

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Matthew: Jesus As Israel's Messiah And His Kingdom

Part XV: Christ As Israel's Messiah Seen In His Discipling Of His Followers, Matthew 16:13-20:34

D. Christ As Israel's Messiah Seen In His Teaching On Living The Cross Before The Crown

1. Christ's Messianic Identity Seen In His Instruction On A Life Of Faith

(Matthew 17:14-21)

I. Introduction

- A. After the transfiguration that revealed the crown Jesus would gain after His cross, a format that patterns the same cross-before-the-crown discipleship theme for all of Christ's followers (Matthew 16:24), Jesus began to give His disciples specific instructions on what it means to deny one's self and take up his cross to follow Him.
- B. One such instruction, that of Matthew 17:14-21, calls Christ's disciples to a life of faith in God and His Word in dying to one's self and selfish ambitions, and we view it for application for our discipleship (as follows):

II. Christ's Messianic Identity Seen In His Instruction On A Life Of Faith, Matthew 17:14-21.

- A. Descending from the mount of transfiguration to join the nine other disciples, Jesus, Peter, James and John met those nine disciples together with a gathering of people, Matthew 17:14a.
- B. The cause of this gathering was clarified when a troubled man with a demon-possessed son (Matthew 17:18a) approached Jesus, kneeled down before Him and pleaded for Him to have mercy on his son, Matthew 17:15a.
- C. The demonic possession was an unusually potent, destructive one: the boy often had experienced epileptic seizures, leading to great suffering as he would fall into the fire or the water, Matthew 17:15b NIV.
- D. Most troubling of all, the man had brought his son to Jesus' nine other disciples who had not accompanied Him on the mount of transfiguration, and they had not succeeded in exorcising the demon, Matthew 17:16.
- E. Jesus explained the problem lay in that generation as it was "unbelieving" (*apistos*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1966, p. 85) and "depraved, perverted" (*diastrepho*, Ibid., p. 188), a stunning critique not only of the crowd that was present, including the boy's father, but of His own disciples, Matthew 17:17a.
- F. Jesus rhetorically asked how long He would be with them, how long would He have to put up with their faithless, depraved, perverted ways, Matthew 17:17b. Accordingly, He directed the boy be brought to Him, and He rebuked the demon so that it left the boy, and he was cured at that very instant, Matthew 17:18.
- G. This event produced a question in Jesus' disciples, so they came to Him to ask why they could not exorcise the demon (Matthew 17:19), and Jesus answered that it was because of their "littleness, poverty of faith." (*holigopistos*, Ibid., p. 566) Viewing the context further explains this poverty-of-faith problem (as follows):
 - 1. The afflicted boy's father had claimed that the *disciples* could not cure his son, Matthew 17:16.
 - 2. Similarly, the disciples themselves were troubled because *they* could not cure the boy, Matthew 17:19.
 - 3. However, the Matthew 10:1 passage that explains the Lord's provision of authority for the disciples to exorcise demons reveals that authority belonged to *Christ*, that it did **NOT innately** reside in the *disciples!* Somewhere between Matthew 10:1 and Matthew 17:14 the disciples and the people to whom they ministered had assumed that it was by the *disciples'* authority that exorcisms were achieved, and when they faced an especially troublesome, potent demon, they experienced defeat for *not trusting in God!*
- H. Thus, Jesus added that if they had even the tiniest faith, as small as a grain of mustard seed, they could say to a nearby mountain, "Remove hence to yonder place," and it would occur, that nothing would be impossible for them, Matt. 17:20 KJV. This verse does not teach a self-directed faith where one trusts what he wants to see occur in order to make it come to pass, a false practice espoused by even some evangelicals today. Rather, Jesus taught that faith was to be in God's Word and will, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, ftn. to Matthew 17:20.
- I. Evidence of this is seen in noting (1) the Matthew 17:21 verse on praying and fasting does not appear in many manuscripts, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 66; it was added by scribes to harmonize with Mark 9:29. (2) That Mark 9:29 verse in turn claims Jesus said this kind of demon is exorcised only by prayer, and the words "and fasting" there are a late addition (Bruce M. Metzger, A Text. Com. on the Grk. N. T., 1971, p. 101). Prayer is an exercise of faith, so Jesus taught we must trust **God, not human might or effort**, to exorcise such demons.]

Lesson: Jesus taught that the path of the cross-before-the-crown for us involves "dying" to reliance on our own human will, abilities and authority and submitting to God, His will, His power and His Word for blessing.

Application: (1) May we trust in Christ to be saved, John 3:16. (2) May we "die" to depending on ourselves for blessing in life and service and live by faith, depending on God in all aspects of our experience for His blessing.