

Departing to Jerusalem
Matthew 20:17—34

Jesus has been confining His ministry to Galilee and the area north of Jerusalem for almost three years. There were three feasts that all Jews were required to observe in Jerusalem; Feast of Unleavened Bread (follows Passover), Feast of Weeks (Passover) and Feast of Tabernacles (Booths) (Deuteronomy 16:16). Jesus would come to Jerusalem for these feasts and then return to Galilee, which would explain why we see Him in Jerusalem on occasion (John 7:1—10).

There is a huge shift in His ministry at this point in Matthew. In Matthew 16:21 He first tells His Disciples that He will be going to Jerusalem to die. In Matthew 20:1 they leave Galilee and head for Jerusalem (verses 17 and 18). He is still working on preparing the Disciples for what is to come but there is much that they are not yet ready to accept (John 16:12) even a few days from Christ's death.

Jesus' death foretold (verses 17—19)

Jesus once again tells the Disciples that they are going to Jerusalem for Him to die but that He will rise again from the dead. He first told them in Matthew 16:21 but they were unwilling to hear of it. He again told them after the transfiguration that He must die (Matthew 17:12). He told them a third time in Matthew 17:22—23. This time they were grieved because they perhaps distraught that they might lose their Leader. The fourth time was when they were making their way to Jerusalem. Although He repeated that He would rise from the dead on the third day, they really didn't fully comprehend what He was saying until it actually happened (Luke 18:34; John 20:8—9; 2:22; 12:16; Luke 24:6—8).

Most people think that Jesus, being God, knew everything and therefore knew that He would die for the sins of mankind. Luke 2:40 and 52 should dispel this notion because if He did know everything He would not need to grow in wisdom. As a baby, He did not understand who He was or what His mission was. By the time He had turned 12, it seems that He had come to an understanding of who he was (Luke 2:46—49). These are things that He would need to learn and I believe He did so through an understanding of Scripture, and through what His mother told Him about His miraculous beginning. The things Jesus told His disciples about His death could be found in Scripture.

Ruling with Christ (verses 20—28)

Foremost on the minds of the Disciples was the setting up of the Kingdom. As they were making their way to Jerusalem they were thinking that the Kingdom would finally be set up and they would be ruling with Christ. As they came towards Jerusalem they passed through Jericho (about 15 miles ENE of Jerusalem) and they were becoming more and more excited to see the Kingdom come into existence (Luke 19:11). Thinking the Kingdom would be set up at any time James, John and their mother came to Jesus to ask Him if the two sons could have a place next to Jesus, one on His left and one on His right.

The problem with this request was that it was the Father who granted this authority, not Jesus. We know that when Christ ascended into heaven that He sat at the right hand of God the Father meaning the Father was at His left hand (Mark 16:19). He will stay in this position until He comes back in His glory to take the throne in Jerusalem in the Kingdom (Psalm 110:1). When Stephen was being stoned he saw Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56). Even in this dispensation of Grace Jesus Christ is sitting at the right hand of God (Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20).

However, in the Kingdom it appears that the Father will assign who will sit on Christ's left and right hands. The two Disciples desired this position of authority to be able to rule over others but Jesus (verse 24) calls the Disciples together to correct their wrong attitude about being in a leadership position. They are not to

lord over men as the Gentiles do but are to rule humbly with the heart of a servant. Just as Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve, they were to do the same (Philippians 2:8). The Disciples will be feeding Israel as a good shepherd would his sheep (John 21:16—17).

Drink of my cup (verse 22—23)

When Scripture speaks of drinking from a cup it often metaphorically refers to wrath, often about God's wrath against Israel (Isaiah 51:17); but also His wrath against the nations (Jeremiah 25:15). Jesus was given a cup to drink by the Father, often understood to mean His death of the cross (John 18:11). However, I believe it actually refers to the wrath of the Father poured out on the Son in payment for our sin. We see this when the Father forsook the Son on the cross (Matthew 27:46). This is the act of propitiation—appeasing the wrath of God (Romans 3:25; 1 John 4:10).

To drink of the same cup means to experience the same thing. In this case Christ experienced God's wrath but also experienced the wrath of the people who put Him to death. The Disciples will also experience wrath for what they preach and what they stand for. Many, if not most of the Disciples, were martyred for their faith. Only one, James, is listed in Scripture (Acts 12:1—2). They were the ones who literally took up their cross to follow Christ (Matthew 16:24).

Two blind men (verses 29—34)

As Jesus and His Disciples continued their trek to Jerusalem, they left Jericho, along with a large crowd, and ran into two blind men. They implored Jesus to restore their sight and moved with compassion, He did so immediately.

I believe this is a picture of the condition of Israel. The two blind men represent the northern 10 tribes of Israel and the southern 2 tribes of Judah. Israel split into two under the reign of Rehoboam, son of King Solomon and were never reunited. These two men regained their eyesight just as Israel and Judah needed to turn back to God. This story is not about the lost needing a Savior but about all of Israel needing to return to God. Just as their sight was restored because they were once able to see, Israel needed to turn back to God as in the past.

By “coincidence,” there were ten Disciples who were angry with the two Disciples. It was only after Jesus intervened that they came back together again. Israel will be reunited at the Second Coming (Ezekiel 37:15—24; Jeremiah 3:18; Hosea 1:11).

For previous notes and additional mid-Acts materials please visit www.MidActsTruths.com