

Jesus Rebuking Ambition Of The Disciples

Lesson 18

Matthew 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45

April 20, 2022

Jesus Rebukes The Disciples' Ambition For Greatness ...

Matthew 20:20-21, "Then came to him the mother of the sons of Zebedee with her sons, worshipping (him), and asking a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wouldst thou? She saith unto him, Command that these my two sons may sit, one on thy right hand, and one on thy left hand, in thy kingdom."

- From accounts of the women at the cross we know that their mother's name was Salome. (Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40)
- Here, as on other occasions (Matthew 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25), Jesus accepts worship without protest, even though, He affirms the command, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (Matthew 4:10; cf. Deuteronomy 6:13)
- Even angels refuse to accept worship from men, commanding John to "worship God" (Revelation 19:10; 22:9).
- God alone deserves worship. As Jesus accepted worship, He is God!

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The Request

- To sit on the right hand of a sovereign ruler is to occupy the highest position of honor that he can give.
- To sit on the left hand is to occupy the second highest position.
- Both positions entail not only great honor but also involve tremendous responsibility. To occupy these positions in the Kingdom of Christ was the heart's desire of these two brothers.

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Why The Request?

- Note preconceived notions. cf. Matthew 18:1ff
- Our conclusion is often that this was an ugly chapter in the lives of these otherwise good men.
- Is it possible that our conclusions are based solely on the attitude of the other apostles who "were moved with indignation against the two brothers"? Matthew 20:24

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Why The Request?

- See Context: Matthew 19:23-30
- Faith in the Promises. See Matthew 20:17-19 and Luke 18:34
 - Men of lesser faith would have wavered.
 - We should never abandon the conviction that the victory belongs to our Lord. cf. 1 Corinthians 15:25-26, 55-58
- Unquestioned Loyalty.
- Ambitious.
- The Request Not Denied.

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Matthew 20:22, "But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink? They say unto him, We are able."

- You do not know the nature of your request, nor what would be involved.
- It would NOT be attended only with honor and happiness if the request was granted, it would require much suffering and trial.
- "Cup" used metaphorically, to get one's fill.
 - Either of good (Psalms 23:5) or of ill (Psalms 75:7-8)
 - Jesus' cup was one of suffering – cf. Mark 14:36; John 18:11
- "Cup" was frequently used in the Old Testament of divine wrath (Psalms 75:8; Isaiah 51:17,22; Jeremiah 25:15-17), of suffering (Psalms 11:6), and of salvation (Psalms 116:13).

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- Figuratively, to be overwhelmed.
- Jesus uses the terms baptized and baptism describing the trials and suffering through which He would pass.
 - Jesus' baptism was one of suffering. cf. Luke 12:50

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- Cecil Willis notes: "Christ was about to endure the pain and suffering of a death on the cross, and he told these two disciples that they may also be baptized with the same baptism with which he was to be baptized. So we see that there is another New Testament baptism which refers to the suffering and agonies of our Lord on the cross ('Conversions,' 533)." (Mike Willis, *Matthew*, Truth Commentaries, pages 762-673)

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- Mark 10:39, "And they said unto him, We are able. And Jesus said unto them, The cup that I drink ye shall drink; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized" cf. John 15:20-21
- "James would be the first of the apostles to die for his faith. (Acts 12:2).
- "John would face a life of persecution and exile. [Revelation 1:9]
 - "Irenaeus, writing in the second century, records the early tradition that John wrote his gospel while living in Ephesus (*Against Heresies* 3.1.1)" (Mike Willis, *Matthew*, Truth Commentaries, page 674)
- Experienced by the apostles in general. 1 Corinthians 4:9-13
- Experienced by the apostle Paul in particular. 2 Corinthians 11:23-28

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Matthew 20:23, "He saith unto them, My cup indeed ye shall drink; but to sit on my right hand, and on (my) left hand, is not mine to give; but (it is for them) for whom it hath been prepared of my Father."

Note: Such honor does not come by assignment from Jesus, but as a product of character described in verses 25-28.

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Matthew 20:24, "And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation concerning the two brethren."

Reaction Of The Disciples:

- The ten were offended at their ambition, and at their desire to be exalted above their brethren.
- Men want status and power and fight and climb over one another to attain it.

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• Matthew 20:25-27, "But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant"

- Nations are governed by rulers and lords who have dominion and authority over the citizens of their kingdoms.
- NOTE: Jesus does not deny greatness but defines it!
 - The subjects of the Lord's kingdom must will or choose to place others above themselves and to subject themselves to them and their needs. cf. 2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:3-5; Hebrews 10:5ff