



Part Two

By

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The Sayings of Jesus

The relationship Jesus had with His disciples was truly remarkable. The eternal Son of God came from Heaven to earth and became human through a virgin birth – God in flesh (John 1:1-3, 14). He made Himself of no reputation and took on the form of a bondservant, “coming in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:6-7). Jesus was “found in appearance as a man” and humbled Himself. He became obedient to the point of death, “even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8). Because of that, God the Father highly exalted His Son and gave Him the name that is about every name, “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9-11)

This God-Man, Jesus of Nazareth, chose twelve men to follow Him and learn from Him. All of them, except for one (Judas Iscariot), would become His official representatives (apostles) to the world. The apostles would replace Judas Iscariot with Matthias after Jesus returned to Heaven and Jesus would call Saul of Tarsus from Heaven to be His special apostle to the Gentiles.

In this section of our study, we are looking at the sayings of Jesus to His disciples prior to His crucifixion. We will see what He said to them after His resurrection in a later part of this series.

The New Testament includes about 31-thousand of the words Jesus spoke while He was on earth. Based on average estimates of how many words a man speaks in a day (about 15-thousand), we have about two days worth of Jesus' sayings in the Bible. Since Jesus did a lot of speaking as a traveling preacher and teacher, He may have spoken even more than 31-thousand words. Based on an earthly ministry lasting about 36-42 months, Jesus may

have spoken between 16-million and 19-million words. What we have then are the exact words God determined before time began that Jesus would speak and the apostles would record for us to read.

For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.
John 12:49-50

This is most helpful to us as we learn how to follow Jesus today – to be His disciples and make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20). We know that what Jesus said and did on earth was according to His Heavenly Father's command. The words Jesus spoke were deliberate and authoritative.

Jesus' Sayings to His Disciples

The twelve disciples Jesus chose to become His apostles heard almost everything He said while on earth. They were true witnesses of every aspect of His amazing life and ministry. They heard Him preach and teach and saw Him perform many miracles. They also had many 'private audiences' with Jesus. By that, I mean that Jesus often spoke to the disciples privately. He always had an important reason in doing that.

Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, 'Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it. Luke 10:23-24

Jesus often gave His disciples spiritual insights that He gave to no one else. Jesus taught the crowds that followed Him in parables that were difficult to understand (almost 40 parables). The disciples wondered why He did that.

And the disciples came and said to Him, 'Why do You speak to them in parables?' He answered and said to them, 'Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see

with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.’ But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. Matthew 13:10-17

The answer Jesus gave His disciples to their question is quite remarkable on several levels.

- The disciples received special insight to the “mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” that Jesus did not give to the crowds that followed Him. This is a demonstration of God’s sovereignty in granting spiritual understanding to some and not to others. A “mystery” is a secret known only to the one who knows the secret. In the case of the “mysteries of the kingdom of God,” only God knew the secret. Jesus, who is God, chose to reveal those

mysteries to His disciples, but not to the crowds that followed Him.

- Jesus said He did not give the crowds the same insight to the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven “because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.” Why wouldn’t Jesus give the crowds the same spiritual insight to the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven? Jesus quoted from Isaiah 6:9-10 where God called Isaiah to be a prophet. God said – “Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?” Isaiah answered – “Here *am* I! Send me.” God responded to Isaiah by telling Him to go and tell the people what Jesus quoted to His disciples about the people of Israel having dull hearts and being hard of hearing. Isaiah asked God how long he should tell the people that message and God responded – “Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, The houses are without a man, The land is utterly desolate, The Lord has removed men far away, And the forsaken places *are* many in the midst of the land.” When we understand the context, we can understand the reason

Jesus said what He said. The people had not changed at all, even 700 years after Isaiah prophesied.

- The spiritual eyes of the disciples of Jesus were blessed because they personally saw and heard what the prophets, kings and “righteous men” desired to see. Think about that. The Old Testament prophets, kings and righteous men desired to see what the disciples saw but didn’t see it. Didn’t see what? The fulfillment of prophecy – the Messiah, the Son of God, walking on earth, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven, teaching crowds, and explaining the mysteries of His Kingdom to a select group of twelve men. That is truly remarkable.

Jesus Gives His Disciples Power

The twelve disciples (apostles) heard Jesus preach and teach. They saw Him heal people and cast demons out of people. Jesus looked at the multitudes of people who were following Him and He was moved with compassion for them “because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36). He turned to the Twelve and said this:

The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Matthew 9:37-38

Jesus wasn't just asking His disciples to pray, He was spiritually preparing them to become laborers in the harvest God had planned to begin at that time. Jesus called His twelve disciples to Him and “gave them power over unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease” (Matthew 10:1). The Lord also gave them very specific instructions about how to use the power

He was giving them. You will recognize several verses that are often quoted by Bible teachers, but note that they are all in the context of a commandment Jesus gave to the Twelve about how to be laborers in God's great harvest in Israel:

Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food. 'Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or

city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city! Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. 'Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone

through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes. 'A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household! Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever

denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it. He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say

*to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.
Matthew 10:5-42*

We know that this entire section of Matthew was Jesus commanding His disciples before they went out to preach, heal and cast out demons because of the words that follow:

*Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities.
Matthew 11:1*

The same account in Mark's Gospel is shorter, but includes important information about what Jesus said to His disciples:

And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits. He commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bag, no bread, no copper in their money belts— but to wear

sandals, and not to put on two tunics. Also He said to them, 'In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place. And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!' So they went out and preached that people should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them. Mark 6:7-13

Luke's account is also much shorter than Matthew's:

Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. And He said to them, Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece. Whatever house you enter, stay there,

and from there depart. And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them.’ So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. Luke 9:1-6

Jesus has all power and authority in Heaven and on earth and He graciously shared some of it with His disciples. He gave them power and authority over demons and disease. He also gave them power to determine which communities would receive God’s blessings and which would receive God’s judgment. Apostolic power was an amazing gift that Jesus gave to a select group of men two-thousand years ago. Jesus also told the disciples they would suffer persecution as they served Him and preached His Gospel.

I might add that these sayings of Jesus recorded for us in three of the Gospel accounts presents a strong and high view of Jesus. His words and actions are not that of the soft and pliable Jesus of liberal and progressive 'Christianity.' They are the words and actions of the Almighty Son of God who came to earth to declare the Kingdom of God with great power. It would be wise for us to remember that as we read the sayings of Jesus.

Jesus Reveals A Mystery

As we saw in our last study, the disciples wondered why Jesus spoke to the crowds that followed Him in parables. Parables were a common form of teaching in Judaism, but Jesus used them in a different manner. He spoke them but didn't explain them. You may remember that the disciples asked Jesus why He did that and how Jesus responded:

Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Matthew 13:13

You can read our notes from the last study for more detail about what Jesus answered that way.

The disciples asked Jesus that question after He spoke a particular parable concerning a sower who went out to sow seed. Some of seed fell by the wayside, some fell on stony places, some fell among thorns, and some fell on good ground. Sowing seed was what people did in the 1st century if they wanted food from the ground. The people who followed Jesus could understand the physical aspect of the action of the sower; many of them had probably done that themselves. However, they were not able to understand the spiritual implications. Jesus saved that explanation for a private meeting with His disciples. Let's compare what He said during the meeting from the three Gospel accounts of it:

Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Matthew 13:18-23

And He said to them, 'Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble. Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred. Mark 4:13-20

Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience. Luke 8:11-15

Mark's account includes what appears to be a slight rebuke to the disciples' question – "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?" I think Jesus used that statement as a teaching tool. It would certainly get the disciples' attention and cause them to think more carefully about future parables the Lord would speak publicly.

This was an important parable for the disciples to understand because it went to the heart of their calling. When Jesus called Peter and his brother to become His disciples, He said – "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). Peter and Andrew were fishermen and would have understood something about their calling from Jesus' words. James and his brother John were also fishermen and would have understood. How would the disciples "catch" men? Through the Word of God.

As Jesus said plainly to His disciples – “The seed is the word of God.” The “seed” the disciples would sow would never change. It would always be the Word of God. What did change was where the seed landed. Same sower, same seed, but different landing locations.

- Wayside
- Stony places
- Among thorns
- Good ground

Three of the four landing locations were not good ground for the seed (the Word of God) to grow.

- Seed that lands on wayside becomes food for the birds of the air. Satan snatches the Word of God away before a person can believe and be saved. The Gospel doesn't penetrate their hearts.
- Seed that lands on stony (rocky) places springs up quickly because the dirt is not deep. The sun scorches the young plant and it withers away. That's like people

who hear and receive the Word with joy, but because they don't have a good root they fall away when tempted. They stumble when tribulation or persecution arise because of the Word of God. They are not able to endure. These are people we know who make an emotional decision to follow Jesus, but abandon Him when the going gets tough.

- Seed that lands among thorns are choked out by the thorns. Those are people who hear God's Word and go out, but the cares, deceitful riches, and pleasures of life choke them and they become unfruitful. They bring no fruit to maturity. These are people who hear God's Word but love the world too much to become committed followers of Jesus Christ.

The Word of God did not impact the lives of the hearers in any permanent way. They did not bear fruit.

The only landing location that produces a good crop is the good ground. Those are the people who hear the Word of God “with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.” Jesus said that they were the people who “hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.”

Bearing fruit goes to the heart of being a disciple of Christ. Jesus would later tell His disciples – “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit ... By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples” (John 15:2, 18). Not every disciple bears the same volume of fruit, but all disciples will bear much fruit.

Jesus shared many more parables with the crowds in public and with the disciples in private, but this parable of the sower and the seed would be foundational to the disciples understanding of their ministry. It would remind them through the years how to determine how people were receiving their message and who were true disciples of Jesus. They would know them by their “fruit.”

‘Road Trips’ with Jesus

Students love to take “road trips” with their teachers. It’s great to get away from the confinements of a classroom and venture out into the world for first-hand learning experiences. While that’s usually a small part of a student’s learning today, it was most of the learning opportunities for the disciples of Jesus. Jesus was always moving from one place to another, preaching and teaching, healing and working other miracles.

Jesus taught the disciples much about the Kingdom of God and their part in it as they were on the road. Sometimes they were literally “on the road.” Other times they were “on the water.” Jesus skillfully wove these important lessons on discipleship and ministry into real-life situations. Here are two examples that happened together: the feeding of the five-thousand and Jesus walking on water. Both demonstrated Jesus’ supernatural power and authority over need and nature. We also learn something important about the disciples at that point in their training.

Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said to them, 'Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.' For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves. But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to Him. And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things. When the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him and said, 'This is a deserted place, and already the hour is late. Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat.' But He answered and said to them, 'You give them something to eat.' And they said to Him, 'Shall we go

and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them something to eat?’ But He said to them, ‘How many loaves do you have? Go and see.’ And when they found out they said, ‘Five, and two fish.’ Then He commanded them to make them all sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in ranks, in hundreds and in fifties. And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fish He divided among them all. So they all ate and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of fragments and of the fish. Now those who had eaten the loaves were about five thousand men.

Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away. And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray. Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the

land. Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them. Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by. And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw Him and were troubled. But immediately He talked with them and said to them, 'Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.' Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled. For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened. Mark 6:30-52

We learn several things about Jesus and the disciples from these two encounters “on the road.” The disciples saw challenges through the eyes of human weakness and doubt. Jesus saw challenges through the eyes of sovereign faith. One of the lessons Jesus taught His disciples through these kinds of experiences was to see life’s challenges through His eyes, His purpose and His endless grace. That’s a good lesson for us as well.

We might look at these two encounters as unconnected, but they are connected. That’s the point of Mark 6:52 – “For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened.” The disciples didn’t learn the lesson of the loaves, so they were amazed when they saw the power Jesus had to walk on water and calm the storm. These were not the first lessons where Jesus had demonstrated His supernatural power to the disciples. He had healed the sick and cast out demons. He also sent the disciples out to do the same. Why were they still amazed in themselves beyond measure that Jesus could walk on water and calm a storm? Their heart was hardened.

We learn more from Matthew's Gospel about what Jesus said and did as He walked on the water:

But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.' And Peter answered Him and said, 'Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.' So He said, 'Come.' And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, 'Lord, save me!' And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?' And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Truly You are the Son of God.' Matthew 14:27-33

We see here that Peter was trying to understand what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. He struggled with faith, as we all do, but Peter didn't give up. He tried, failed, tried, failed, and tried again. Peter eventually learned the lesson we all need to learn. Trust Jesus in everything.

On the Boat Again

You may have noticed that Luke's Gospel doesn't include the boat scene following the Lord's feeding of thousands of people. However, Luke does have a different boat scene that's worth noting:

Now it happened, on a certain day, that He got into a boat with His disciples. And He said to them, 'Let us cross over to the other side of the lake.' And they launched out. But as they sailed He fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water, and were in jeopardy. And they came to Him and awoke Him, saying, 'Master, Master, we are perishing!' Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was a calm. But He said to them, 'Where is your faith?' And they were afraid, and marveled, saying to one another, 'Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him! Luke 8:22-25

In this 'road trip' we see Jesus asleep in the boat. A windstorm came down on the lake and began filling the boat with water. The disciples woke Jesus from His sleep and warned Him that they were going to die. Jesus rebuked the wind and water and the storm stopped. Jesus asked the disciples a simple question: "Where is your faith?" The disciples were amazed at what Jesus did and wondered how the violent storm obeyed Him.

Luke records this event as preceding the feeding of the thousands in Luke 9:10-17. If this is chronological, it means the disciples had seen Jesus' power over nature before they saw Him walking on water and calming the storm. It is another demonstration of Jesus' authority over creation. This is a strong Jesus, not the weak Jesus of liberal and progressive 'Christianity.'

One of the great questions of our time should be “Who is Jesus of Nazareth?” Many people today don’t even know about Jesus. A majority of people who do know the name don’t know the truth about His true identity. Even many people who call themselves Christians don’t know. They think of Jesus as a good man, a moral man, a good teacher, a prophet, etc. A majority of people who call themselves ‘evangelicals’ believe Jesus was the first and greatest being created by God the Father. They believe God created Jesus to perform important tasks for Him, like creating the heavens and the earth and dying for people’s sins. Others believe Jesus was a man who lived such a good life that God elevated Him to a special position to do special things.

After seeing Jesus cast out demons, heal and feed thousands, walk on water and calm violent storms, what did His disciples believe about the identity of Jesus? They were certainly in a good position to discover His true identity.

Who Is Jesus?

We see an important exchange between Jesus and His disciples concerning His true identity in three of the Gospel accounts. He began by asking them how people identified Him. Then He asked them the same question. The answer is insightful.

When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' So they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail

against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.’ Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ. Matthew 16:13-20

Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, ‘Who do men say that I am?’ So they answered, ‘John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.’ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered and said to Him, ‘You are the Christ.’ Then He strictly warned them that they should tell no one about Him. Mark 8:27-30

And it happened, as He was alone praying, that His disciples joined Him, and He asked them, saying, 'Who do the crowds say that I am?' So they answered and said, 'John the Baptist, but some say Elijah; and others say that one of the old prophets has risen again.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered and said, 'The Christ of God. Luke 9:18-20

It's interesting to note that the crowds of people who followed Jesus thought He was a prophet. They viewed Jesus as a good man, a wise man who did good things for people. That's very similar to what hundreds of millions of people around the world believe about Jesus today.

When Jesus asked the disciples what they believed about Him, Peter was the first to answer – “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” The Lord's response is important to see:

Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'

Jesus acknowledged that Peter's answer was correct. God the Father had revealed this truth to Peter. Jesus is the Christ – the Messiah – the Son of the living God. Peter's understanding of what he said was in the early stages, but he was slowly learning about the true identity of the Man he called Master. Peter's faith was growing.

Who Is Peter?

Jesus said something to Peter in this context that has caused much confusion in Christianity for centuries:

And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

We know from reading through the New Testament that Peter played a pivotal role in the early years of Christianity. He preached the sermon that God used to greatly expand the number of disciples in Jerusalem. Peter and the other apostles taught the new believers (Acts 2:40-47). Their emphasis was prayer and the Word (Acts 6:1-4). We saw many years later that James, the half-brother of Jesus, was a leader in the Jerusalem church and Paul mentioned his name ahead of Peter's in Galatians 2:9. Paul also rebuked

Peter publicly for hypocrisy in Galatians 2:11-21. We also see in letters of the Apostolic Fathers that none of the bishops had any more power or influence than any others. The idea of the Bishop of Rome becoming predominant happened over a period of many years.

Even though the household of God was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself was and is the chief *cornerstone*. Jesus said to Peter, “you are Peter” (*Petros* – detached stone, pebble,) “and on this rock” (*petra* – large mass of connected rock) “I will build My church.” The Church is built on Jesus, not Peter. Peter was an important stone in the building of the Church, but it does not belong to Peter or any bishop or pope. Jesus will build His Church and “the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”

Son of God – Son of Man

Peter called Jesus “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Peter and the other disciples would have many more opportunities to learn that Jesus was Son of God in the years they spent with Him.

The title “Son of God” appears many times in the Gospels. The first time we see the title in the New Testament is when the angel Gabriel spoke to the Virgin Mary:

And the angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Luke 1:35

It's interesting that "Son of God" was a primary title Satan and his demons used when they spoke directly to Jesus -

Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread' ... If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. Matthew 4:3-6

And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, 'You are the Son of God. Mark 3:11

When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. And he cried out with a loud voice and said, 'What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me.' For He said to him, Come out of the man, unclean spirit! Mark 5:6-8

Many of the people watching Jesus die on the cross said He called Himself the Son of God:

He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.' Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing. Matthew 27:42-44

One of the soldiers standing near Jesus during His crucifixion called Him Son of God:

So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, 'Truly this Man was the Son of God! Mark 15:39

It's interesting that the disciples didn't call Jesus "Son of Man." That was the primary title Jesus used for Himself. It was a reference to a title Daniel used centuries earlier for the "One like the Son of Man" who would come from Heaven to establish an everlasting Kingdom:

I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed. Daniel 7:12-14

Jesus used the title, Son of Man, when He answered a pointed question from the high priest. The priest asked Jesus if He was the “the Christ, the Son of the Blessed.” That’s another way of asking if Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus answered, “I am,” then added something that the high priest viewed as blasphemy:

Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, ‘Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?’ Jesus said, ‘I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.’ Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, ‘What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?’ And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. Mark 14:61-64

The liberal/progressive idea that Jesus didn't see Himself as Divine is incorrect. Jesus knew He was the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Christ. When asked by Israel's high priest if He was the Messiah, the Son of God (the Blessed), Jesus answered "I am." That shows clearly that Jesus knew Himself to be the Son of God.

Jesus Predicts Death and Resurrection

Many liberal and progressive ‘Christians’ say that Jesus didn’t know He was going to die at the hands of the Romans and certainly didn’t know He would rise from the dead. That’s contrary to what Jesus told His disciples on multiple occasions:

From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Matthew 16:21

Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, ‘The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up.’ And they were exceedingly sorrowful. Matthew 17:22-23

Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again. Matthew 20:17-19

Jesus knew specific details of when He would die, how He would die and on which day after His death He would rise again. Liberal and progressive 'Christians' are not telling the truth about Jesus.

We see in Matthew 17 that the apostles were "exceedingly sorrowful" when Jesus told them He was going to be betrayed and killed. That was the second recorded prediction. Peter's response the first time Jesus told them did not go well for him:

Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!’ But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men. Matthew 16:22

You may wonder why Jesus was so harsh in his response to Peter. It was an important lesson for the apostles. Jesus had chosen them to speak for Him – to speak the words He gave them to speak. They were to preach His Gospel and speak only the words of God. That’s why Jesus said what He did to Peter a few verses earlier:

He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus answered and said to him, Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. Matthew 16:15-17

Jesus commended Peter because he spoke the words that God the Father had revealed to him. Jesus rebuked Peter a short time later because he spoke the words that came from Satan. Jesus had just revealed to Peter and the other apostles God's eternal plan for salvation. Satan stood in opposition to God's plan and Peter fell into the devil's deceptive trap. Peter verbally opposed God's plan – "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You." – and for that Peter received a stern rebuke. While it may have had some impact on Peter at the time, he would try to keep Jesus from going to the Cross at a later time (which we'll see in a later part of this series).

How quickly things changed for Peter. A commendation from Jesus was followed soon after by the Lord's rebuke. Peter had many more ups and downs to come as he followed Jesus. The same is true for us as well. Discipleship is a journey that is both exciting and costly.

The Cost of Discipleship

After rebuking Peter, Jesus turned to His disciples and said:

Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. Matthew 16:24-28

This was not the first time Jesus had talked with His disciples about self-denial and suffering for His sake. It was part of the charge He gave His disciples when He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease:

Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds

his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it. Matthew 10:32-39

Does this sound like the “weak, soft” Jesus of liberal and progressive ‘Christianity?’ It does not. Jesus was strong, focused and authoritative in what He said to His disciples.

Discipleship is based on being a follower, a learner and a doer. It’s not just a matter of calling yourself a ‘Christian’ because you were born in a majority Christian nation or because you attend a Christian church from time to time. Being a disciple of Jesus Christ means you follow Him and learn from Him. It means you do what He says.

Jesus Transfigured

Many atheists, including myself before becoming a Christian, used Mark 9:1 as a way to 'prove' that Jesus was wrong. I didn't even believe Jesus had existed, but still enjoyed confusing Christians about what's in the Bible. As it turned out, I was the one who was confused.

Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power. Mark 9:1

Atheists and others point to the impossibility of anyone standing with Jesus in the early part of the first century AD not tasting death until they saw the Kingdom of God. Looks like a slam-dunk for the atheists. Not so fast. Read the next verse:

Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. Mark 9:2

So what, you may ask? Keep reading:

His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, ‘Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah— because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!’ Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves. Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that

they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant. Mark 9:3-10

What we see here is how Jesus would show His disciples the Kingdom of God “present with power” before they tasted death.

- Peter, James and John saw Jesus transfigured and witnessed His true glory, the glory of the King.
- Peter, James and John saw Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah. That represents how the Law and Prophets pointed to Jesus and His Kingdom.
- Peter, James and John saw a large cloud and heard a voice saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” That points to God the Father’s approval of what Jesus the King was saying and accomplishing on earth.
- Peter, James and John heard Jesus command them not to tell anyone what they had seen until “the Son of

Man had risen from the dead.” That’s when the Kingdom of God would be “present with power.”

None of the apostles would “taste death” until they saw the Kingdom of God present with power.

If an atheist or other unbeliever throws a Bible verse at you and says that proves Christianity isn’t true, think it through. Look at the context and be sure you understand the meaning of the words being used (Hebrew and Greek). Feel free to **send us your questions** and we’ll do our best to give you a helpful answer.

Handling Disputes

As exciting as it must have been to be one of the Lord's apostles, it also came with challenges – challenges for the apostles and for Jesus.

Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, 'What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?' But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. Mark 9:33-34

Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest. Luke 9:46

Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. Luke 22:24

The Lord's closest disciples (the apostles) "disputed" among themselves. Here they are following the Messiah and rightful King of Israel, the Son of God, and arguing with each other about who would be the greatest in the coming Kingdom of Jesus.

Something we might note here is that the apostles believed Jesus was King of a soon-coming Kingdom. That's why they were disputing with each other. They weren't having a theological argument about whether Jesus was really the promised Messiah who would one day rule Israel. They were arguing about their position in that Kingdom. Who would be the greatest?

Before we become too judgmental about the apostles disputing with each other, think about what you've witnessed in churches. Ever seen any Christians disputing with each other? I've seen so many in my life that it's difficult to select the best example. I began my drift toward atheism because of disputes I witnessed in my church as a child and teenager. Even after becoming a Christian as an adult, I

continued to see disputes that tore apart families, friendships and churches.

So, how did Jesus handle the dispute? He sat the twelve men down and taught them an important lesson.

And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, 'If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.' Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, 'Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me. Mark 9:35-37

Did that end the dispute? Well, not exactly. It wasn't long after this lesson that James and John came to Jesus and asked Him to do something for them. Jesus asked them what they wanted Him to do. They said, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in your glory" (Mark 10:37). The same account in Matthew 20

shows us that James and John's mother was also involved in the request. The other apostles overheard the conversation and were "greatly displeased with James and John" (Mark 10:41) ("And when the ten heard *it*, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers." Matthew 20:24).

Jesus used this opportunity to share two important lessons with His apostles. First, what Jesus said to James and John in the hearing of their mother:

But Jesus answered and said, 'You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They said to Him, 'We are able.' So He said to them, 'You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father. Matthew 20:22-23

But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” They said to Him, ‘We are able.’ So Jesus said to them, ‘You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared.” Mark 10:38-40

Jesus confirmed that His Kingdom was coming, but who would sit on the right and left side of Him on the throne was a decision of the Father. That statement opposes those who say Jesus never claimed He was the Messiah and would be King of Israel. Jesus also told James and John that they would experience something similar to what He would face – rejection and death. As we know from reading the rest of the New Testament, James was killed by Herod and John was banished to an island by the Roman government. Each man did drink the cup that Jesus drank and was baptized with a similar baptism. Just as Jesus said would happen.

Jesus then spoke to all of His apostles. Ten of them were upset with James and John who wanted a higher position in the coming Kingdom, so Jesus used that as an opportunity to teach them again about the importance of being servant-leaders:

But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, 'You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. Mark 10:42-45

Lessons in Leadership

The apostles gave Jesus many opportunities to talk with them about their leadership style. Jesus wanted them to lead the way He lead them. That's one of the great benefits we get from reading the words of Jesus. Even as Jesus taught His apostles about servant-leadership, we see that's what He wants from all His followers. If we only see the words of Jesus as a record of history, we're missing out on what can change our hearts and minds. Jesus was preparing the apostles to make disciples and His method was servant-leadership.

Jesus knew He would soon return to Heaven. He had just told the apostles that He was going to be betrayed into the hands of men who would kill Him, but He would rise from the dead the third day. The apostles didn't understand what Jesus was saying and were afraid to ask Him what He meant (Mark 10:31-32). The next thing we see in Mark 10 is the apostles arguing with each other about who would be the greatest in His Kingdom. Jesus used every opportunity

with the apostles to teach and demonstrate what it would mean for them to be leaders in His Kingdom.

Mark 9 is a great chapter to read to learn some of these lessons of leadership. Soon after teaching the apostles about servant-leadership and being “servant of all,” John told Jesus that they (the apostles) had seen someone who didn’t follow them casting out demons in Jesus’ name. John said, “we forbade him because he does not follow us.” Time for another lesson in leadership:

But Jesus said, ‘Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side. For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward. But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to

sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched — where ‘Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.’ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— where ‘Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.’ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire— where ‘Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.’ For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another. Mark 9:39-50

John was concerned because a man was casting out demons in Jesus' name, but was not part of the official discipleship group. The man, John said, "does not follow us." While John might have had a real concern about protecting Jesus' ministry, there's also the possibility John was still thinking about the position he wanted as an apostle and leader in the group. Whatever John's reason, Jesus taught him and the other apostles an important lesson.

The day would soon come where John and the other apostles would have to lead the Church that Jesus was building. They would need to understand how to work with a wide variety of people. Some people would come for the right reasons – some would not. How would John and the others know the difference?

Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side.

Jesus confirmed that the man was working a miracle by casting out demons in His name. Jesus also confirmed that the man was “on our side.” An important part of servant-leadership is being able to identify friend or foe and to welcome people who may differ. Many people followed Jesus during His ministry and some were not part of the “official” group. The apostles would need to look deeper than externals to see true discipleship and intent.

Another thing we learn here is that there are “sides.” We know that Jesus is one side, but who is the other “side?” The context gives us a clue. The man was casting out “demons.” Demons are part of the “other side,” which is the devil’s side.

The apostles had seen Jesus cast out demons. Jesus had also given them power to cast out demons (Mark 3:15; Matthew 10:1). However, the apostles had also seen that casting out some demons was more difficult than others (Mark 9:17-18). They asked Jesus why they were unable to cast out the demon and Jesus replied – “This kind can come

out by nothing but prayer and fasting” (Mark 9:29). Another lesson.

Leadership is complicated and takes time to learn. Servant-leadership is more difficult because the leader also has the heart of a servant. How do you do that? Look to Jesus who will teach you.

Jesus Reveals His Plan

Jesus came from Heaven to earth with a specific and detailed plan about what He would say and do. Jesus, the Son of God, and His Father and the Holy Spirit designed the plan in eternity. It's settled and won't change. Jesus was preaching and teaching on earth in fulfillment of that plan. Nothing is going to deter Him from completing the plan completely and perfectly.

Jesus is God. He's the Messiah. He's the coming King. It's interesting to watch the apostles respond to Jesus as the Lord revealed His plan to them. They understood He was the Messiah and future King of Israel, so you would think they'd fall in line with His plan without question. You might think that, but they sometimes didn't. They questioned Jesus about His plan and even rebuked Him. While that may sound a bit audacious on their part, if we're honest we would probably have done the same thing. After all, the apostles were human just like us.

This is probably a good time to bring it up. Each of the apostles had their own plan. They all came to discipleship from a different perspective that drove their ideas, hopes, dreams and plans for their own future. Their plans would, at times, run counter to Jesus' plans. That could lead to disagreements with Jesus. How did Jesus handle those moments? He taught them.

Teachable Moments

One thing we can learn from how Jesus handled disagreements, disputes, misunderstandings and even rebukes from His disciples is that the Lord used them as “teachable moments.” Jesus is the Master Teacher. No better teacher has ever taught. The Lord never missed an opportunity to use what might appear to be an uncomfortable moment as an important lesson about His Kingdom. That was part of God’s eternal plan. We can learn from that in our own relationships and ministries. Look for teachable moments in every situation, no matter how disrespectful or dumb we might think about it.

Examples of Disagreements

Let's take a look at a couple of examples of the disagreements the apostles had with Jesus. There are many more than what we'll list here, but this will give us some idea about how Jesus turned disagreements into positive opportunities for growth in the apostles' lives as well as His revealing the Eternal Plan. These are also an example for liberals, progressives and others who would say Jesus didn't say what He said so the apostles could not have questioned anything Jesus did or said. Unlike the false gospels written in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, we see the total picture of how Jesus interacted with His apostles.

Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God

as a little child will by no means enter it.’ And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them. Mark 10:13-16

The apostles followed Jesus for different reasons and reacted to other people’s interest in Jesus for different reasons. Mark’s Gospel, which is Peter’s recollection of his years with Jesus, gives us the impression that all the disciples rebuked the people who brought little children to Jesus. It was common at in the first century AD for Jewish parents to bring their children to prominent rabbis who might place their hands on the children to receive special blessings. However, the apostles apparently didn’t want Jesus to “waste” His precious teaching time blessing children, so they “rebuked” the parents.

The word “rebuke” is *epetimēsan* and means “warn, admonish, chide.” The word was often used as a warning to prevent something from going wrong. We’re not sure what the apostles thought might go wrong if the children approached Jesus for a blessing, but the strength of the word used lets us know the apostles were in a *protective* mode. The apostles might have thought that bringing children to Jesus would interrupt Him from teaching the adults and take away from the importance of the work He was doing. How did Jesus react to the apostles’ rebuke?

First, we see that Jesus was “greatly displeased.” The Greek word is *ēganaktēsen* and means “angry, incensed, indignant, grieved.” That’s a very strong reaction from Jesus toward His disciples. Why? Because they were opposing His plan. Jesus came to earth from Heaven with a plan that included access by all people. Jesus came to seek and save the lost. It was not in the apostles’ job description to determine who could and could not have access to Jesus.

Jesus could have chewed out the disciples for their bad choice, but He did something else. He used the event as a teachable moment – “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.” Remember that Jesus had come to earth to preach the “gospel of the kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14). Jesus was Gospel and Kingdom focused. We should follow His example and look for opportunities to turn a negative situation into a teachable moment to focus on the Gospel of Christ.

The Apostle Peter was often the first apostle to speak out on a variety of issues. One example is found in Mark 8. Jesus asked His disciples “who do you say that I am?” Peter answered – “You are the Christ.”

Jesus then began to teach the disciples that “the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again” (Mark 8:31). As we know the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus was central to God’s eternal plan.

However, Peter went into protective mode and actually rebuked Jesus for saying that.

The Greek word for “rebuke” in Mark 8:32 is *epitiman*, which is the same word Luke used when describing how the apostles rebuked the parents who brought their children to Jesus. It’s hard to imagine that Peter would “warn, chide, admonish” Jesus. Yes, Peter did it privately (he took Jesus “aside and began to rebuke Him), but it was still a disciple rebuking the Messiah. How did Jesus respond? He used the event as a teachable moment for all the disciples.

But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men. Mark 8:33

While this sounds harsh, keep in mind that Peter had just declared in front of the other apostles that Jesus was the Christ (Messiah). Matthew’s version of the same event gives us a little more information about how Jesus responded to Peter’s declaration:

Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'" Matthew 16:17-19

Jesus told Peter that he was “blessed” because God the Father had revealed to him that Jesus was the Messiah. Peter spoke the words of God under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Moments later Jesus rebuked Peter because he spoke the words of Satan. Peter experienced both pride and humility within a matter of minutes because of the words he spoke.

So, what's the lesson here? What's the "teachable moment" for the disciples in these two events? There are two powerful forces at work in the spiritual realm and followers of Jesus must be careful who influences their thinking and their words. It was just as easy for Peter to speak what was Satanic as what God had revealed to him. Jesus was the promised Messiah and He was going to die and rise from the dead. Both statements are true. Peter had no business rebuking anything Jesus claimed to be true, especially when it came to the Lord's plan to go to Jerusalem and give His life as a ransom for many. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is at the very heart of the Gospel. Anyone who claims to be a follower of Jesus Christ but says otherwise is not hearing from God.

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the

Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. 1 Corinthians 15:1-8

The Liberal/Progressive Problem

While it's easy to read about Peter's error, it's more difficult for us to see that we often do the same thing. We agree with things with which we agree and disagree with things with which we disagree. We've all done it because we're human. However, the liberal/progressive wing of 'Christianity' does it all the time – not just from time to time.

Liberals and Progressives who think they're followers of Jesus say that much of what we read in the Bible is not true or that we 'misunderstand' what the Bible really means. Many believe that the teachings of Jesus provide just one of many ways to God even though Jesus clearly said that He is the only Way to God. Many Liberal and Progressive 'Christians' don't believe that Jesus is the eternal Son of God. Many deny the basics of the Gospel as preached by Christ and His apostles. They are "not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." Satan has influenced their thinking.

We left the Apostle Peter in a difficult situation in the last part of our study. Here's what happened.

Jesus asked His disciples who they believed He was and Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus responded by saying:

'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Matthew 16:17-19

So far, so good for Peter.

Jesus then began to show to His disciples “that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.” Peter had a problem with that. He took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!” Jesus responded by saying, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”

Not so good for Peter.

We pick up the story from there.

When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, ‘Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses

his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.’ And He said to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.’ Mark 8:34-9:1

Keep in mind that Peter had rebuked Jesus because He said He was going to Jerusalem to die. Now Jesus is saying that whoever desired to follow Him would need to deny himself and take up his cross. Whoever desired to saved his life would lose it, but whoever lost his life for Jesus and the Gospel would save it. Then Jesus put His words into the context of the coming of the Kingdom of God, which was a central theme of His Gospel message. Jesus even said there were some people standing with Him who would not taste death until they saw the Kingdom of God present with power. Peter probably wondered what Jesus meant by that.

The King Transfigured

Peter wouldn't have to wait long to see what Jesus meant.

Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'— because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!' Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves. Now as they came down from the

mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant. And they asked Him, saying, ‘Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’ Then He answered and told them, ‘Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him. Mark 9:2-13

This is a remarkable event! Jesus was “transfigured” (*metemorphōthē* – transformed) in front of Peter, James and John. The word comes from *morphóō*, which means “changing *form* in keeping with inner reality.” The English word *metamorphosis* comes from the Greek word.

Jesus transformed before His disciples eyes so they saw the Lord's "inner reality." The outer reality of Jesus of Nazareth was human flesh (e.g. John 1:14; Romans 1:3; 1 John 4:2-3; 2 John 1:7). The inner reality of Jesus was that of the Son of God and that's what He showed to Peter, James and John.

Here's how Matthew and Mark described Jesus at the moment of His transfiguration:

His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. Matthew 17:2

His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. Mark 9:2

Notice key words about the “inner reality” of Jesus:

- face shone like the sun
- clothes became as white as the light
- clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow

Now, compare the “inner reality” of Jesus that Peter, James and John saw at the Transfiguration to what John saw years later on Patmos. Keep in mind that this is how Jesus looked on the outside. We might call that the “outer and inner reality” that John saw.

*His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.
Revelation 1:14-16*

What John saw at the Transfiguration was similar to what John saw decades later on Patmos:

- head and hair white like wool, as white as snow
- countenance like the sun shining in its strength

We can also look back at the Old Testament of the prophets' visions of God in Heaven as well as what the Apostle Paul saw when Jesus called Him.

I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire; A fiery stream issued And came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, And the books were opened. Daniel 7:9-10

While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. Acts 26:12-13

The transfiguration of Jesus in front of Peter, James and John was a supernatural event. What strikes me most at this moment is that I will one day see Jesus in all His bright glory, as will all who trust in Him for salvation.

The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. Revelation 21:23

The Witness of the Law and Prophets

Another amazing part of this remarkable event was that Elijah and Moses appeared with the transfigured Jesus and talked with Him. You may remember that God took Elijah to Heaven without Elijah dying (2 Kings 2) and that God personally buried Moses (Deuteronomy 34). Elijah represented the Prophets and Moses represented the Law. I'm reminded what Jesus told His disciples after His resurrection:

Then He said to them, 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.' And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Luke 24:44-45

The “transfiguration” of Jesus is one of more important events of His earthly ministry. It demonstrated clearly to His inner circle of disciples that Jesus was the Son of God and Son of Man. It also proved that He was on a special mission from God that connected directly to the Law and the Prophets. Jesus was the fulfillment of everything written in the Hebrew Bible.

What did Moses and Elijah say to Jesus? What did Jesus say to them? The Bible does not tell us. We don't know if they spoke for a few seconds or a few minutes. We don't know what Moses said, what Elijah said, or what Jesus said. That's one of those secret things that belong to God (Deuteronomy 29:29). However, the fact that Jesus spoke with Elijah and Moses is something God revealed to Peter, James and John, and to us through the writings of Matthew and Mark. Whatever they talked about was certainly important and probably relevant to the Lord's upcoming death and resurrection.

Moses had long before spoken about a Prophet who would come some day to the people of Israel and they would hear what He had to say:

The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear ... And the Lord said to me: 'What they have spoken is good. I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. Deuteronomy 18:15, 17-18

Jesus was that promised Prophet.

Peter didn't know what to say as he witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus, and the appearance of Moses and Elijah. However, as was usual for the outspoken disciple, Peter said something:

Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, ‘Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah’— because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid.

Peter, James and John next saw a cloud overshadow them and heard a voice come out of the cloud:

‘This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!’

These words were similar to what God the Father said at the baptism of Jesus:

It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, ‘You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Mark 1:9-11

Just as quickly as the transfiguration began, it came to an end.

Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves.

There would be no time or need for Peter to build the three tabernacles for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Jesus told them not to say anything to the other disciples, “till the Son of Man had risen from the dead.” That was a direct reference to what Peter had rebuked Jesus about only days earlier. Jesus was going to Jerusalem to die and rise from the dead. Peter needed to accept that fact.

Jesus told Peter, James and John not to tell the other disciples what they had seen until He had risen from the dead. The inner-circle disciples did as they were told and kept what happened to themselves. They did question what the rising from the dead meant. They also asked Jesus why the scribes said that Elijah must come first. Jesus answered:

Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him.

Peter, James and John then understood that Jesus was speaking about John the Baptist.

A Prophecy of Death

Jesus was born to die. Let me say that again. **Jesus was born to die!**

Jesus, the Eternal Son of God, came from Heaven to earth through the process of human birth – but without a human father. The angel Gabriel told the virgin Mary that “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God*” (Luke 1:35).

Why would the Son of God be born to a virgin? To gain a human body. Why? So He could die a human death for our salvation.

Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—In the volume of the book

it is written of Me—To do Your will, O God.’ Previously saying, ‘Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them’ (which are offered according to the law), then He said, ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.’ He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Hebrews 10:5-10As we saw in the last part of our series, the Apostle Peter ran into some problems after confessing that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah).

And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke this word openly. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.’ Mark 8:31-33

Peter believed that Jesus was the Christ, but he didn't believe Jesus should suffer and die. Why would Peter have made that mistake? Because of what Jews believed about the coming of the Messiah. Peter and the other disciples believed that Jesus was the Messiah, but they believed He had come to establish a physical kingdom. They didn't know then what you and I know now. Jesus had to die so that they and we could be "sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all.*"

Jesus' response to Peter was quick and powerful – "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." Jesus pointed to the real enemy of God's eternal plan – Satan. The devil had been deceiving God's people for thousands of years and was still up to his old tricks. Peter and the other disciples needed to be "mindful of the things of God," rather than the "things of men." In other words, the disciples needed to think differently about what Jesus said about His death.

Jesus often spoke about things that were going to happen in the future. He answered their questions about what would happen at the end of the age. He told them about His impending suffering and death, and His glorious resurrection from death.

Three Times

Jesus told His disciples about His death three times before He was arrested, tried, crucified, and buried. He told the disciples three times about His resurrection from death. The disciples didn't understand at the time, but remembered His words after Jesus rose from the dead.

1. And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. Mark 8:31
2. Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know *it*. For He taught His disciples and said to them, 'The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.' Mark 9:30-31
3. Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the

twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.' Mark 10:32-34

Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, 'Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.' And they remembered His words. Luke 24:3-8

As you follow the timeline of Mark chapters 8, 9, and 10, you see Him and the disciples traveling near Caesarea Philippi, then on through Galilee to a mountain where Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John, then on to Capernaum. Jesus left Galilee with His disciples and traveled “to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan” (Mark 10:1). It was “on the road, going up to Jerusalem” where Jesus prophesied His death and resurrection for a third time to His disciples.

Jesus and the disciples went on to Jericho from there where He healed Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, from blindness. Jesus then traveled to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, and sent two of His disciples to a nearby village to get a colt to bring to Jesus. Jesus rode that colt into Jerusalem and entered into the temple. We know that as the day of His “triumphal entry” into Jerusalem as crowds of people shouted, “Hosanna! ‘Blessed *is* He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ Blessed *is* the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” (Mark 11:9-10) After looking around “at all things” (Mark 11:11), Jesus returned to Bethany with His disciples.

That was several days before Jesus was betrayed into the hands of men, rejected by the elders and chief priests, condemned to death, crucified, buried, and rose from the dead – just as He had told His disciples three times before it happened.

An Apologetic Perspective

From an apologetic perspective, Jesus foretelling His betrayal, arrest, rejection, suffering, crucifixion, burial, and resurrection three separate times to His disciples is powerful.

Jesus was very specific about what would happen to Him in Jerusalem, weeks before they happened. Everything Jesus said would happen to Him happened. That's a powerful apologetic for Christians. It's one of the things that played an important role in my becoming a Christian.

As I said at the beginning of this article, Jesus was born to die. We find the first prophecy of His death in Genesis 3:15. We find prophecies concerning His death throughout the Old Testament. Some examples are:

- Isaiah 53
- Deuteronomy 21:23
- Exodus 12 (The Passover Lamb)
- Psalm 34:20

- Psalm 22
- Psalm 69:21
- Psalm 16:10
- Zechariah 12:10
- Zechariah 13:7
- Amos 8:9

The words Jesus spoke to His disciples should be an important part of our “faith defense” in the days, months, and years to come.

Next eBook

Jesus had much to say to the disciples between the time He entered Jerusalem and His death on the Cross. We'll look at those words in the next eBook as we continue our special series, *And Jesus Said*.

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