

Lesson 28

Taking Up The Cross

Introduction:

It is September in our year 30 AD, three years after Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River. The summer harvest is nearly complete and the autumn winds of change are in the air. Jesus senses the change too. He and his disciples have been preaching the gospel and ministering to people wherever they go. But he knows His time on earth is short and he has many things left to teach them. It's time to prepare them for the unexpected ... His impending death. Taking the disciples with Him, Jesus travels the twenty-five miles up the Jordan River from Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee to Caesarea Philippi at the foot of Mount Hermon ... a fitting place to talk about the subject of death.

In 20 AD, King Herod the Great received the whole district of Caesarea Philippi from Augustus Caesar and dedicated a temple to the emperor there. Herod's son Philip enlarged the town and called it Caesarea Philippi to distinguish it from his father's city of Caesarea on the seacoast. What is significant about Caesarea Philippi is that it was originally a Canaanite sanctuary, probably Baal Hermon, which was dedicated to the worship of Baal. And within its confines stood a large cavern, which was known to be the entries point to the realm of the dead ... the gate of Hades.

Reading The Scripture:

Matthew 16:13-28, 17:22-23, Mark 8:27-9:1, 9:30-32, Luke 9:18-27, 9:43-45

"Who Do You Say That I Am?"

Matthew 16:13-21, Mark 8:27-31, and Luke 9:18-22

(Gospels forged together into one seamless story, in collaboration with New American Standard Bible, authored by Michael Gibson, Founder of Spirit & Truth, dba Key 2 Changes: "Follow Me: A Message from God", a Journey with Jesus)

Now when Jesus came into the district of **Caesarea Philippi**, He began asking His disciples, saying, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon **Barjona**, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are **Peter**, and upon this **rock** I will build My **church**; and the **gates of Hades shall not overpower it**. I will give you the **keys of the kingdom of heaven**; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ. From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

Caesarea Philippi. A city located about 25 miles north of Bethsaida at the foot of Mt. Hermon.

Barjona. "Son of Jonah".

Peter. The name in Greek is Petros meaning a rock or small stone.

Rock. The Greek word is Petra meaning foundation stone. (Jesus said that His Church was going to be built on the foundation stone [truth, principle, or fact] of Peter's statement that declared Jesus, as the Christ, the Son of the living God.)

Church. The Greek word is ekklesia meaning "called out ones". The Hebrew equivalent, kahal means assembly, congregation, or community. Both of these words refer to people. Neither of them refers to an institution or a building.

Gates. The entry or departure points of a fortified place or stronghold (i.e., a walled city). Gates were closed in dangerous times to prevent entrance by enemies attempting to overpower the stronghold. This is called going on the defense. Gates were opened to allow the stronghold's resources to be released against an enemy. This is called going on the attack.

Gates of Hades. Entry and departure points into the realm of the dead.

Shall not overpower it. Jesus simply means that the power of death cannot kill the Church, by opening its gates and attacking. Nor can it stop the Church from taking souls out of the realm of the dead by closing its gates and defending the stronghold.

Keys. Instruments used for either locking or unlocking the gates of strongholds.

Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. One key locks (binds or closes) the gates of Heaven, thus barring entrance and keeping its blessing from being released. The other key unlocks (looses or opens) the gates of Heaven to provide entrance and releasing of its blessing. Peter first used these keys to release heaven's blessing on the first Feast of Pentecost following Christ's resurrection from the dead. He declared, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself." ([Acts 2:38-39](#))

True Discipleship

Matthew 16:24-28, Mark 8:34-9:1, and Luke 9:23-27

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And He summoned the multitude with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever 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 the glory of His Father with the holy angels; and WILL THEN RECOMPENSE EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS." And He was saying to them, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."

Jesus Prophesies His Death

Matthew 17:22-23, Mark 9:30-32, and Luke 9:43-45

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And from there they went out and began to go through Galilee, and He was unwilling for anyone to know about it. And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. But while everyone was marveling at all that He was doing, He said to His disciples, "Let these words sink into your ears; the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day." And they were deeply grieved. But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they might not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement.

Group Discussion:

Would you like to know when you are going to die? Why or why not?

How would you like to die?

The Command:

1. Let these words sink into your hears.

The Lesson:

Jesus introduced the subject of His death by asking the disciples who people thought he, the Son of Man, was. They respond by saying that people think He is one of the prophets who has returned from the dead. Then He asked the disciples who they thought He was. Peter answered for them, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

By his answer, Jesus recognized that God had revealed to Peter the identity of the Son of Man.¹ Immediately He responds with several shocking statements, the import of which would not fully be comprehended until after His resurrection from the dead.

1. Jesus referred to Peter as Barjona, which means son of Jonah. This was a fitting title for Peter who would be the first to bring the gospel to the Gentiles, much as was his forerunner the prophet Jonah, who also took his message to the Gentiles.
2. Peter’s real name was Simon, but Jesus called him, “Peter”. The name in Greek is Petros meaning a rock or small stone. A small stone is solid and strong but can be moved.
3. Jesus referred to Peter’s statement, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”, as the rock on which His Church would be built. The Greek word for this rock is Petra meaning foundation stone. A foundation stone is also solid and strong but cannot be moved.
4. Jesus said He would build His church. The Greek word for church is ekklesia meaning “called out ones”. The Hebrew equivalent, kahal means assembly, congregation, or community. Both of these words refer to people, not an institution or a building. The fact that Jesus was starting his own community of believers would have come as a great surprise to the disciples since it was not **directly** revealed in the Torah (Old Testament). However the concept was alluded to several times.²
5. He also said that the gates of Hades would not overpower His church. In saying this He indicated a two-fold meaning: 1) that the church could never be killed, as it would last forever and 2) that the church could not be prevented from taking souls out of the realm of the dead.

¹ Daniel 7:13-14 - “I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the **clouds of heaven** one like a **Son of Man** was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. **And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom**, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.”

² Exodus 32:9-10 – “The LORD said to Moses, ‘I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation.’”

Deuteronomy 32:21 - “They have made Me jealous with what is not God; they have provoked Me to anger with their idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.”

Isaiah 65:1 - “I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me; I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me. I said, ‘Here am I, here am I,’ to a nation which did not call on My name.”

6. In addition, Jesus said He would give His disciples the keys to the kingdom. This would have been surprising news to them since the Pharisees of that day claimed to hold the keys to Heaven.³ One key locks⁴ the gates of Heaven, thus barring entrance and keeping blessings from being released. The other key unlocks⁵ the gates of Heaven thus allowing entrance and releasing of its blessings. The term bind simply means to forbid something and to loose means to permit something. There are two primary uses of the authority to bind and loose: 1) prayer and 2) making legal decisions regarding communal life within a church body.
7. Finally, Jesus tells the disciples that He must go to Jerusalem where He will be persecuted and killed. But then He reassures them that He will be raised from the dead on the third day.

If the previous revelations weren't enough, Jesus challenges His hearers with this statement. *"If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross⁶ daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it."* Jesus makes it quite clear that discipleship is costly. There is no "cheap grace" in being a Christian or some primrose path to follow in doing God's will. Jesus' statement is a sobering thought to all who call themselves, Christians ... that is to say, we who follow Christ. Can we deny ourselves ... by giving up what we want to do to serve another? Can we embrace and carry our cross daily ... the very thing that just kills us to do? Or can we follow Jesus ... by obeying what He tells us to do?

Group Discussion:

Name one thing that you can give up to serve another?

Name one thing that just kills you to do?

Name one thing that Jesus has told you to do?

The Point Of The Lesson:

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ will cost you your life.

Application:

1. Check to see if your motives are pure.
2. Don't be fearful or anxious about your life.
3. Believe what God has told you to do, and then do it.

³ According to Josephus in his "Wars of the Jews 1:5:2".

⁴ Binds – forbids - closes

⁵ Looses – permits - opens

⁶ The cross was the Roman method of executing non-citizen lawbreakers. The Jewish people used only four methods of execution: stoning, burning, beheading and strangling. Hanging someone from a tree (cross) was not one of them. The reason for this was that according to Deuteronomy 21:22-23 when someone was hanged he was accursed by God. This was how the Apostle Paul was able to make his statement in Galatians 3:13. *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"*.