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THE GREAT QUESTION

– NOVEMBER 17. – MARK 8:27-9:1. –

"Thou art The Christ, the Son of the Living God." – Matt. 16:16.

FOR A CONSIDERABLE period of His ministry our Lord did not declare Himself, even to His disciples, to be the Messiah. Undoubtedly He chose the wiser course. As the Great Teacher He instructed the people, until they said, "Never man spake like this man"; He healed the people, until they said, "Could Messiah do more than this?" It was better, undoubtedly, that the thought should gradually come upon the minds of His followers than that He should have started in with making that claim – better that the people should claim it for Him than that He claim the honor for Himself.

He did, however, wish His disciples to know, and He approached the question by asking, "Who do men say that I am?" He got a reply, that some thought Him John the Baptist risen from the dead; that others considered Him to be Elijah risen from the dead, and others thought of Him as being perhaps one of the other Prophets.

Then came the point of the question: "But who say *ye* that I am?" St. Peter answered and said, "Thou art The Christ, the Son of the Living God." Jesus admitted the correctness of this, saying, "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but My Father which is in Heaven."

Forthwith Jesus began to explain to the beloved Twelve the experiences that lay before Him – how the Kingdom would be formally proffered to the Jews, and how through their representatives, the Elders, the chief priests, they would reject Him; how He would be killed, and after three days rise again. [R5120 : page 328]

He made the statement about His death very emphatic, and the disciples clearly understood it. Judas, angrily disappointed, considered

it a disgrace upon our Lord for Him to take such a view of the future, and a disgrace also upon the Apostles, because if Jesus had such expectations it would modify and regulate His course, and soon disaster would come to Him, and the dashing of all their hopes which He had inculcated – hopes of sitting with Him in His Throne, etc.

Doubtless all of the Apostles were disappointed, but only St. Peter had the courage to express himself, saying, "Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not happen." You will, we all know, as the Messiah, attain the Throne of Israel and thus eventually the Throne of the world, and bring blessing to the whole human race; and as you have promised, we shall be with You in Your Throne.

"GET THEE BEHIND ME, SATAN!"

In this course St. Peter was opposing the Divine will and plan, of which the death of Jesus was the very center or hub, from which would radiate all the fulfillments of all the various promises – to the Church first, to Israel next, and finally to all nations, peoples, kindreds and tongues. Jesus perceived that these influences were striving to hinder His consummation of His sacrifice, even as Satan tried to do in the beginning of His consecration.

To make the matter very emphatic He said to St. Peter, "Get thee behind Me, adversary," thy words savor not of the things of God's plan, but of the things of human judgment and preference. Then He began to make clear to His followers what had not been "meat in due season" to give them before, in such plain terms, namely, that whoever desired to be counted in with Him in any part of His work must realize that it would cost him all that he possessed of an earthly kind; he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow in the footsteps of the Redeemer.

Anyone solicitous of maintaining his rights and holding on to the present life, and unwilling to sacrifice all, will lose the great "prize" of the Divine nature, which will be given to those who do take up the

cross and make a full sacrifice of earthly interests. And on the other hand, he who will faithfully lose his life for Jesus' sake will save it – will gain the reward of life on the spirit plane.

Moreover, the same principle that now thus operates will always operate, namely, that whoever is simply selfish, loving his own life and his own interests, will not be accounted worthy of everlasting life; but those who will sacrifice, if need be, in the interests of the Lord's cause will be the ones accounted worthy in character for eternal life.

"WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT A MAN?"

God has provided a future life for every soul of man through the redemption accomplished by Jesus, but only the noble of heart, of character, of life, who will accept this great blessing through the Divinely appointed way will get it. If they selfishly seek for the whole world, the selfishness thus developed will make them unfit for the eternal life. For what would a man take in exchange for the loss of his life? Would he consider wealth or fame or name for a few years in the present time worthy of exchange at profit, if it were to cost him eternal glory and eternal life? Surely not. We are therefore to have in mind that character-building is absolutely essential to our attaining eternal life upon any plane, by the proposition that God has made us through His Son.

Whoever becomes a follower of the Lord and hopes to gain the prize of everlasting life and glory on the spirit plane must do so wholeheartedly, and not in an underhanded or secret manner. He must come out fully and courageously and properly acknowledge Jesus and acknowledge His words. And Jesus puts Himself and His words on a parity – "whoever is ashamed of Me and of My words." Jesus' words are Jesus' doctrines or teachings. To be ashamed of the Truth, to be ashamed of the Divine Plan, to be ashamed of what we find to be the teachings of God's Word, because they are unpopular with men, is to offend the Lord and to prove ourselves unworthy of His favor.

All who are of His Church will need Christ continually as their Advocate, down to the very last, when He shall present them blameless and unreprieveable before the Father in love. (Col. 1:22.) And if they would maintain Him as their Advocate, they must also be advocating His cause amongst men, not ashamed of Him and not ashamed of His doctrine, His words.

That the Lord addressed His words especially to the disciples is shown by His reference to others of that nation who had not made such a consecration as all of His disciples must make. The others were called "an adulterous and sinful generation." The followers of Christ must hold up the Light of Truth before the world, and so doing faithfully they will be acknowledged by the Lord Jesus in due time, when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. He will not be ashamed to acknowledge them; He will present them to the Father and to the holy angels.

THE GREAT QUESTION

The great question of eighteen centuries ago is the great question of today! Who is Jesus? If, as some claim, He was merely a good man, a most able Teacher, then He was not The Christ, for The Christ, although the embodiment of all these qualities, was more, much more. To be The Christ, He must have been "the Man Christ Jesus," who gave Himself a Ransom-price for all, to be testified in due time. (I Tim. 2:5,6.) And this signifies that He must have been, not of ordinary birth, but extraordinary, born from above, because if born in the ordinary course of nature He would be like others of Adam's sons, subject to the sentence of death, and hence unable to save either Himself or others. But if He was The Christ, the Sent of God, who left the glory of the Father and was made flesh that He might "taste death for every man," then we behold Him as the great Redeemer of the world, whose death was necessary as a Ransom, or corresponding price, to secure the release of mankind from the death sentence and to make possible the resurrection of Adam and his race.

More than this, the word Christ signifies The Anointed. The Bible declares that the Anointed Lord shall be the Great King, Prophet and Priest, whose Kingdom shall be under the whole heavens – a Kingdom which shall last for a thousand years; and shall destroy sin and all who love sin; and which shall lift up all humanity willing to return into harmony with God. According to the Scriptures, this Jesus is – the Messiah. And His present work is the gathering of a Bride class, to be His joint-heir in His glorious Kingdom, which will be set up soon after the Elect Church shall have been completed by the glorious change of the First Resurrection.

What think ye of Messiah? What think ye of His invitation to become His associates in His glory and Kingdom? What think ye of the cost of self-denial, self-sacrifice? What think ye of the great reward? Let those who have made the consecration review the terms; let those who have not made this consecration do as Jesus [R5120 : page 329] said: "Sit down and count the cost," before making a decision, so that if they become His disciples they will do so intelligently, and be loyal and faithful in their course.

Only those who appreciate the "High Calling of God in Christ," "The Heavenly calling" – only such will have the necessary incentive to run with patience the race upon which they started when making a consecration; and only those who run the race faithfully will win the prize; and only by the assistance of the Great Advocate can any hope to come off conqueror and "more than conqueror," through His precious Blood.

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