

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

b. Christ's Instruction On Our Need Humbly Not To Cause Fellow Believers To Sin

(Matthew 18:6-14)

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 is **not God's way** for the *believer* to function, for believers are to relate in **humility** toward others, **even in the matter of causing even the least among people to be influenced to sin against God!**
- C. This truth is taught in Matthew 18:6-14, directing us on the cross-before-the-crown behavior (as follows):

II. Christ's Instruction On Our Need Humbly Not To Cause Fellow Believers To Sin, Matthew 18:6-14.

- A. Having taught the need for His disciples to relate to the least of people in humility (Matthew 18:1-5), Jesus broadened the application to the subject of how we **spiritually influence** even the **least** of men, Matt. 18:6: if one causes another to stumble, influencing him to sin ("offend," Matthew 18:6; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, fn. to Matt. 18:6-7), it would be better for him that a millstone were hung about his neck and that he were then drowned in the depths of the sea! (Matt. 18:6) The kind of millstone Jesus mentioned was used in milling grain, and it was about eighteen inches in diameter and three to four inches thick, while the upper millstone was "turned by a donkey walking in a circle," *Ibid*. In other words, causing even the least of one's brethren to sin was as despised by God and would bring as great a punishment as any capital crime!
- B. Offenses, actions or words that influence even the humanly least of other people to sin would inevitably arise in the world, but great would be God's discipline upon those by whom such offenses came, Matthew 18:7.
- C. That being so, Jesus used strong language in Matthew 18:8-9 to teach one must do whatever is necessary to remove what offends in his own life. In Matthew 18:8-9, the initial application deals with what keeps one himself from being saved himself, but the wider context applies to Christ's concern that one does whatever is necessary not to influence even the least of other people to sin, Matt. 18:10a, 6; Bib. Kno. Com., N. T., p. 62.
- D. Returning to His concern about the treatment of the least of God's people, Jesus directed that we not despise even a little child, Matthew 18:10a, 2-6. The angels God has assigned for their care are always beholding the face of God the Father in heaven, for these little ones are important to Him, and He sends His angels out to minister unto them, so we need to be sure that these little ones are also very important to us! (Matthew 18:10b)
- E. The Matthew 18:11 verse that claims the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost does not appear in the "earliest witnesses representing several textual types (Alexandrian, pre-Caesarean, Egyptian, Antiochian)," revealing this verse was "manifestly borrowed by copyists from Lk. 19:10. The reason for the interpolation was apparently to provide a connection between ver. 10 and verses 12-14." (Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek Testament, 1971, p. 44-45)
- F. However, to illustrate the reality of the importance of even the humanly least significant person in the eyes of God that is taught in Matthew 18:10, Jesus at verse 12 added that not only do their angels always behold the Father's face, but God feels they are also greatly worth saving from hell. Jesus then gave His great illustration of the shepherd who, having lost one of his one-hundred sheep, leaves the ninety-nine in the fold to trek off into the mountains to look for it, Matthew 18:12. Once he finds the lost sheep, He rejoices over it more than the ninety-nine that had not gone astray, accentuating the intensity of God the Father's concern for the welfare of the most insignificant of people in man's eyes, that none of them be lost to hell, Matthew 18:13-14.

Lesson: Part of the believer's "cross-before-the-crown" discipling involves **HUMBLY** learning to heed God the **FATHER'S VALUE** that He places on the **LEAST** of people in man's eyes, that we **NOT INFLUENCE** them to **SIN**, **ESPECIALLY** relative to failing to believe in Christ, but **DEEPLY RESPECT** their **IMPORTANCE** to **GOD** toward **INFLUENCING** them with **GREAT CONSCIENTIOUSNESS** to **OBEY** the **LORD!**

Application: (1) May we ourselves be sure to trust in Christ for our own salvation, John 3:16. (2) In heeding God the Father's will in our "cross-before-the-crown" discipleship, may we **HIGHLY VALUE** the **LEAST** of people in man's estimation, lost and saved alike, that we might **CAREFULLY INFLUENCE** them unto righteousness.