

The Son of Man Came to Serve, and to Give His Life as a Ransom for Many

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

DIG: Why does Jesus once again predict His death? Why now? How does the request of Salome show that the apostles' view of the Kingdom was different from Yeshua's? What don't they see? Why can't they share in Messiah's **cup**? Why are the other ten talmidim indignant? Were their actions any more commendable? How does Christ use this uproar to convey new insights about what greatness is all about? How does Jesus practice what He preached? How is His **death** the ultimate service to all?

REFLECT: Yeshua of Nazareth came to pay the price of our ransom, to buy us back to our Father, the God of Isra'el. Do you believe that? Have you personally received this gift of love (Second Corinthians 9:15)? Thanks be to God for His incredible gift! How does Christ's model of a servant influence your view of spiritual power? Your use of your gifts? Your relationships? What is one way to serve this week? When facing a tough spiritual battle, whom do you trust? What do you do if they don't understand?

Jesus had finished His Galilean ministry and had crossed into Perea, on the other side of the Jordan River (see HI - **Then Jesus Went Back Across the Jordan**). As Jewish travelers from Galilee often did in order to avoid going through Samaria, Yeshua traveled down the eastern side of the Jordan River and crossed over into Jericho. From there, He and the Twelve would make their way up to **Tziyon**.

They were on their **way up to Jerusalem**, with Jesus leading the way in accordance with rabbinic tradition (Mark 10:32a). This detail, unique to Mark, points to Yeshua as the One who leads His people both in suffering and triumph. We have a construction in the Greek text that speaks, not of the momentary **leading the way**, but of a habitual practice. **The Holy City** stands near the highest point of the backbone of Palestine some 2,500 feet above sea level and higher than most inhabited places in Isra'el. This particular ascent was being made from Jericho, 900 feet below sea level. No matter where one is coming from in their travels, it is always **up to Yerushalayim**. It may not always be physically **up** if you were coming from Nepal, for example. But it is certainly **up** in the sense of a spiritual pilgrimage, and drawing close to **God's** presence.¹²¹²

On the way to Jericho, He took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to Him. He had done so before (also see Fy - [Jesus Predicts His Death](#), and Ge - [Jesus Predicts His Death a Second Time](#)), but they did not understand the meaning of His words. His talmidim were terrified and in a fearful state of mind because of the somberness and determination of His attitude. The words Yeshua spoke were for their ears alone, not for the crowd. This time He explained to them, in more detail than ever before, the things He must suffer in Tziyon.¹²¹³ He said: **We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will not be received by all Isra'el; in fact, He will be delivered over to the high priest, the Sadducees and Torah teachers.** Here Jesus spoke for the first time of His betrayal, **mocking, flogging and crucifixion. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked, flogged, crucified, spit on and finally killed (Matthew 20:17b-19a).** This is the last of three times that Jesus predicts His death. The apostles gave no reply to Messiah's words. Perhaps they could not bring themselves to believe He was going to be treated in that way.

This reflects the actual historic reality of the day as Isra'el was under Roman occupation and its civil authority. It was well known that, while the community of Isra'el was given a large amount of religious autonomy, many civil cases (including capital punishment) rested with the Roman government. Consequently, it has never been completely accurate to say, as many have, that "the Jews killed Jesus." The Jews could not carry out the death penalty (see my commentary on [Genesis Lg - The Scepter Will Not Depart from Judah Until He Comes to Whom It Belongs](#)); therefore, they had to take Yeshua to the Romans. Later in [the Life of Christ](#), we will see the Jewish culpability (see Lf - [The Religious Trial](#)), as well as the Gentile responsibility (see Ln - [The Civil Trial](#)). It is actually fitting that both Jews and Gentiles are represented in the rejection of the Messiah. In a twist of irony, it will be the death of Christ that will open up the gates of salvation for Jews and Gentiles alike.¹²¹⁴

Over this dark picture Jesus mentioned that **He will be raised to life three days later and triumph over His enemies (Matthew 20:19b; Mark 10:33-34; Luke 18:31-33)!** This would be the most memorable Passover in the history of the Jewish people. Yeshua will fulfill the promises of Messiah ben Joseph as He suffered to pay for the redemption of mankind. Jesus will also be able to fulfill the hope of Messiah ben David as He is risen and will return as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (see Mv - [The Jewish Concept of Two Messiah's](#)). His steadfast determination in the face of impending danger astonished the apostles. Not only that, but the crowd of disciples who usually followed Jesus were afraid (Mark 10:32b). These feelings must have been awakened by the manner of the Messiah, as one laboring under strong emotion, His face set like a flint (see my commentary on [Isaiah Ir - Because the Sovereign LORD Helps Me, I Will Set My Face Like a Flint](#)). The

talmidim did not understand any of this about His **death**. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what He was talking about (Luke 18:34).

All the apostles hoped to reap of the glory that will come after the new **Messiah** overthrew the Romans. Had He not promised that they would sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Isra'el? With all the talk of the coming **Kingdom**, two of the more ambitious talmidim, were speculating in their own minds as to whom would occupy the more prominent seat. Then **James and John, the sons of Zebedee**, came to Him like spoiled children. "Rabbi," they said, "we want You to do for us whatever we ask" (Mark 10:35). Their mother, whose name was Salome, came along with them. She was probably a sister of Jesus' mother (Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40; John 19:25). If so, then **James and John** would have been Jesus' first cousins. Perhaps they hoped their family ties would help their cause.¹²¹⁵ At any rate, she came along with her sons and, in traditional humble fashion, kneeling down, also asked Jesus for a favor (Matthew 20:20).

What do you want Me to do for you? He asked (Matthew 20:21a; Mark 10:36). Each time **Yeshua predicted His death**, one or more talmidin responded with **pride or misunderstanding**. When **He** becomes **Meshiach ben David**, would **He** be so kind as to grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in Your Kingdom (Matthew 20:21b). The two sons agreed with their mother: **Let one of us sit at your right and the other at Your left in Your glory** (Mark 10:37). She wanted her sons to have the highest places of honor and authority in the messianic Kingdom, which they expected **Messiah** would soon establish.

Their mother had evidently gotten the main point from **Jesus' teaching regarding the kingdom of God** (see **Ik - The Little Children and Jesus**). It was so convincing that she wanted to reserve a place of leadership for her two sons. But she seemed to miss the point about having the humility of a child.

Jesus' answer was sharp and penetrating, and **He** immediately corrected her by saying: **You don't know what you are asking** (Mark 10:38a). **Messiah** told them they did not realize what was involved in their ambitious request. **To ask** (this verb is in the middle voice, which represents the person acting in their own interest) for a place of honor in **His** glory was also a request to share in **His** suffering since one is tied to the other. The contrast could not have been greater. **The Son of God** was going to the cross, while they were only concerned about advancement in **the coming Kingdom**.

Continuing His questioning, **Yeshua** asked: **Can you drink the cup I drink** (Mark 10:38b)? In the Greek, **Jesus' question** called for a negative response. **The cup** was a

common Jewish metaphor for either joy (Psalms 23:5 and 116:13), or divine judgment against human sin (Psalm 75:7-8; Isaiah 5:17-23; Jeremiah 25:15-28, 49:12, 51:7; Ezekiel 23:31-34; Habakkuk 2:16; Zechariah 12:2), with the context determining which to use. On many occasions like Shabbat and other festivals, Jews bless a **cup** of wine and **drink** it as a way of connecting with the holy times. But **Yeshua** will **drink** more than wine. Divine judgment would be unleashed upon **Christ**, but **He** would **drink the cup** voluntarily. The futuristic present tense is used here, pointing to an event that has not yet occurred, but which is so certain that it is as if it had already taken place.

The Lord continued, **or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with** (Matthew 20:22a; Mark 10:38c)? "We can," they answered (Matthew 20:22b; Mark 10:39a). This was a mere profession of moral courage, not a claim of spiritual power. The figure of baptism expresses a parallel thought. Being under water was a picture in the TaNaKh of being overwhelmed by calamity (Job 22:11; Psalm 69:2 and 15; Isaiah 43:2). Here the calamity **Jesus** faced was bearing the burden of **God's** judgment of sin that involved overwhelming suffering, culminating in death. **He** was to **be baptized** by **God** who would place these sufferings on **Him** (Isaiah 53:4b and 11). Were they willing to suffer the same consequences as their leader?

Jesus said to them: **You will indeed drink from My cup and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with** (Mark 10:39b). The apostles did not take on the sins of the world, but they did all **drink the cup** of martyrdom except for **John** (see **Cy - These are the Names of the Twelve Apostles**). This comes under the category of, "You had better be careful what you ask for, because you may get it."

But positions in the Kingdom are not part of **Jesus'** responsibility. As the **Messiah**, **He** is in submission to the will of **the Father**. **He** could make no such promises. **He** said: **To sit at my right or left is not for Me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by My Father** (Matthew 20:23; Mark 10:40). It would not be on the basis of favoritism or ambition that those honors would be given, but on the basis of **the Father's** sovereign choice. It was not only sinful but a foolish and useless waste of effort.

When the other ten talmidim heard about this, they became indignant with **James** and **John** (Matthew 20:24; Mark 10:41). This jealous reaction reveals that they had the same selfish ambitions. Maybe they were disappointed in themselves for not making the request first! As **Jesus** saw an argument brewing, **He** saw it as a teachable moment, and **called them together** and reemphasized the meaning of true greatness (see **Gg - The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven**), by contrasting greatness in the world and greatness in **God's Kingdom**. **But Yeshua called them** together and drew a contrast between the Gentiles

and the children of **the Kingdom of God**. He said, "You know that among the *Goyim*, those who are supposed to rule them become tyrants, and worst still their superiors quite often become dictators (Matthew 20:25; Mark 10:42 CJB). In other words, the quickest way to become powerful in **the Gentile** world is through power plays, guile and corruption.

Of course, this was exactly what the apostles had done earlier when they had argued among themselves about who was the greatest, and now the sons of Zebedee were asking for preferential treatment! But Yeshua helped them make a quick attitude adjustment. Each time the apostles respond with pride or misunderstanding, Jesus followed with teaching about servanthood or cross-bearing discipleship. He said: **Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all** (Matthew 20:26-27; Mark 10:43-44). The word **servant** is *doulos*, is commonly used for a **bondslave**.

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve. Jesus Himself is the supreme example to the true **Servant**. As the divine **Meshiach** sent from the Father, Yeshua had every right to demand the submission of all of His followers. But in vivid contrast to them, **the Son** voluntarily veiled His glory (Mark 8:38 and 13:26), and came as **God's Servant** (Psalm 49:5-7; Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12; Philippians 2:6-8), **not to be served** by others, but **to serve** them.

Once again, Yeshua was predicting His **death**. And yet the apostles were so focused on the glorious moment when **ha-Meshiach** would reveal Himself that they ignore the fact that He was telling them He would die soon. There would be no overthrow of the Romans. There would be no new government.

From washing the feet of the **talmidim**, to becoming the **Lamb of God** to be slaughtered for our sins, **Christ's** whole earthly **life** was an example of serving, giving, and thinking of others **and to give His life as a ransom for many** (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45). The word **ransom** only occurs in these two verses in the Renewed Covenant. It means *the price of release*, and refers to a payment to achieve the release of slaves or captives from bondage. It also includes the concept of substitution. We are captives under the power of sin and death (Romans 5:12, 6:20) from which we cannot free ourselves. **Messiah's** substitutionary death **redeemed** us and set us free (Romans 6:22 and Hebrews 2:14-15).

There are six Greek words in the B'rit Chadashah for **redemption**. The first is the verb *agorazo*, which means *to buy, to purchase in the market or slave market* (First Corinthians 6:20, 7:23; Second Peter 2:1; Revelation 5:9 and 14:3-4). The second is the verb *exagorazo*, which means *to buy out, to purchase out of the market or slave market* (Galatians

3:13, 4:5). The third is the noun **ransom**, or *lytron*, which means *the price of release* (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45). The fourth is the verb *lytroomai*, meaning *to ransom, to free by paying a ransom price* (Luke 24:21; Titus 2:14; First Peter 1:18). The fifth is the noun *lytrosis*, which means *the act of freeing by paying a ransom price* (Luke 1:68, 2:38; Hebrews 9:12), and the sixth noun is *apolytrosis*, meaning *to buy back and set free by paying a ransom price* (Luke 21:28; Romans 3:24, 8:23; First Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:7 and 14, 4:30; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:15, 11:35).¹²¹⁶

The climax of **Christ's** service was **His** death **as a ransom** in the place of **many** (Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45), emphasizing what a large number was bought back from the single sacrifice of One Redeemer (Romans 5:15 and 18-19). **He** did this voluntarily, sacrificially, and obediently. Of course, there is one condition for anyone (including us) to enjoy the benefits of that **ransom**. We must be willing to accept the gift of **Jesus**. **God's** love will only be experienced by our reciprocal faith and trust, as **Yeshua** verified in **His** conversation with Rabbi Nicodemus: **For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life** (Yochanan 3:16). Because of our personal sins and folly, we are in slavery without hope. Jewish and **Gentile** believers from every age have eagerly waited for the arrival of King **Messiah** to bring in **His** thousand-year reign of **the messianic Kingdom**.¹²¹⁷

One of the incredible abilities of **Jesus** was to stay on target. **His** life never got off track . . . **He** kept **His** life on course.

As **Jesus** looked across the horizon of **His** future, **He** could see many targets. Many flags were flapping in the wind, each of which **He** could have pursued. **He** could have been content to be a teacher and educate minds . . . But in the end **He** chose to be a **Savior** and save souls.

Anyone near **Christ** for any length of time heard it from **Jesus Himself**. **For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost** (Luke 19:10). The heart of **Christ** was relentlessly focused on one task. The day **He** left the carpentry shop in Nazareth **He** had one ultimate aim - the cross of Calvary.¹²¹⁸