

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

3. Christ's Messianic Identity Seen In His Instruction On Dying To Selfish Pride, Matthew 18:1-35

a. Christ's Instruction On Our Need For Humility In Viewing Fellow Believers

(Matthew 18:1-5)

I. Introduction

- A. The pride of life is one of the characteristics of worldliness (1 John 2:15-16), and the great men in this world typically dominate their subordinates and view them as of lesser value than themselves, Luke 22:24-25.
- B. However, this way of thinking and relating in relationships is **not** of **God**, and it is **not** the way people in His heavenly kingdom are to think and relate to one another, for believers are to relate in **humility** with each other.
- C. Jesus taught this truth in Matthew 18:1-5 as part of His instruction on living the cross-before-the-crown as His disciple, promoting the need for His disciples to put on the attitude of humility in how they viewed each other:

II. Christ's Instruction On Our Need For Humility In Viewing Fellow Believers, Matthew 18:1-5.

- A. At the same time that He had testified and illustrated to Peter and the other disciples that He as the Son of God did not owe God the Father's temple tax, but graciously paid it so as not to offend the tax collectors (Matthew 17:24-27 with 18:1a), the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (Matthew 18:1b KJV) Apparently, Christ's revelation that He was the Son of God equal in deity with the Father had led the disciples to want to know which **mortal saint** was the greatest in God's kingdom, suggesting their own interests in being great now that they rubbed shoulders with One Who was God!
- B. In response, Jesus called "a little child" (*paidion*, a diminutive form of *pais*, "child," what we might term a "childette," but in English we call a toddler, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 609-610) to come Himself, and He placed the toddler in the midst of the thirteen tall, adult men, Matthew 18:2.
- C. Even in our culture today, and especially so in Jesus' era where toddlers were not nearly as respected as they are in our era, this toddler would have been very self-conscious amid these thirteen adult men who stood around him, looking down at him, and he would have either dropped his gaze or looked somewhat insecure.
- D. Jesus then told His disciples that truly He said unto them, unless they themselves would be "turned, converted" (*strepho*, Ibid., p. 778-779) and become like "little children" (*paidion* again), toddlers as it were, standing in the midst of a group of grown adult men, they could not in any way (the double negative of *ou me*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 67) enter the kingdom of heaven, Matthew 18:3. This means that everyone who enters the kingdom of heaven does so only by God's unmerited favor apart from human works or merit (Ephesians 2:8-9), so there is no logical basis for humans to boast in the kingdom of heaven!
- E. Accordingly, since it takes one's humbly beseeching God's mercy just to enter heaven, a humility of the kind a toddler naturally exhibits in the presence of tall adult men standing around looking at him, everyone in heaven must be as humble as such a toddler, making the greatest human in heaven like such a toddler, Matthew 18:4.
- F. However, going even further, Jesus stated that whoever received **one** (*hen*, Ibid.) such small child (*paidion* again) in Christ's Name, received Jesus Himself, Matthew 18:5. In light of Jesus' recent claim to be the Son of God on equality in deity with God the Father in Matthew 17:24-27, a passage connected with this one via Matthew 18:1a, Jesus was saying that **any single** believer in Christ was so valued by God the Father and Jesus Christ that the Father and Christ saw one's treatment of a fellow believer as a treatment unto God Himself, meaning there should be **absolutely NO competition** in Christ's followers as to which of them was greater!

Lesson: *As part of the cross-before-the-crown path a disciple of Christ is to follow, he must of necessity die to all selfish pride particularly as it relates to his view of and treatment of fellow believers: he must realize he is saved by grace alone that he may relate to every other believer in humility, receiving every other believer as he would the Lord Jesus or God the Father, that there be no sense of competition between believers in God's family.*

Application: (1) *May we trust in Christ to be saved and enter the kingdom of heaven, John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9.* (2) *May we realize that this salvation by grace makes no room for human merit in any way once one has entered the sphere of God's people, and so view every other believer in Christ as precious and valuable that we fully receive and accept each one as we would the Lord.* (3) *May we promote this viewpoint in the Church.* (4) *May we also reflect this humility to a lost world as part of our witness, cf. 1 Peter 3:15.*