

Stage IV. The Great Galilean Ministry

J. Jesus Withdraws to the Gentile Regions Surrounding Galilee

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #129

9. Jesus Teaches About His Cross for the First Time MT 16.21-28 (Parallel Texts: MK 8.31-38; LK 9.22-27)

21 ^{MT}From that time on Jesus began to reveal to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Have mercy, Lord!" he said. "There is no way that will ever happen to you!"

23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, *"I command you to get behind me, Adversary! You are being a stumbling block to me, because you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human interests."*

24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, *"Since you are willing to come after me, I command that you must deny yourself, take up your cross ^Ldaily, ^{MT}and keep on following me. 25 For whoever wants to save their own life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for my sake ^Mand the gospel's ^{MT}will find it."*

26 *"What good will it do for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their own soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? 27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done."*

^M*"If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in ^Lhis own glory and ^Mthe glory of his Father with his holy angels."*

28 ^{MT}*"Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will most certainly not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."*

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *the words of Jesus are in red italics*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

| | CONTEXT DIGEST |
|---------------------|---|
| Location | Caesarea Philippi |
| Timeline | July (Month 30) |
| Jesus' Life Context | Stage IV: The Great Galilean Ministry |
| | J. Jesus Withdraws to the Gentile Areas Surrounding Galilee |
| Title | 9. Jesus Teaches About His Cross For the First Time |

COMMENT:

Immediately after Peter's 'great confession' Jesus began to teach his disciples about the most important aspect of his messianic ministry: his death and resurrection. He had patiently waited almost three years to do this, as he carefully nurtured his disciples in their spiritual growth. With his death now just seven months away, and his disciple's conviction that he was the Messiah firmly grounded on the bedrock of his Father's revelation, it was time to turn his face to the cross.

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Why was the cross so crucial in Messiah's ministry? Every other aspect of Jesus' saving work could be performed by the power of the Holy Spirit through sinful people. The gifts of prophecy, teaching, evangelism, healing, miracles, mercy, administration, leadership, discernment, etc. that were active in Jesus are all still active in his body, the Church, today. The only thing that God cannot accomplish through sinful people is the work of atonement.

The ability to offer one's self as a substitute payment for the sins of another person requires that the substitute be sinless--with no need of atonement for themselves. Jesus was the only sinless person to ever live on this planet. HE alone was capable of becoming "**the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world,**" for he was the only perfect sacrifice. The substitutionary death and resurrection of the Messiah was the one aspect of Jesus' ministry that was possible for him alone, and therefore it was the indispensable, irreplaceable, absolutely necessary, crucial aspect of his work as Messiah.

As soon as Peter confessed his faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Lord began to teach all of his disciples about the centrality and necessity of his death and resurrection. It could be no other way. This was the heart of Jesus' mission. His disciples must embrace his cross as something he did for them...in their place; therefore they must embrace Jesus' cross as their own cross, too. But it would take time, constant re-teaching from Jesus, and ultimately the actual death and resurrection of Jesus for his disciples to understand how central it was to Jesus' ministry. That process began at Peter's "great confession."

When Jesus first prophesied his death and resurrection, Peter took him aside to rebuke him! Peter could not believe that the Living God would allow his Son to be killed like a common criminal. It was unthinkable to him. That was because Peter was thinking from a human perspective, not God's.

Jesus knew that there could be no forgiveness for sin without payment of the penalty of death that God had decreed from the beginning of creation. "*The wages of sin is death.*" God's righteousness required the death penalty for sin. This righteousness was God's concern, and the death of the Messiah was the solution. Peter needed to stop thinking from a human perspective, and embrace God's view that Jesus had just explained to him.

Jesus called Peter "Satan," or "Adversary" here. It is likely that Jesus did not mean that Satan had literally possessed Peter, but rather that by taking a human perspective rather than God's, Peter was acting as Jesus' adversary regarding the cross. This could not be tolerated. Jesus lived in unity with His Father in all things.

Overcoming a human perspective is an ongoing battle in discipleship. Jesus therefore moved from teaching about his own private cross, to the general principle of each disciple bearing their own cross as a lifestyle.

Jesus was calling Peter, and all of his disciples, to constantly give up their own human perspectives and self-interests, and adopt HIS own Divine perspective as they followed him. That began with accepting the meaning of his death and resurrection on God's terms, not their own. Humanly speaking, the death of Jesus should never have happened. It was totally unfair, and undeserved. From God's perspective the death of Jesus was an absolute necessity.

In addition, God's perspective and interests had to pervade every thought and attitude of their life. They needed to learn to give up their own human perspectives on everything, by adopting God's will as their own. From this point forward discipleship training would become the focus of Jesus' ministry as he prepared himself, and his disciples for the cross. It could be no other way.

APPLICATION:

Willingness to give up our own human perspectives in order to follow inevitably involves denying our own self-will. However, the Christian life is not negative in orientation--about what we have to give up. That is in itself a human perspective!

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The point is to follow Jesus into the most abundant, high-quality kind of life in all the universe. God's perspective is always loving, abounding in joy, and it imparts peace and wholeness. We gain so much more in Christ than we give up. Thus, the notion of "sacrifice" in following Jesus is rendered meaningless. HE did all the real sacrificing--we give up what we cannot keep anyway. We are "blessed."

Is there an aspect of your life in which you are struggling with what God is calling you to "give up," to follow Jesus more intimately?

How can you focus more on the riches of what you gain in Christ? What resources can encourage you in your struggle? Who can you pray and share with regarding this?