

Messiah

We are quickly approaching the end of our study together, and as it's end approaches, so does Jesus' ministry. I'm so glad you are following with me. Our time with Jesus in the next couple of weeks will be bittersweet. It is hard watching events beginning to spiral towards the crucifixion, but we know the end of the story. Stay with me as we continue with our study. You have been steadfast in studying God's Word. He is so pleased with your effort and there is so much more that he wants to reveal to you!

Last week we saw the tremendous power Jesus had over the people of Israel and their desire to make him king. They so desperately wanted to rid themselves of Roman occupation and they thought they had found a messiah to lead the way to a new and sovereign Israel. But it was not God's plan to liberate a single nation from a human oppressor, but to liberate all people from the spiritual oppression of sin. Jesus had to deliberately walk away from the ambitions and furor of the crowds demanding his leadership. He boldly endured the venomous accusations and machinations of the religious leaders. He tirelessly ministered to Israel as best he could, and now most of Israel had made their decision about who he was. His time on earth was running short. It was time to take the twelve disciples away and reveal to them the plans the Father had for the Messiah. It was time for the Twelve to understand what Jesus had come to do, and it wasn't leading a revolt against Rome.

You are the Son of the Living God



Matthew 16:13-20

On your map locate Caesarea Philippi. Describe its location, and why Jesus and his disciples had departed Israel. What are some possible reasons?

Why do the people say that Jesus is John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets? What does this tell us about the people's expectations?

"Who Do You Say I Am?"

Lesson 8 Homework

What does Simon Peter answer on behalf of the disciples as to the identity of Jesus?

How do you think Peter, and the others have come to this understanding?

Jesus led his disciples out of Israel into territory ruled by the tetrarch Philip, Herod's brother. There was rivalry between the brothers and neither was inclined to do any favors for the other. Jesus and his disciples were in a relatively safe region beyond Herod's authority and beyond the reach of the religious leaders in Jerusalem. We have reached a point in Jesus' ministry where he turns his focus from proclaiming the Gospel to Israel, to focusing on preparing the Twelve for what is soon to come when they eventually return to Jerusalem. This passage of scripture is the beginning of teachings specific to the twelve disciples and leading the way to their understanding of God's plan of salvation through the Messiah who is the suffering servant.

For the benefit of the disciples' understanding Jesus begins connecting the dots for them of what will become of the Son of Man. Through identifying the prophets, Jesus reveals that while he does speak and obey the Father, he is more than a prophet. Peter correctly identifies him as "*the Son of the Living God*". God has revealed to Peter and the disciples that Jesus is his Son through the evidence of signs, fulfilled prophecy, and through Jesus own teachings. Jesus makes it clear that they have come to this understanding by the Father's revelation, not by their own understanding. Since the disciples have all come to a fuller (albeit, shaky) understanding of Jesus being the Messiah and Son of God, it's time for them to come to an understanding of the Father's plan for the Messiah. Jesus' time on earth is running short and the disciples need an understanding of what is coming next.

Look up 1 Corinthians 3:11, Ephesians 2:20, and Revelations 21:14; and describe who is the cornerstone and the foundation of the church.

What role is Peter to have in the building of the church? Read Acts 1: 7-20, and 2:14-40.

❖ To what do the Keys to Heaven refer? Read Revelations 1:12-18 and 3:7. Who possesses the Keys of Death and Hades, and the Key of David? What does possession of keys represent?

What will Peter be loosing and binding?

❖ Why do you think Jesus warns the disciples to not tell anyone that he is the Christ?

As Peter is the spokesman and leader of the disciples and first to proclaim that Jesus is "*the Christ, Son of the Living God*". He is the rock Jesus named him to be. Jesus goes on to explain that he will establish the church on the rock. The rock is not just Peter. Jesus is himself the cornerstone, and Jesus is the one who lays the foundation. The apostles *and* the prophets -Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah, John the Baptist, all the prophets of the Old Testament, including even Moses and David – are the foundation of that church. Peter is recognized as the strong leader he will become and who will be desperately needed in the early days of the church's formation after Jesus ascends into heaven. Peter is given the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus is bestowing authority upon Peter just as a master will bestow authority on a trusted servant (signified by giving the keys of the household to the servant). It will become Peter's responsibility, along with the other disciples, to take Jesus' place in proclaiming the Gospel, building up the church, and leading people to the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Just as Jesus obediently carried out the Father's plans on earth, so will Peter. With that authority, so also will come great responsibility. Peter will follow in Jesus' footsteps, and Jesus will tell him where that path will take him in the next passage of scriptures we will study.

Jesus Predicts His Death

Our lesson today continues right on the heels of the last passage we studied. If you remember, Peter had just proclaimed that Jesus not only was the awaited Messiah, but also the Son of the living God. It must have been an astonishing moment in Peter's life to come to that profound conclusion, and Jesus must have been waiting for that moment when his dearest and closest friends finally recognized who he was. In the very next passage of scripture we see that

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Peter doesn't understand the full scope of what it meant to be the Messiah. Take a few minutes to pray that our Father will open our eyes and our hearts to his Word.



Turn in your Bible to the Gospel of Mark and read 8:31-9:1. (This passage is paralleled in Matthew 16:21-28.) Answer the following questions.

What three things does verse 31 tell us will happen to the Son of Man?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Why did Peter begin to rebuke Jesus? What was Peter thinking that Jesus would accuse him of *“not having in mind the things of God, but the things of men”*? What were the “things of men” that Peter had in mind?

The Scriptures tell us that Jesus speaks plainly and directly, teaching the disciples of what must come for the Son of Man. Just as the crowds anticipated the Messiah ushering in a new Golden Age for Israel, the disciples too held that same hope. They did not yet understand the idea that Jesus was ushering in the spiritual Kingdom of God on earth, not a temporal political kingdom. Jesus spoke unambiguously about the necessity for his death and resurrection. Peter's response reflected his belief in Jesus establishing a political kingdom, and his words in effect were similar to Satan's offer in the wilderness of a cross-less Messiah-ship. Peter was attempting to divert Jesus from the path he didn't understand, the path of the suffering servant, to a path that led to a political kingdom no longer under Roman authority. In his words to Peter, Jesus rebukes Satan for bringing forth this temptation through Peter. The path to the cross was God's plan and will for Jesus, and Jesus, the obedient son will walk that path.



Read Isaiah 53:4, 10-12. What does it tell us of God's suffering servant, the Messiah?

What do you think "*If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself*" means?

What do you think "*take up his cross and follow me*" means?

Jesus was teaching those who would follow him that they too would have to deny any claims they had to their own self will in order follow him. Just as Jesus, the suffering servant, *must* put aside his own will and obey the Father's plan for salvation, anyone who wants to follow Jesus must put aside selfish interests and desires. It is the purposeful and continued denial of the dictates of the self; and a willingness to give up everything dear in life, and even life itself, for the cause of the Kingdom and for Christ.

In the time of Jesus, there was no "cross-bearing" metaphor in Hebrew, but the idea would have been easily understood as it pertained to the Roman custom of crucifixion. It brought to mind the sight of a condemned man who was forced to demonstrate his submission to Rome by carrying part of his cross through the city to his place of execution. Thus "to take up one's cross" was to demonstrate publicly one's submission/obedience to the authority against which he had previously rebelled.¹ In the first century, the idea of taking up the cross led to martyrdom. Jesus called on his followers to be willing to deny oneself a life dictated by selfish concerns and obediently follow Christ, even unto the death of a martyr on a cross. In fact, many of his followers, including Peter, did die on the cross, and in other ways. It is now looked upon symbolically as following Christ in sacrificial service. It does not mean stoically bearing life's troubles or burdens.

Denying oneself and taking up one's cross can be summed up as obedience to God's will as it is revealed in his Word, accepting the consequences without reservations for Jesus' sake and the gospel. For some this may include physical suffering and even death as the lives of many of Jesus' followers have attested.²

In your own words summarize the meaning over verses 8:38-9:1.

¹ Bible Knowledge Commentary

² Ibid

The Transfiguration

Jesus, continuing with his mission to prepare his disciples for what would come in Jerusalem, takes them up on a mountainside for an experience that will stay with them for the rest of their lives. These men had come to understand that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the Living God, but there was so much they still did not understand. Jesus was about to reshape their perspective of himself.



Read Matthew 17:1-13 and answer the following questions.

Who did Jesus take up the mountain?

Describe how Jesus appeared (v. 2).

Who appeared with Jesus?

According to Luke 9:30-31, what were they talking about?

What did Peter want to do and what would that indicate?

Compare the description of the cloud in Exodus 34:29–35, 40:36-38 with the description in Matthew 17:5. What does the cloud signify?

Before Peter could even finish speaking, who's voice is heard and what does that voice say?

Hearing the voice what did the disciples do?



What where the disciples experiencing through this event on the mountain top? They just witnessed Jesus the Son of God *in all his Glory*, discussing God's plan for redeeming mankind with Elijah and Moses.

- God's voice literally knocked the disciples off their feet and face-down in a position to do what?
- What should the disciples have been doing from the moment they saw Jesus transfigured?
- What was God revealing to the disciples through this mountain top experience?

This event in the lives of the three disciples transformed their idea of who Jesus was. They had been following Jesus for some time. They had been living with him, eating with him, traveling, preaching, healing, and ministering with him. They saw and understood the humanity of Jesus. They need to experience and know the divinity of Jesus. Jesus allowed them this special vision of himself so they could be strengthened and prepared for what would come in Jerusalem.

Jesus, in all his divine glory shining with unearthly dazzling light and the brilliance of his sovereignty and purity as he must appear in heaven, stood before them in the company of Moses, *the Law Giver* and Elijah *the Prophet*. Peter, ever the man of action and service, jumps in and offers to build shelters so they can all stay on that mountain top. But even before he can finish speaking, he is silenced as the Glory of God the Father in the form of a cloud descends upon the mountain top and His voice literally flattens the disciples down on their faces in awe and fear. *This was the appropriate response the disciples should have taken upon seeing Jesus transformed.* Jesus the Messiah, the Son of the Living God is God Himself. It is this perspective on who Jesus is that will allow Peter, James and John to make it through the events of Jerusalem without losing their faith. They may not understand why those events must transpire, but at least they will get through them without losing their faith in God and eventually they will become the pillars of the church that cannot be overcome. In those moments face down in the dirt the disciples hear the voice of God the Father Himself confirming and endorsing everything that Jesus has done and commanding them to listen and obey him even as Jesus' path heads directly to his death. Is it any wonder that they are filled with fear and terror? A transformed perspective of Messiah was the reason they had been brought to this mountain top revelation.

As they were descending Jesus instructed them not to reveal to anyone what they had just experienced until "*after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.*" I don't think the disciples could have explained their experience sufficiently to allow anyone to better comprehend who Jesus was. If this story had gotten out, it could have whipped up the crowds who pursued Jesus with the intent to make him King of Israel into a dangerous fury. The scriptures alluded to the fact that Elijah would return ahead of the Messiah, "*See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.*" (*Malachi 4:5*) Moses too received a messianic promise from God in Deut 18:15: "*The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your*

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own brothers. You must listen to him." Even the presence of Yahweh was anticipated with the advent of Messiah. It was prophesied in 2 Maccabees³ 2: 7-8, *"The place is to remain unknown until God gathers his people together again and shows them his mercy. Then the Lord will disclose these things, and the glory of the Lord will be seen in the cloud, just as it appeared in the time of Moses and when Solomon prayed that the Place^{3a} might be gloriously sanctified."*

Had this incident become public knowledge at this time it very likely could have provoked the crowds into crowning Jesus as King.⁴ In John 6:14-15, (Which we studied last week in the miracle of Jesus walking on water) Jesus knew the intention of the crowds and made his escape from their plan to crown him at that time. By spending time in prayer with the Father, he defeated a possible temptation of the cross-less kingdom. Jesus felt and knew the agony of the Roman occupation of his people. He could put an end to it. He had legions of angel-armies at his disposal.⁵ He could lift his people out of oppression, but where would that leave God's salvation plan? God's larger plan had to be the focus, and the distractions of a crowd seeking their warrior-king would not help Jesus towards his goal in Jerusalem. God told the disciples to listen to his son. They listened, they obeyed, and they said not a word until after the resurrection when what they had experienced in Jerusalem illuminated what they saw on the mountain top.

Jesus Predicts his Death a Second and Third Time

We are down to our last homework segment for this week. Take a few minutes to pray that the Lord will reveal to your heart the relevance of these passages as they prepare us for our final lessons next week. We are rapidly approaching Jesus' entry to Jerusalem and some significant events will come to pass before Jesus is greeted with Hosannas and waving palm branches at the gates of Jerusalem. Reading these accounts of Jesus' imminent suffering and crucifixion are emotionally hard for us to dwell upon. Praise be to God that we know the end of the story! His suffering and death serve God's purpose to redeem each one of us in loving union with him. Death does not constrain our Lord, He is victorious in all things.

In preparation for our final lesson this week, it is imperative to have an understanding of Jesus' attempts to enlighten the Twelve disciples about his impending suffering and death in Jerusalem. We have already closely examined Jesus' first prediction of his death and resurrection at the beginning of this week as it was recorded in Mark 8:31-9:1 (and in parallel, Matthew 16:21-28). Jesus twice more informs his closest disciples, the Twelve, who will later build the church.

³ Sited from New American Bible. 2 Maccabees is one of the books of the Apocrypha, included in some Protestant Bibles and all Catholic Bibles.

^{3a} The Place refers to Mt. Moriah which becomes the Temple Mount

⁴ Bible Knowledge Commentary

⁵ Jesus says to his disciple in Gethsemane at his arrest "Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" Matt 26:53-54 (NIV)

The second prediction falls soon after the Transfiguration. We will be jumping ahead in our timeline as we study the third prediction and the bulk of today's study wherein Jesus tells his disciples what it will require for them to be great in his kingdom. The third prediction and lesson for the disciples happens as Jesus and the Twelve are travelling to Jerusalem before Passover. Next week's study will take us back prior to these two events.



Read Matthew 17:22-23 and 20:17-19.

In the second account of Jesus' prediction of his death and resurrection, he reveals no new information to his disciples. His reiteration, though does not allow the disciples to dismiss his first prediction. It is a reality with which they will have to come to terms. The response of the disciples is one of grief, in fact the Greek translation would be better read as "*they grieved exceedingly.*" None of the disciples overtly fight against Jesus' predictions as Peter had previously, but it is hard to believe they are at peace with it.

The third prediction includes information the Jesus had not previously revealed to his disciples. He tells them that he will be betrayed in Jerusalem to the chief priests and the teachers of the law, where he will be condemned to death. Jesus' death now becomes an imminent reality. They are even now on their way to Jerusalem. Jesus then tells the disciples that he will be handed over to the Gentiles – the Romans – to be brutally and publicly crucified. The Son of Man will become God's Suffering Servant *soon*. Again Jesus tells them he will be raised to life on the third day after his death. And again the disciples make no objections to what Jesus is revealing to them. They obediently accompany him toward Jerusalem, and worse, as we shall soon see, they still clearly do not understand what is soon to befall their beloved Jesus.



The rest of our homework this week will focus on Matthew 20:20-28. Read the passage and answer the following questions.

Read Matthew 19:28. What does Jesus promise the Twelve when the Son of Man sits on his throne?

What is that the mother of James and John request of Jesus?

Jesus' response in 20:22 in Greek reveals that his answer is directed to James and John not their mother. His answer is, "*Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?*" What does that mean?

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 Do they understand what they are asking for? What does their request reveal about their understanding of Jesus' kingdom? What are they still anticipating?

Jesus reveals two things in his answer in verse 23. What are they?

What must the disciples do if they want to have authority in his Kingdom?

In verse 28 what does Jesus finally reveal to the disciples about God's salvation plan regarding the Son of Man?

Read the following verses. What do they have to say about Jesus' death?

- John 1:29
- Romans 5:8
- 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18

It is interesting that the mother of James and John comes to Jesus requesting places of honor for her sons. Apparently the two brothers have put their mother up to this task, and Jesus sees right through the plan. He addresses his response directly to the brothers. It must have been very disheartening to Jesus that his disciples still did not grasp the fact that he was not inaugurating an immediate and temporal kingdom in Israel. The disciples still have not understood that he will not be defeating the Romans and releasing the Jews from Roman oppression. The reward of a throne in the kingdom to each of the disciples would not come in their earthly life, but in the heavenly kingdom of God. Jesus is still the obedient son of God and willingly subordinate to the Father until after his resurrection when all authority is confirmed upon him (Matt 28:18). It is up to the Father to reward faithful servants. Jesus goes on to explain to all twelve of the disciples that the heavenly reward is not granted by favor, but is based on their steadfast commitment to serving Jesus even in the face of severe trials. They will all drink from the same cup that Jesus soon will drink, the cup of suffering and death for their commitment of serving the Father. Tradition tells us that John will be imprisoned and subjected to hard labor for his faith. James, Peter, and several other disciples will indeed die a martyr's death for their faith.

Jesus concludes with the statement in verse 28, *"just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* It is the first time that Jesus reveals the purpose of his mission. God has sent him to *"give his life as a ransom for many."* To the

disciples the word ransom (*lytron*, in Greek) would have evoked the concept of buying back a slave's freedom. Psalm 49:7-9 gives us the idea of how costly the ransom Jesus is:

No man can redeem the life of another
or give to God a ransom for him--
⁸ the ransom for a life is costly,
no payment is ever enough--
⁹ that he should live on forever
and not see decay.

The “many” of Jesus’ statement refers to everyone who accepts his offer of forgiveness, made possible through his death, and who have committed their lives to following him. In this statement, Jesus declares that he will die and pay the ransom required for the sins we surely deserve to pay. We are the slaves that his death serves to ransom, and his death alone is truly the only sufficient atonement for our sin. He was the perfect sacrifice whose death paid the ransom for the sin of all who would accept him.

Take a few minutes to reflect over this week's homework. What have you studied this week that has altered or transformed your vision of who Jesus is? Write a prayer or reflection about it. You may share your thoughts during our discussion time if you are inclined to do so.