

## **The Teaching of Jesus and Ethics In the Early Church—To Serve and to Suffer**

Mk. 10:32-45; Matt. 20:20-28

### Introduction:

1. The ethics demonstrated by our King and culminating in the cross is quite demanding.
2. Like James and John, we want to be exalted, but do not comprehend the intensity and the magnitude of the service and the suffering required.
3. In this lesson we will further examine the teaching of Jesus and consider how the apostles called on the early Christians to flesh out the teaching in their lives. In addition we will learn that the teaching of Jesus does not just call on us to flesh out the teaching in our own lives, but to engage the world in the saving mission and purpose of our God.

### Discussion:

- I. The two great aspects of the Messianic task are to rule and to serve.
  - A. This is evident in Mk. 10:32-45.
    1. James and John assume that Jesus has authority as a ruler.
    2. Their mother said to Jesus, “Command that in your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left” (Matt. 20:21).
    3. But His leadership is a leadership of service (Mk. 10:43-45).
  - B. In the parallel account in Lk. 22:24ff the task of service is the emphasis. Jesus said, “I am among you as one who serves.”
  - C. Jesus identifies himself as “the Son of Man” (Mk. 10:45). This phrase comes from Dan. 7:13-14 and emphasizes the rulership of “the Son of Man,” a phrase in this passage associated with the Messianic king.
  - D. But it is not just the King who serves. Discipleship is synonymous with serving, self-sacrifice and suffering.
    1. Jesus asked James and John, “Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” (Mk. 10:38). “Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all” (Mk. 10:43-44). “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mk. 10:45).
    2. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus had said, “Blessed are those who have been persecuted . . . Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me” (Matt. 5:10-11).
    3. First century Christians were encouraged to withstand suffering as part of being in the kingdom.
      - a. Heb. 10:32ff reminds its readers of their having endured “a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated.”
      - b. “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials” (James 1:2).

- c. "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that you also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation" (1 Pet. 4:12-13).
- d. 1 Pet. 2:21-24 cites Jesus as the example for us to follow.
- E. So the Messianic task involves a rulership of service characterized by suffering.

II. The Christian ethic stands in stark contrast to the way of the world. The world demands to be served. Christianity serves.

- A. Jesus says, "The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them. But it is not this way among you" (Mk. 10:43).
  - 1. This is a similar phrase used in Eph. 4:20 as Paul contrasted the walk of the Gentiles in contrast to the people of God. He says, "You did not learn Christ in this way."
  - 2. The separateness of the people of God is described in this way.
- B. It is evident in O.T. Israel (2 Sam. 13:12).
  - 1. When Amnon desired Tamar, his sister, he pretended to be sick and sought to have relations with her.
  - 2. She tried to avoid the sexual assault saying, "No, my brother, do not violate me, for such a thing is not done in Israel."
  - 3. It was described as a "disgraceful thing," resulting in "reproach." She said, "You will be like one of the fools in Israel."
- C. So the Christian ethic begins with the King and extends to His people setting them apart from all others.
  - 1. But it is not a matter of self-righteousness, so that we view others with contempt (cf. Lk. 18:9-12).
  - 2. Instead, it involves the recognition that righteousness is only possible by the sacrifice of the King.

III. The Christian ethic extends to the many (Mk. 10:45; 14:24).

- A. As the King gave His life a ransom for many His disciples give themselves up for others. This is the Christian ethic.
- B. Are you expendable for the common good? What does this look like?
  - 1. Turning the other cheek (Matt. 5:39-42).
  - 2. Loving your enemies and praying for those who persecute you (Matt. 5:44).
  - 3. Worship without concern for the praise of men (Matt. 6:6ff).
  - 4. Forgiving others (Matt. 6:14).
  - 5. Being gracious in judgment (Matt. 7:1ff).
  - 6. Illustrations from 1 Cor.
    - a. "Why not rather be wronged?" (6:7).
    - b. "You are not your own, you have been bought with a price" (6:19).
    - c. In marriage your body is for your spouse (7:4).
    - d. Limit your rights for the other (8:13).
    - e. Spiritual gifts are for common good (12:7).
    - f. Giving (16:1; 2 Cor. 8:9).

7. Bear others burdens (Gal. 6:2).
8. Be subject to one another (Eph. 5:21).
- C. We are indeed concerned about shaping ourselves as the elect body, separated from the world and its wickedness, but our perception must be larger than being a saved people. We are a saving people.
  1. I fear this last part of the kingdom task is diminished today. We are too content to be a saved people, elected for privilege, and give minimal attention to the mission of giving our lives for the many in evangelistic mission.
  2. We make the words and deeds of Jesus the standard and pattern for our internal discipline rather than allowing them to inspire us with the mission of seeking and saving the lost.
  3. Kingdom ethics is not just about our personal discipline.
    - a. We are a salt and light influence.
    - b. In the great commission the King calls on us to engage the world (Matt. 28:18-20).
    - c. It is evident this was the mind of the early church.

#### IV. Summary and conclusion.

- A. Kingdom ethics find their origin in God.
- B. The Messianic King interprets and exemplifies the ideal.
  1. This ideal is captured in the statement, "Love one another as I have loved you."
  2. It is seen in the statement, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many."
  3. This ethic is an ethic of service and self-sacrifice.
- C. We are called out of the world and to engage the world.
  1. "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it" (Mk. 8:34-35).
  2. "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Lk. 14:27).
  3. "He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it" (Matt. 10:38-39).
  4. "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions" (Col. 1:24).
  5. "For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ" (2 Cor. 1:5).
  6. Phil. 3:7-11.
  7. "I bear on my body the brand-marks of Jesus" (Gal. 6:17).
  8. "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Phil. 1:29).
  9. "Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25).
  10. Phil. 2:3-11.

Conclusion:

1. Are you expendable for the kingdom of God? Will you give yourself completely and totally as your King gave Himself?
2. Will you serve like He serves? Will you love like He loves?
3. Will you be holy like your heavenly Father is holy?