

GREATNESS THE REWARD OF SERVICE

– *JULY 12.* – MARK 10:32-45. –

"The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a Ransom for many." – Verse 45.

IT WAS at the close of Jesus' ministry. For more than three years the Master had been calling His disciples and instructing them. They had come to recognize Him as the Messiah, the Heir of all God's promises, the One through whom the Messianic Kingdom would be set up, which would bless all the world of mankind – the dead as well as the living.

The Master had particularly assured them that if faithful they should sit with Him in His Throne. However, He had not told them that His Kingdom would be a spiritual one, and that they would need the change of the First Resurrection before they could be sharers of it. He had not yet made clear to them the fact that a whole Age would intervene before they would be sharers in the Kingdom, and the Kingdom itself be established amongst men. But he had hinted all this. He had said, "I have many things to tell you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when the Spirit of Truth is come, it will bring My words to your remembrance and show you respecting future things."

Jesus did, however, begin to break to the disciples a part of the news necessary for them to know and appreciate, lest they should be entirely overwhelmed and discouraged. He told them that He was going up to Jerusalem, and that the result would be that He would be delivered to the Gentiles to be crucified. St. Peter, always courageous, this time brought upon himself a severe rebuke. He undertook to correct the Master, saying, "You are not telling us truth; these things shall not happen to You, and Your saying them to us will only discourage us. You are, as I have

confessed, the great Messiah. You are to reign; You are not to be crucified at all. Give up that thought, dear Master; and let us continue to think about the glorious things of the Kingdom into which You will soon be ushered and in which we, as your faithful disciples, will soon have a share.

But Jesus rebuked St. Peter, saying, "Get thee behind Me, adversary; for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

And now in this lesson Jesus, in the same journey, again brought up the matter of the shame, ill-treatment and death which was to come upon Him. This time He included the thought of His resurrection from the dead on the third day. However, the matter was incomprehensible to the disciples; and they merely said to themselves, This is another of those dark sayings of the Master which seem so mysterious. Remember how He said to us on one occasion, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." That was a dark saying, and we could not understand it. But we hung on, although we did not then, neither do we now, understand the meaning of these words. Here we have another similar statement: the Master is representing Himself as receiving the treatment due to the vilest of criminals – crucifixion.

They could not comprehend the meaning of the Master's words; these thoughts seemed so different from what they had been expecting! How could they receive them? Not until after Pentecost did they get the full grasp of the situation and of what Jesus had told them. There the Holy Spirit began to make plain the Divine arrangement – that the sufferings of all the Church must come first before the glories of the Kingdom would be revealed and the blessing to the world begin.

ON RIGHT HAND AND LEFT

Another of the Gospels tells us that the mother of James and John came with them and voiced their plea for them. They believed that the time for distributing the honors of the Kingdom was very near at hand. They wanted to speak for prominent places. We need not assume that these two dear disciples sought the positions closest to the Master merely for ambition's sake. Rather, let us suppose that they loved the Lord very dearly, and therefore thought that they could appreciate a nearness to Him more than could some of the others. Indeed, they evidently appreciated being near to the Master in His hours of suffering and deepest experiences; and they were permitted to come nearer than the majority of The Twelve. On several special occasions the Lord took with Him the same James and John, and Peter. They were with Him in the holy mount, and at the awakening of Jairus' daughter, and in Gethsemane's Garden. They were glorious characters, whom the Lord greatly loved.

Let us mark carefully the words of Jesus. He did not say, My dear disciples, there will be no Throne to sit upon, but on the contrary He declared that while there would be a Throne, and while there would be places of preference in that Throne, they would not be distributed by Himself, but by the Father.

The Father stands as the Representative of absolute Justice, while Jesus stands as the Representative of mercy, compassion, forgiveness. Places in the Millennial Kingdom are not to be given on the score of mercy or favoritism, but absolutely on the score of quality. The Lord Jesus Himself will have the highest place, because He is worthy. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." The Father will give these to Him, as He has promised. Indeed, He has given our Lord honor and great glory, even though this Kingdom glory still waits until the Church,

the Body of Christ, shall have been completed by the change of the First Resurrection.

WHAT KINGDOM IS MEANT

For many centuries confusion has prevailed amongst Christian people respecting the Kingdom of Messiah, so frequently mentioned by Jesus and the Apostles, and the basis of this lesson. There was no confusion at first, nor for nearly two hundred years after Jesus' day. The early Church understood very well the promise that Messiah would come a second time, would receive the Church to glory with Himself and establish the Kingdom of Divine Power for the rule of the world and the subjugation of all things to the will of God; and that this Messianic Kingdom would require a thousand years to fulfil its mission. But by and by a theory sprang up to the effect that the Church was to be organized as Messiah's Kingdom and was to conquer the world before Jesus' Second Advent.

This unscriptural view changed the whole course of church history. Instead of longer preaching the Gospel merely with a view to calling out and perfecting the saintly few who would have a hearing ear and an appreciative heart, to make these ready for Kingdom honor and glory, the course changed. Thereafter the endeavor was to grasp civil power. Intrigues were begun, false claims were asserted, and the endeavor was made to obtain control of kings and nations along the lines of superstition. Additionally, persecutions were used; and as much as possible civil rulers were cajoled, threatened, induced, **[R5483 : page 187]** to become the tools of ecclesiasticism, for the purpose of establishing a world-wide dominion of the church.

For a time – through inquisitions, etc., etc. – these things flourished; but ever since 1799 all thought of ecclesiastical dominion of the earth has given way. In their confusion many have lost all faith in the Messianic Kingdom, and few are looking for it

at Christ's Second Coming. Many in perplexity discuss a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of believers. Others believe that Christ's Kingdom is now represented in the great governments of the world, and yet are abashed and confused when asked whether certain portions of Messiah's Kingdom are building dreadnaughts to destroy other portions of the same Kingdom.

By the majority of Christian people, the teaching of the Bible seems to be regarded as not consistent nor logical; otherwise, they would see that St. James, St. John and the other Apostles could not sit upon twelve thrones without there being a ruling Kingdom. They would also see that the Kingdom must be future, in harmony with the Lord's prayer, "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as in Heaven." What we need is to cease handling the Word of God deceitfully. We must learn to read our Bible reverently and to understand it by comparing Scripture with Scripture. Bible students who do so are receiving great blessings, and are perceiving that Messiah's Kingdom is not only future, but apparently nigh – even at the door.

"ARE YE ABLE?" – "MY CUP, MY BAPTISM?"

To the two dear disciples who requested places of special nearness to the Master in the Kingdom, Jesus made known the fact that any position whatever in the Kingdom would require the fulfilment of certain conditions. It was not enough that they had been called to discipleship. It was not enough that they had surrendered all to follow the Lord; that they had been with Him, had heard His teachings and had assented to them so far as they could understand them. There must be something more; else they might not get into the Kingdom at all.

These conditions the Master declared, saying, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" What did He mean? Did He mean, Would they be able or willing to eat the Passover supper,

and there partake of the unleavened bread and drink of the memorial cup which He would institute? They had already been baptizing many. Did Jesus mean that they should be baptized again in water? What was the purport of the words, My cup, My baptism?

We reply that Jesus' "cup" was the one to which He [R5484 : page 187] elsewhere referred, saying, "The cup which My Father hath poured for Me, shall I not drink it?" In the Divine Plan God had already marked out that whoever will be of the great Messiah, and entrusted with the Messianic Kingdom glory, honor and power for the blessing of the world, must demonstrate worthiness of that honor and glory. In the case of Jesus Himself the cup meant all those experiences of ignominy and shame, including crucifixion, which He experienced during the three and one-half years of His earthly ministry and which he fully accomplished at Calvary when he cried, "It is finished."

Of that cup the Master said to His disciples, "Drink ye all of it." In other words, whoever will be successful as a disciple of Christ in attaining to joint-heirship with the Master in His Kingdom glory, honor and power, must first of all demonstrate a loyalty and faithfulness in respect to suffering with the Master, must prove his love, loyalty and faithfulness unto death – walking in the footsteps of Jesus.

The Master made no reference to water baptism, but to His baptism into death, of which He spoke a few days later, saying, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" The Master's baptism in the beginning of His ministry was merely a symbol, or picture, of the real baptism. His going down into the water, His burial in it and rising up from it symbolically represented His going down into death and His resurrection therefrom. His real baptism into death progressed for three and a half years, from Jordan to Calvary; and when He cried on the cross, "It is finished," He meant that His baptism into death

was completed. He was raised up out of that death-baptism on the third day by the Father's Power, to the Father's right hand, which position He will always occupy.

This was the Master's baptism. It meant the full renunciation of all earthly rights. And now He asked those dear disciples whether or not they were ready, able or willing to follow Him to this extent – to be sharers of His cup of ignominy and His baptism into death. Only by faithfully following Him thus might they hope for any share in His Kingdom. The same principle must apply to all the followers of Jesus. It is for each of us to decide whether we will drink of His cup or not; whether we will share in His baptism into death or not. Only the lowly, self-sacrificing, will be able or willing to endure such an experience.

Let us now apply these thoughts to the incorrect views of the Kingdom so frequently held. How could these sentiments be applied to any Kingdom of God in the heart, or how could they apply to the various kingdoms of earth? Is it necessary for the kings of the earth to partake of Christ's ignominy and sacrifice unto death, by consecration, before they can reign? Or, applying the matter to the church systems at the present time, as some do, is it through great difficulty that any attain membership in the earthly institutions called the Church of Christ? Does it require self-denial to get into these? Are all who are in them buried with Christ in baptism – into His death? Do they all partake of the cup of His sufferings? Surely not! Only a right view of the Kingdom dovetails into these various statements. We must see that the Kingdom is the Pearl of great price, to obtain which all else must be sacrificed. – Matthew 13:46.

"WE ARE ABLE" – "YE SHALL INDEED"

In the other account of this incident the disciples answered that they were able, that is, willing, to undertake to share the Master's cup and His baptism. Of course they did not know clearly

what all this meant; but they were able, or willing, ready, to do anything that the Master would command. So it must be with all who, like those faithful Apostles, shall come off conquerors and share with the Redeemer in the glory, honor and immortality promised to His Kingdom class, the Bride class.

In that account, Jesus is represented as replying, "Ye shall indeed drink of My cup, and be baptized with My baptism." That is to say, willingness on the part of all is as much as the Lord could reasonably require of His disciples. We have not the power that He possessed: we are sinners by nature. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners." We can merely, therefore, will to do right; and the Lord must needs take us under His care and into His School of affliction and experience, giving us the lessons necessary to prove our loyalty and faithfulness even unto death. How gracious, how Godlike, that because of our weakness as members [R5484 : page 188] of the fallen race we could not do all ourselves, God has provided for us in the Savior whom He has appointed! Our imperfections are accounted as imputed to the Redeemer, while His perfections are accounted as imputed to us. Thus through Him only may we hope to gain the Kingdom and glory and honor and immortality.

CHIEF SERVANT – MOST HONORED

The other Apostles were indignant that St. James and St. John should have made such a request. However, the incident afforded Jesus opportunity for laying down the rules which must govern in respect to greatness in the Messianic Kingdom. Whichever one will serve the others most will thereby be demonstrating to God a greater fitness for a higher place. This is different, as Jesus says, from the ordinary course of affairs, where a lordship is exercised according to some arbitrary rule.

The rule of the Kingdom will be that the one who serves most will have the highest honor. Thus Jesus Himself is pre-eminently

servant of all. His position is the highest in the Kingdom by Divine appointment, and others will range next to Him in proportion as they have His spirit of love, service, obedience and loyalty.

