

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

i. Christ's Instruction On Humbly Helping Versus Striving For Rank In God's Service

(Matthew 20:17-28)

I. Introduction

- A. Christ's call for His followers to deny themselves and take up their cross to follow Him (Matthew 16:24) in reference to **service** to God will have its reward in heaven **providing** they properly handle the issue of **rank**.
- B. Matthew 20:17-28 provides Christ's instruction on that issue, and we view it for our insight (as follows):

II. Christ's Instruction On Humbly Helping Versus Striving For Rank In God's Service, Matthew 20:17-28.

- A. As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem in heading for the cross, He took the twelve disciples aside and began to tell them about the cross He would face followed by His resurrection [and eventual crown], Matt. 20:17-19:
 - 1. Jesus explained that the "Son of man" prophesied in Daniel 7:13-14 Who would eventually ascend up to the Father, the "Ancient of days," and receive an indestructible, eternal kingdom over all men would first face a terrible series of events. He would be betrayed unto the chief priests and the scribes, they would condemn Him to death and deliver Him over to the Gentiles [Romans] to mock, scourge and crucify Him in putting Him to death, Matthew 20:17-19a.
 - 2. However, this "Son of man" would rise again from the dead, Matthew 20:19b, and, following that event, He would begin to fulfill the Daniel 7:13-14 prophecy in ascending to the "Ancient of days," Acts 1:9-11.
- B. Nevertheless, this prediction was not understood by the disciples due to their spiritual dullness, and the mother of Zebedee's sons, James and John, came with her sons to Jesus, bowing down to Him and asking that her sons sit one on His right hand and the other on His left in His Kingdom, Matthew 20:20-21. This event may have occurred due to Jesus' Matthew 19:28 prediction that the disciples would sit on thrones judging the tribes of Israel, that there was a desire for the sons to have the loftiest of those thrones, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 66.
- C. Jesus then addressed the sons, the "you" in verse 22 being in the plural form (Ibid.), indicating the sons had been the ones who urged their mother to make this request, and He stated that they did not know what they were asking. He then asked if they were able to "drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Matthew 20:22a,b) In God's program, the cross always precedes the crown: just as Jesus had to go through the terrible cross before ruling on His messianic throne (cf. Matthew 20:17-19), so these men had to go through suffering and martyrdom before ruling on the twelve thrones of Israel in Christ's coming Kingdom, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Matthew 20:22.
- D. The two sons, clearly not realizing what Jesus had meant by Jesus' terms "cup" and "baptism," claimed they were able to partake of them, and Jesus replied that they would indeed do so, Matthew 20:22b-23a. [James was actually the first of the Apostles to be martyred, Ibid. (Ibid.; Acts 12:2)] However, it was not Jesus, but God the Father Who decided who would sit on Christ's right and left hands in His Kingdom, Matthew 20:23b.
- E. The other disciples heard of this conversation, and became upset that James and John had tried to surpass them in rank in Christ's Kingdom, so Jesus called them all aside to teach them the need of humbly facing the cross before the crown in their lives when it comes to the issue of rank in serving God, Matthew 20:24-28:
 - 1. Jesus explained that the Gentile rulers "lorded" over their subjects in selfish ways, Matthew 20:24-25.
 - 2. However, that was not to be the function of His disciples as they served the Lord, Matthew 20:26a: rather, whoever desired to be great among Jesus' followers was to be the one who stooped to serve the needs of the other brethren, and whoever desired to be first in rank over the others was to be the slave in the sense of bearing the unsavory but necessary burdens of the rest of the body of the disciples, Matthew 20:26b-27.
 - 3. As the ultimate illustration of this truth, Jesus concluded that He had not come to earth in His first advent to be served by others, but to minister in behalf of the needs of others, to give His life through the horrible mistreatment of the cross described back in Matthew 20:18-19 to be a ransom for many, Matthew 20:28.

Lesson: *In the cross-before-the-crown discipleship path to which God called them, Jesus told His disciples not to strive for high human rank, but stoop to bear the burden most needed to help others if they would be truly great in God's view, and that much as Jesus Who would give of Himself on the cross to bear their sins to redeem them!*

Application: *In the footsteps of Jesus, may we not strive for rank, but strive to meet the needs of other brethren!*