

Jesus Warns Against Selfish Ambition

Matthew 20:17-28; Mark 10:32-45; Luke 18:31-34

¹⁷ 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 disciples aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: ¹⁸ "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. For the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death ¹⁹ and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. They will crucify Him. And the third day He will rise again. ³⁴ But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.

²⁰ Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. ²¹ And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your Kingdom." ³⁵ James and John, the sons of Zebedee were also saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask." ³⁷ Grant that we may sit, one on your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory." ²² But Jesus answered and said to them, "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." ²³ 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."

²⁴ And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers, James and John. ²⁵ 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 those who are great exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. ²⁷ And whoever desires to be first among you shall be slave of all. ²⁸ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

Questions:

1. What was it about the way Jesus was going in front of His disciples which caused them to be amazed and afraid? (see John 11:7-16 and 11:55-57)
2. Why did Jesus take the disciples aside privately to talk about what was going to happen to Him in Jerusalem? Why not announce this openly with the other crowds following?
3. What new information does Jesus reveal in this third announcement of His coming death? (see Matt 16:21-22; 17:22-23) How was He careful to always end these announcements with victory?
4. With such a clear description of what was coming in Jerusalem, why were His own twelve disciples not able to understand? vs 34 How would all these details later become very meaningful to them?
5. What request did the mother of James and John make? Was this just the mother's request, or the two brothers themselves? Did they really believe Jesus would do for them "whatever we ask"?
6. How did this request definitely prove the disciples were not understanding what Jesus had just told them in vs 17-19?
7. How did Jesus answer the request for chief seats in the kingdom? What did He mean by His "drinking His cup" and "baptized with His baptism"? Did they understand when they said "We are able"?
8. Jesus said they would indeed drink the cup and undergo His baptism.. how did they do this? Why then did Jesus not grant their request?
9. How did the other ten disciples react when they heard this request? How does their indignation show they shared the very same spirit and understanding of the brothers they were upset with?
10. What is the worldly principle of greatness and how does it differ from greatness in the kingdom of God?
11. How was Jesus the greatest example of what He was trying to teach His disciples? How was He a ransom?