They went out two by two, in the unity of fellowship together, and this power was expressed through them.

The third fact to note is that they were given a superiority over all forms of evil. They did not need to fear anything they came up against. He gave them authority over all unclean spirits. This suggests to me that those of us who still go out to minister in the name of Jesus are to recognize that authority is given to us, and that we do not need to be afraid to tackle anything. There is no entrenchment of evil which is too difficult for Christians to take on. That is what this account suggests, and what these disciples discovered when they went out.

Notice the dependence they practiced, as well. Jesus made clear they were to go without any provision for their journey. He said, in effect, "Now, don't even go home and get ready; go just as you are. Don't think about any preparations. Take no food, take no money to buy food -- not even some hidden provision for emergencies in the secret compartment of your wallet. Just go trusting God all the way, and God will make provision for you." He deliberately sent them out in this way to teach them lessons in faith, to teach them that God was able to provide, that everywhere they went they would find provision made.

We also need to recognize, however, that this was in line with the general practice of that time. That is, hospitality was considered very important in these Eastern villages. Any stranger coming to town could expect to be taken care of and entertained. So when they went, Jesus told them to expect hospitality. They did not have motels and hotels, and inns were very few, so this was the normal provision for travelers in that day. We must read this account in conjunction with Luke 22 where, much later, as Jesus came to the close of his ministry, he said to his disciples,

"When I sent you out with no purse or bag or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "Nothing." He said to them, "But now, let him who has a purse take it, and likewise a bag. And let him who has no sword sell his mantle and buy one." {Luke 22:35-36 RSV}

This was to be the continuing practice in the ministry of believers, as our Lord was approaching the close of his ministry and the age of the Spirit was about to begin. I say this because there are some who, having read this account of the first mission of the twelve, immediately leap to the conclusion that their practice is to apply as much to us today, and they rush forth to minister without making any adequate preparation whatever. This shows how carelessly we sometimes read our Scripture. Our Lord makes clear that this was a temporary provision, specifically for these men. There is, however, an abiding principle which runs through all the ages, and which grows out of this account: Those who go and minister in the name of Jesus, go in dependence upon God. God must open doors. God must plan the journey and make the opportunity and supply the needs, whatever the preparation made in advance. It is God upon whom we must depend. This is what our Lord was teaching these disciples.

Note, too, that they were not to go out as beggars. They were not to solicit hospitality and funds. They were going to give, not to get. They were clothed with authority, with power to bless and strengthen and heal, and they were to share their power and their peace whenever they came into a house. In the fuller account in Matthew, whenever they came to a house, they were commanded to let their peace come upon that household, and were to be a blessing to the family where they stayed. Furthermore, they were to exercise the power of their ministry in that household, to heal the sick and to leave blessing behind. So, as they went, they were giving far more than they got. This, again, is an abiding principle of ministry. Ministry which is worthy of support is ministry that gives more than it gets.

Our Lord instructed them that when they left a village or a town which did not receive them, they were to leave without regret, except to express a word of sorrow. This is the meaning of the shaking off of dust from their feet. It was not an act of vindictiveness; it was not anger or resentment which was being expressed. It was an attitude of sorrow that these people would not receive the blessing which was available to them.

Notice, further, the message they preached. They went out preaching that men should repent. This was the message of John the Baptist. Repentance means the acknowledgment of wrong, the awareness that something is damaging your life, that you are doing things which are hurtful to yourself and to others. To admit that fact, and not to justify it or excuse it or cover it over and try to make it look good, is repentance. Repentance is coming to the place where you simply admit that you need help. When people reached that place as a result of the preaching of the twelve, then the disciples ministered to them in the unique way recorded here: "They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them."

I confess that for years I have read this account in the Gospels, and it never struck me that the disciples went about anointing with oil. I never saw that until I read it again in preparation for this study. Jesus never anointed with oil, but the disciples did, evidently at his command. This links with a passage in James 5. James was the brother of Jesus, who grew up with him in that home in Nazareth. He says, "Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven," {cf, Jas 5:14-15 KJV}. This is evidently a reference to the apostles' practice of anointing with oil as they went about ministering from place to place.

So, as men and women came to the place of repentance, acknowledging their guilt, their need, their wrongdoing, their hurtful ways, then these disciples were empowered to administer forgiveness and healing in the name of Jesus. People were to be forgiven, and raised up, when they came to the place of repentance. This casts a great deal of light on that passage in James. The disciples' ministry was a response to the problem of sin and evil in individuals. And so we are likewise sent out, by the same Lord, with authority to act against evil wherever we find it -- but in dependence upon God to open the doors and make the ways and provide the opportunities and plan the strategies. We are to declare the message that people, when they come to the place of acknowledging their need, to the place of repentance, are open to the ministry and the grace of God. What a ministry this was for the disciples, as they went about! It had a great effect.

In fact, Mark goes on to tell us what the effect was, as he links it with the event which comes before us next, the murder of John the Baptist. The account opens, in Verse 14, by citing the effect of the ministry of the twelve disciples:

King Herod heard of it [their ministry]; for Jesus' name had become known. Some said, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; that is why these powers are at work in him." But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." But when Herod heard of it he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." {Mark 6:14-16 RSV}

Two things mark the success of the ministry of these twelve disciples as they went about from place to place:

First, the name of Jesus was magnified. This indicates how faithful these men were to their commission. They did not magnify themselves. Nowhere did people raise the question, "Who are these men, that they do these mighty things?" The question raised was always, "Who is this Jesus, by whose name these men are acting?" So the name of Jesus was spread abroad throughout that region. I like that. It indicates that these disciples were not keeping statistics. They did not come back with a long list of how many demons were cast out, how many people were baptized, and how many were healed, although that is the way we might have done it. They were content to know that the name of Jesus was magnified. Everywhere people were talking about Jesus and what he could do. One of the great weaknesses of the modern church is that we talk so much about the church, instead of about the Lord and what the Lord can do.

The second result is that Herod was frightened out of his wits. When he heard all these reports, he suddenly

realized that the fire he thought he had put out by putting to death John the Baptist had suddenly broken out in a dozen new places. And that scared him. This is the way God always works. When someone raises opposition to the gospel message and squelches it in one place, this serves only to scatter it, like pouring water on burning oil. When Herod realized this he was very frightened.

It is especially remarkable that Herod actually thought this was John the Baptist raised from the dead and appearing in all these various places, because the Scriptures tell us specifically that John the Baptist did no miracles! Yet when Herod hears of all these miracles he says, "This is John, come back from the dead." This is all the more amazing in that Herod belonged to the party of the Sadducees, who were rationalists, anti-supernaturalists. They did not believe in resurrection. Yet the minute word got back to Herod that the twelve were preaching like this, he said, "Oh, oh, it's John, raised again from the dead." All of which testifies to the power of a guilty conscience at work in this man. Shakespeare said, "Conscience doth make cowards of us all." Herod is a very vivid example of that truth.

The account which follows is a flashback to an event which happened just before the disciples were sent out:

For Herod had sent and seized John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip 's wife; because he had married her. For John said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." {Mark 6:17-18 RSV}

The marital entanglements of this whole family of Herods are incredible. They started with Herod the Great, who married five different wives, and had children by all of them. Then the progeny began to marry each other, and each other's progeny! So there were cousins marrying, and, in the case of this Herod, Herod Antipas, he married his niece, Herodias, who had been the wife of his half-brother, Philip. Now, to further complicate the story, there was another half-brother also named Philip! But I am not going to try to sort it all out for you. It is enough to recognize that this was a public scandal of that day. And John the Baptist evidently had publicly rebuked the king for seducing his brother's wife and marrying her. Herod did not seem to be greatly offended by John's rebuke, but Herodias was. She insisted on John's arrest and, later, his murder.

And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe. When he heard him, he was much perplexed; and yet he heard him gladly. But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and the leading men of Galilee. For when Herodias' daughter [Salome] came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will grant it." And he vowed to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." And she went out, and said to her mother, "What shall I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the baptizer." And she came in immediately with haste to the king, and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." And the king was exceedingly sorry; but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her. And immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard and gave orders to bring his head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

This is a grisly story of a woman's hate and a man's weakness. Herodias was a bitter woman who hated John because of his exposure of her evil, so she constantly worked to destroy him. But Herod somehow was attracted to John, and went to hear him, and listened to him. All this took place in that forbidding castle called Machaerus, on the east side of the Dead Sea, the ruins of which are still there. You can visit the dungeons and see where the chains were fastened to the walls, and where undoubtedly, John the Baptist was held prisoner. There in that remote fortress Herod gave a banquet for his court and the great men of Galilee. On that occasion, as we have this story, Salome danced before him and pleased him, and he vowed to her he would give her anything she wanted. At her mother's request, she asked for the head of John the Baptist, and it was brought in on a platter. Herod thus reveals the weakness of his character in all his actions here.

Mark has given us this account because it provides the reason why Jesus sent out the twelve disciples. When John was first arrested, Jesus began his own ministry in Galilee. Now that John is beheaded, Jesus sends out the twelve to continue John's ministry: the message of repentance -- and to add to it another note: the authority

and power to cast out demons and to heal the sick, to heal emotionally and spiritually, as well as physically, those who were afflicted by guilt and sin. So gradually, as we trace the account through, we see the Lord teaching these disciples what is to be the full message of the gospel. They were ignorant men at this point. They knew nothing of his impending death, or his resurrection; they knew nothing even of who he was. They only knew that God was at work in Israel, and that men were to come to a place of acknowledgment of need, and then God would begin to work in their lives. This is where the gospel starts -- with repentance. And little by little these other elements are being added as we go along. So you have a contrast here between the ministry of the twelve and the ministry of John.

In the last two incidents which come before us here, we have what follows when the twelve return from their mission. It includes the story of the feeding of the five thousand. We will see how that fits into this pattern in a moment.

First we get the result of the return of the twelve:

The apostles returned to Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. {Mark 6:30-31 RSV}

It is clear from this that our Lord recognized this as a period of danger to these disciples. They needed rest, and he made provision for it. They needed time to think through what had happened. From reading Matthew's and Luke's accounts of this return, we know that these disciples were very excited by their ministry. They were tremendously encouraged by the results they had seen, and they came back like boys let out of school, eager to report to Jesus everything that had happened. They were so "turned on" and excited about it that he had to caution them, "Don't rejoice over the fact that the demons are subject to you, but rejoice rather that your names are written in heaven." He could see that they were in danger of being caught up with pride and exaltation at the ministry they had had. This, by the way, is the first time in the Gospels they are ever called "apostles." They had been "disciples" up to now, but now they had been "sent out" -- that is what an apostle is, one who is sent out. They had been given a ministry of their own.

There is a very important principle of pedagogy here. For years churches -- even Peninsula Bible Church -- operated on the widely accepted principle that people must be thoroughly trained before you can put them to work. You have to stuff their heads full of knowledge, and get them to answer all the great, tough theological questions. They have to be able to tell why God does not kill the devil, and who the antichrist is, and solve many other knotty problems, before they are ready to go out and minister. When they have a degree from a seminary, or the equivalent, then they are finally ready to go to work.

Our Lord did not work that way. He sent out these ignorant men who did not by any means understand the fullness of the message they were preaching, who really had no idea why they were going out or what they were doing. But he sent them out and gave them power to act, and expected them to learn as they went. A few years ago we discovered this principle, and have tried to operate by it ever since. We have found that it is true -- you do not wait until you know it all before you act. Rather, you start acting as you are learning; you learn as you go. This is what our Lord did with these men.

Nevertheless, when people are immature, oftentimes the early success they enjoy tends to puff them up and exalt them, and it becomes a very dangerous time in their lives. It is always a time of great peril when you have had success.

I have learned this in my own ministry. Last week I received an invitation to be the Bible teacher at a major national conference to be held later this year. Immediately my flesh grabbed hold of that invitation and ran around the room of my mind, waving it and saying, "Look at this! All these people think you're a great Bible teacher!" And I began to anticipate what some of the results might be. But my will, prompted by the Holy Spirit, rose right up, grabbed hold of that arrogant, vain young man, slammed him down in his seat, and told him, "Sit down and be quiet!" I realized that this was a time of great peril, of grave danger, a time to take it very thoughtfully and carefully, and to remember that God works only through a humble and contrite spirit. Whenever any idea seizes the mind and heart that a ministry is for the glory of the individual, it is a serious

threat to the whole success of the enterprise.

This is why Jesus took these disciples off to a lonely place, to minister to them and to teach them. But he had some difficulty doing it, because the next passage says,

And they went away in the boat to a lonely place by themselves. Now many saw them going, and knew them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns, and got there ahead of them. As he landed he saw a great throng, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. {Mark 6:32-34 RSV}

I do not know how you would have reacted if you had been in Jesus' place. Here they were, trying to get away from the crowd, away from the pressure and the hassle and harassment of this ministry for a few quiet moments, arriving at the other side of the lake only to find waiting the same crowd they had just tried to get away from! I think I would have lost my temper and said, "Can't you leave us alone for one moment? We've got to have some time to rest. Don't you have any concern for us?" But notice how Jesus handles it. He had a shepherd's heart. Remember, it was he who said, "He who hungers and thirsts after righteousness shall be filled," {cf, Matt 5:6}. And here were men and women so hungry for the word of deliverance that, though he took a boat and rowed four miles across the lake, they ran ten miles by foot around the northern end of the lake and arrived at the other side before he got there! They were waiting there for him to teach them when he came. So without a word of rebuke, he began to teach them many things.

I do not know what he taught. Perhaps we have something of it in John's account, where Jesus taught about the bread come down from heaven. Or in Luke's account, where we have what we call the Sermon on the Mount, because it is a passage parallel to that in Matthew. But Luke says it was given on a plain. Perhaps our Lord repeated much of his Sermon on the Mount here to these people. But, whatever he taught, Mark goes on to tell us that he did a deliberate but amazing thing:

And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a lonely place, and the hour is now late; send them away, to go into the country and villages round about and buy themselves something to eat." But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." And they said to him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?" And he said to them, "How many loaves have you? Go and see." [This was when Andrew found the boy who had a lunch with him.] And when they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." Then he commanded them all to sit down by companies upon the green grass. So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and fifties. {Mark 6:35-40 RSV}

This is a very vivid description. It undoubtedly reflects Peter's memory of this event, which he related to Mark. This is the only miracle, by the way, which is recorded in all four gospels. They never forgot this -- Peter especially. He even remembered the green grass which was growing all over the hills and fields in the month of April when this took place, and that, as the people sat down, they looked like a vegetable garden. The word translated "groups" here is the word used for rows of vegetables in a garden. He could still see them, sitting on the hillside, lined up like vegetables in a row, waiting...

And taking the five loaves and the two fishes he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men. {Mark 6:41-44 RSV}

We do not have time to go into this in any detail. I am sure you have studied this miracle and heard messages on it before. But I would simply like to point out three things about it. First, this was a deliberate action of our Lord. These people were not so hungry that he had to feed them. Later on, when he fed the four thousand, they had been without food for three days. But here it is questionable that they had been without food even for a full day. They had run around the lake and were very tired, perhaps, but not especially overly hungry.

Nevertheless, he chose to feed them, and he did so, second, in order to teach his disciples something. This was primarily for their benefit. What he did was designed to remind them of the feeding of the multitudes of Israel in the wilderness, when the manna came down from heaven. He was drawing a deliberate picture of who he was for these disciples. This is why John's Gospel records that he said to them, "I am the bread come down from heaven," {cf, John 6:41}. These disciples were expected to learn from this something of who it was they were following. But they seemed to miss the point.

There is a hint given here for them, third, that this event was related somehow to God's whole ministry to Israel. Mark says, "...they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces." Whenever the number twelve is used in these stories, it relates to the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus himself said he chose twelve disciples so that they might sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. In the previous section there was a dying girl who was twelve years old, and a woman who had had an issue of blood for twelve years. Now there are twelve baskets of food taken up. This is a reminder to these disciples that Jesus was the Promised One who was to come to Israel. He was the Provider sent by God. He had provided rest for his disciples, had provided truth for the multitude waiting and had provided food for these people. But their eyes were shut.

So another incident immediately follows. We will treat it very quickly, but it is very important:

Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. And after he had taken leave of them, he went into the hills to pray. And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. And he saw that they were distressed in rowing, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night [about three or four o'clock in the morning] he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw him, and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; have no fear." And he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened. {Mark 6:45-52 RSV}

We cannot understand this last miracle except as we see it as a kind of examination period given to these disciples after the feeding of the five thousand. Our Lord had sent them out, had given them power. They had seen their ministry confirmed and authenticated by the hand of God working through them. They had come back excited and "turned on" by all they had seen and done. They had now been taught that Jesus was the One who was coming to fulfill the expectation of a Messiah to be given to Israel, promised throughout all the prophetic centuries. But somehow they seemed to miss it all.

So he gives them an examination, a test, to see how they are doing. He sends them out into a storm. This time it is different. He is not with them in the boat. He sends them out alone, deliberately, and he goes up into the hills to pray. How many of the storms of our life are made up of these two elements -- trouble which comes to us and seems to be overwhelming us, and the seeming absence of the Lord? Nevertheless, there is One up on the hillside praying for us.

After the storm has blown for several hours, and the disciples are in deep distress, Jesus comes to them walking upon the water. When they see him they are scared out of their wits. They think it is a ghost. He has to reassure them, "It -- that thing you see which scares you to death -- it is I; don't be afraid." How many times does he have to say that to us? That thing which scares us, frightens us -- "It is I; be not afraid." He got into the boat, and Mark says they were absolutely flabbergasted! This indicates the grade they got on this exam. It was "F" -- F for fear, and F for flabbergasted. It was a total failure, but it astonished them. For the second time, now, their eyes are opened to begin to question, "Who then is this? Who is it?" And they begin to listen. This opens the door for some of our Lord's greatest teaching to his disciples regarding why he came. When they come to the end of this section, they know the answer to their question.

And this is our Lord's question to us: "Who is this? Who sends the storms into our lives? Who tests us? Who makes provision for our needs and then tests us on it? Who gives us a promise and then sends us out to see if we believe what we teach or what we say? It is the Lord himself. This is what he is doing with us, as he did

with his disciples. He is training us, teaching us, preparing us, building into our lives, as he built into their lives, so that we might be men and women of faith, confident and calm and able to cope with life.

Prayer:

Thank you, Father, for what you are doing with us. We thank you for these amazing stories which remind us and teach us what our Lord Jesus is still doing in our lives today. Though we live in the midst of perilous times and travel among troubled seas, whether he be in the boat or out of the boat, we know that he is the Master of the storms of life, and he is able to secure us and strengthen us and enlighten us, and to teach us about himself. So we pray that our eyes may be opened and that we may respond in faith. In his name, Amen.

Title: Who is This?
By: Ray C. Stedman
Series: The Servant who Rules
Scripture: Mark 6:7-52
Message No: 11
Catalog No: 3311
Date: January 19, 1975

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