

August 23, 2009

SAINT SATAN
MATTHEW 16.21-28

Jesus teaches his disciples that death and resurrection are necessary to being the Messiah and to being a part of the Messiah's people.

1. THE NECESSITY OF THE MESSIAH'S SUFFERING, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION (21-23)

The "musts" of the Messiah (21): v 21 begins a new geographical section. After Peter's confession is the reference to "from that time Jesus began to show to his disciples ..."

Jesus is about to build his Temple and Peter and the disciples will be foundation stones. They are the new twelve tribes of Israel. Now it is time to go forward with the mission.

Must - followed by four actions. *Must* means uncompromising necessity. Not optional to his vocation/mission as Messiah. Not Jesus' own preferred choice (cf. Mt 27.36ff.), but it must be done.

Jesus must *go to Jerusalem*. This is where the King of the Jews will be enthroned. But this is also where his opposition is.

Jesus must ... *suffer many things* at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and scribes. Cp. Mt 26.3; 27.41. Fulfills the mission of Messiah prophesied in places like Isa 52-53.

Jesus must ... *be killed or be put to death*. The sin of Adam was to be dealt with by Israel and ultimately by Israel's king. This is b/c he is the Son of God, the image of God. This is the revelation of who God himself is: the self-giving God who expends himself for the life of his people. **Not** to go to the cross would be a contradiction for the Messiah.

Jesus must ... *rise again the third day*. Life was to conquer death for the new age to be inaugurated (i.e. a world characterized by life and not death).

The leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees? (22): Peter is set back by this and rebukes Jesus. Peter is thinking that the course of action for the Messiah will take a different track.

Peter was not a comrade with the P & S, but he is thinking in the same ways. Death must be avoided.

Remember, Peter is one of Jesus' closest confidants, one of his closest advisors ("a friend" to the King = advisor). Tempting to listen to your closest advisor.

Jesus rebukes Saint Satan (23): Satan in Mt: Satan himself in ch. 4; the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees who test Jesus.

Jesus uses same rebuke as he did with Satan himself in 4.10. Peter has taken up the satanic vocation; i.e. to knock Jesus off of the necessary path.

He knows who the Messiah is, but he is still capable of seriously misunderstanding the Messiah's mission; something that is obvious from Jesus' response to Peter.

It doesn't matter if Peter has the best of intentions or another Messianic plan in mind. The bottom line is that his proposed course of action was a satanic course of action.

"Stumblingblock" or "offense" - doesn't primarily mean that Peter is somehow hurting Jesus' feelings like we think of that. This has to do with causing someone to trip up on a course of action. Here it is an encouragement to leave the Father's prescribed path and follow a different course of action.

Peter is this b/c he is "mindful of the things of men and not the things of God." "Things of men" harks back to question, "Who do men say that the Son of Man is?" (16.13) *Men* do not recognize who Jesus is and, thus, his vocation.

Peter is showing that he is still thinking like *men* to some degree. He is not allowing the word of the Father to shape his thinking.

Jesus must distinguish the voice of his Father from the voice of Satan ... even when it comes through the same person.

2. THE NECESSITY OF THE DISCIPLES' SUFFERING, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION (24-28)

The "musts" of the disciples (24): The Messiah is a forerunner for his people; i.e. his people are to follow his same path in suffering, death, and resurrection.

Men strive for self-preservation. We will do whatever it takes to live comfortably. Following God's way looks substantially different. We *must* give up our lives.

Triad of *musts* for discipleship: deny oneself, take up one's cross, and follow Jesus. Not simply a good course of action or even the best course of action among many. These are the *musts* of discipleship. These are imperatives.

1st imperative - *deny himself*. Opposite of self-seeking. Denying oneself is being more concerned about what is best for the other(s) than being concerned about what is comfortable for you. It is denying oneself of comforts, whether bodily or psychologically, to do what is best for the other(s).

2nd imperative - *take up his cross*. Note that this is *personal*: his cross.

This cross-shaped or cruciform death is that which follows the reason, purpose, and promises inherent in the death of Jesus.

Taking up not simply something thrust upon you, but something you willingly take up as a course of life. May involve difficult times, but it is a response to those difficult times to see in them your calling to follow Christ and act as Christ would act.

3rd imperative - *follow me*. Jesus does not bid us go where he himself has not first gone.

Following Jesus is not a one-time experience. This is a way of life. And if you don't do these things, you cannot be his disciple.

Dying to live (25): "for" begins a series of "fors" digging down to the foundations of the "musts" of discipleship.

The man who seeks to save his life will lose it and he who loses his life for Jesus' sake will find it. The man who invests all of his time, energy, and resources in trying to obtain and preserve that which is passing away will pass away with it.

The only way to have life is to follow after and emulate the life-giving God who teaches us that death precedes life. Greater glory, greater life, can only be realized if we first die.

The only way to live is to lose your life for Jesus sake; not just in general, but out of love and devotion to Jesus and following his mission. Dying with and for Christ, in whatever form that takes, is the only way to wake up to the glories of a new life.

Is life worth dying for? (26): 2nd "for" - For what among that which is passing away are you willing to sell your life in the age to come; the age that will last forever?

Living for the judgment (27): 3rd "for" - relates to the judgment, the Day of the Lord. The Jews will be facing this within a generation.

This Son of Man imagery once again harks back to Ezekiel who himself says that he came to destroy the city of Jerusalem (Ezek 43.3 AV; NKJ). Jesus will be doing the same but as the greater Ezekiel.

The judgment that is to come is a motivation for denying yourself and giving up everything in the present so that you can have what is to come.

The soon coming judgment (28): Referring to the judgment to come in AD 70.

1. *The call of discipleship involves the pain of death.*
2. *The call of discipleship involves the promise of life.*