

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Matthew: Jesus As Israel's Messiah And His Kingdom

D. Christ As Israel's Messiah Seen In His Discipling Of His Followers, Matthew 6:13-20:34

3. Christ's Messianic Identity Seen In His Teaching On Living The Cross Before The Crown

f. Christ's Instruction On Humbly Valuing And Ministering To Little Children

(Matthew 19:13-15 et al.)

I. Introduction

- A. The world's lusts of the eyes, of the flesh and of the pride of life (1 John 2:15-16) greatly impact relationships we have not only with other adults, but also with little children whom adults may tend to overlook in value.
- B. In contrast, *God's way* for the *believer* to function in His cross-before-the-crown life (Matthew 16:24) directs us in Matthew 19:13-15 to have the highest regard for and the gentlest, warmest treatment of little children:

II. Christ's Instruction On Humbly Valuing And Ministering To Little Children, Matthew 19:13-15 et al.:

- A. The beliefs and practices of Jesus' era did not grant Him room to come into general contact with little children:
 - 1. The Hebrew leaders and teachers of the Law in Christ's time understood their Messiah to be a great leader among adult male men, Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 1972, ii, p. 336.
 - 2. Also, the rabbis of the era, and Jesus was often called "Rabbi", being viewed as one (John 1:38, 49; 3:2, 26; 6:25), were culturally considered to be too dignified to spend ministry time with little children, Ibid.
- B. Nevertheless, some parents, likely the mothers of small children, were so impressed with Jesus' warmth and gentleness that they began to bring Him their *paidion*, their "very young children, infants" (Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 609) regardless of the usual cultural inhibitions to the contrary that He might put His hands on them and pray, blessing them, Matthew 19:13a,b.
- C. This was a remarkable action for these mothers: generally, such blessings were given by fathers for their own highly beloved children in private (cf. Genesis 48:13-14), so Jesus must have exhibited a family-based warmth before others in public that one would usually experience only from a dear relative!
- D. However, Christ's disciples "rebuked, reproved" (*epitimao*, Ibid., p. 303) the mothers for bringing their little children to Jesus for what the disciples believed was demeaning to Him as the Messiah and at least as a Hebrew Rabbi, Matthew 19:13c.
- E. Jesus became "angrily aroused" (*aganakteo*, Ibid., p. 4) upon seeing the disciples voice this prohibition according to the Mark 10:14 record, and He told them to "tolerate, permit" (*aphiemi*, Ibid., p. 125-126) the little children to come unto Him though it strained against the expected norms of the day, that the disciples were to **stop** "hindering, preventing, forbidding" (*koluo*, Ibid., p. 462; present imperative with subjunctive negative adverb *me*; U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 73) the children to come unto Him, Matthew 19:14a,b.
- F. Jesus thus clarified that such children were typical of those who were of the Kingdom of heaven, that people need to become as unassuming and dependent by faith on God as a little child is on adults or they will not in any way enter into the Kingdom of heaven, Matthew 19:14c with Mark 10:15.
- G. Mark 10:16 (with Matthew 19:15a) then reports Jesus took up the children in His arms (*enagkalizomai*, "take someone in one's arms," Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 261) and "blessed" (*kateulogeo*, Ibid., p. 423) them, laying His hands on them. This activity would duplicate what a grandfather might do for his grandchildren before he passed away (cf. Genesis 48:13-14), so for Jesus as a rabbi thus publicly to gather up these little children into His arms, children who were not part of His earthly family, and, seating them on His lap, put His hands on their heads to bless them would have been an unusually warm expression of love in His era!
- H. After spending time ministering this way to these children, Jesus left the area, Matthew 19:15. This summary statement reveals the great significance of this ministry to these children, that it was worth it to the Lord in His very important, full schedule in His incredibly important time on earth to stay in that place until all the parents who wanted Jesus to bless their children had seen Him bless them. In this way, the Lord exemplified the great need for His followers humbly to value and so warmly minister to little children of simple faith.

Lesson: *In the believer's cross-before-the-crown calling, believing adults must humbly, warmly and affectionately relate even to little children, knowing that only those who are as dependent on God as little children are dependent on adults around them for their care are the only ones who thus enter into the Kingdom of heaven.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ to be saved as a little child entrusts himself to adults, John 3:16. (2) May we warmly love small children, conveying God's love to them as Jesus conveyed God's love to them in His day.*