

The Coming Cross

Jesus shows His power over nature, demon possession, disease, and death. The real message from last week? Do not fear, but believe!

Note: I've enjoyed and recommend Mark E. Moore's "The Chronological Life of Christ." Some of my comments can be found in his material by coincidence (he's not the only one making such observations articulated in his material), and other times, I've leaned on his accurate and helpful observations. He's done an excellent job making 1st-century culture and practices available.

Events that occur between last week's lesson and today: Jesus heals two blind men and a demon-possessed man (Mt. 9:27-34); His final visit to Nazareth (Mt. 13:54-58; Mk. 6:1-6a); Jesus begins His third Galilean tour (Mt. 9:35-38; Mk. 6:6b).

The Twelve's First Solo Mission (Luke 9:1-5)

- Harmonizing and/or explaining the text:
 - Again, this is the beginning of Jesus' third Galilean tour and the first time the 12 are sent out on their own in pairs.
 - This would be a brief and local (Galilee) preaching tour. No need for lots of money and clothes. This is familiar territory and Jesus has been with them for about a year and a half.
 - Matthew's account includes more of Jesus' instructions. He tells them:
 - Not to go among the Gentiles or Samaritans but the lost sheep of Israel.
 - Persecution will come. Apostles will be delivered before governors and kings, but God would provide the message. The faithful will suffer, but those who endure will be saved.
 - Do not fear them; instead, fear God. God cares for them.
 - Jesus did not come to bring peace but a sword. Again, internal conflict is caused by the truth. Those who don't take their cross are not worthy of Jesus.
 - Those who receive the apostles receive Christ and will be rewarded.
- What we can take home:
 - There's a time to own our faith. Jesus wouldn't always be with them. Parents mentor with the goal of one day releasing.
 - Practically, because of the way Jesus went about it, He couldn't do it all. He wanted extra hands - your hands are His.
 - God is pleased with you for supporting those who spread the word. A sincere "thank you" comes from my family to yours. We have learned to trust in God to provide and you are proof of that.
 - We can take home Jesus, come what may. Isn't He worth it?

Herod, John, & Jesus (7-9)

- Harmonizing and/or explaining the text:
 - We've read about John's rebuke of Herod and the imprisonment that resulted in 3:19-20.

- Matthew and Luke discuss the death of John. Herod had John beheaded in prison. John's disciples report this horrific news to Jesus and will finally begin to follow Him.
- Like some others, Herod believes that Jesus is John, who is back from the dead.
 - Perhaps he believed that the souls of the dead could return and enter a living being, as Josephus discusses (*Josephus, Wars 1.599*).
- Herod will have his moment with Jesus shortly before He's crucified (Luke 23:6-12).
- *What we can take home:*
 - There are three individuals represented in this text. One you can't be: Jesus. The other two represent everyone else. You think of Jesus as someone interesting but in no way genuinely follow Him. You may want to hear about Him, see something done by Him, or have a chat, but no genuine desire to follow Him. I've seen that look and casual question about Jesus many times at this point. On one hand, it's a question that can turn into something wonderful. On the other, it's the most horrific look and question. The one that casually brings Him up and then tosses the Son of Man to the side. So quickly. So easily. To many, Jesus is simply an extra in the movie you star in. In and out. Quickly forgotten. Or, you're totally committed to Jesus and will die on a hill for Him because of the hill He died on for you. Teaching God's desire cost John his life.
 - Your life can come and go without a sound being made, but that doesn't mean it isn't meaningful. John was exceptionally known (most of us don't experience that). Still, he was not protected from the wolves of this world. No, God allowed him to be snuffed out quickly and quietly. Here and gone. I recommend putting your faith in Jesus, even if it costs you everything.

Jesus Feeds The 5,000 (10-17)

- *Harmonizing and/or explaining the text:*
 - Moore states, "This is the only event prior to the last week of Jesus' life that is recorded in all four Gospels." This is the third year of Jesus' ministry.
 - We have mixed emotions: on one hand, there's the successful work of the Apostles, but on the other, the sad news of John's death. No doubt, Jesus mourned for Him as He considered His own end.
 - Mark says they didn't even have the leisure to eat. They seek to find time alone on a mountain. However, the Passover was near, and many travelers came to Jesus. You've got a large crowd because some follow Him because of His miracles, others due to the apostle's work, the death of John, and the Passover at hand.
 - Jesus first tests Philip by asking where they should buy food for everyone. Philip explains they don't have nearly enough money for it.
 - After Jesus tells them to give them something to eat, they state it would take 200 denarii. He then asks how many loaves they have. Peter states they have five loaves and two fish. Jesus has them bring the food and blesses it.
 - We learn there were 5,000 men besides women and children.
 - After the miracle, the people wanted to take Jesus by force and make Him king, but He withdrew from the mountain by Himself.
- *What grabs my attention:*
 - Elijah also performed a similar miracle in his day (2 Kings 4:42-44). That's interesting because we'll see him shortly at the transfiguration.

- Some see symbolism in this miracle. For example, do the 12 baskets represent Israel? Is this representative of the Messianic banquet? Is Jesus providing bread in a remote place meant to draw your mind back to God providing the manna? It's certainly discussed the next day with the same crowd.
- This miracle was performed to perhaps His largest crowd. He's never gained more popularity in His earthly ministry than at this moment in time. It's all about Jesus. It's all provided by Him. It could only be done by Him. Yet, again, He's calling for His disciples to play a part and feed the crowd.

Events that occur in between:

- Jesus walks on water (Mt. 14:24-33; Mk. 6:47-52; Jn. 6:16-21).
- Jesus heals in Gennesaret on His way to the synagogue in Capernaum and then teaches "I am the bread of life" (Mt. 14:34-36; Mk. 6:53-56; Jn. 6:22-59).
- Jesus & ceremonial cleaning; heals a Syro-Phoenician woman & deaf/mute man in the Decapolis (Mt. 15:1-31; Mk. 7:1-37; Jn. 7:1).
- Jesus feeds the 4,000 which is probably the same place as in Luke 8:26-39 (Mt. 15:32-38; Mk. 8:1-9a).
- Pharisees & Sadducees seek a sign and warns of the leaven of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians (Mt. 15:39-16:12; Mk. 8:9b-21; Jn. 2:18-23; 6:30).
- Jesus heals a blind man (Mk. 8:22-26).

Who Is He? (18-20)

- *Harmonizing and/or explaining the text:*
 - "We are now well into the third year of Jesus' ministry." Moore
 - We've left Galilee and are 25 miles north of Capernaum in Gentile territory.
 - Matthew's account adds Jesus' comments regarding His confession being the rock that Jesus will build His kingdom.
 - Notice how Jesus prays before this confession. I'm continually challenged by Jesus' faith as seen in prayer.
 - Two points worth making:
 - Moore (pg. 303-304), "Jesus' response parallels Peter's. Peter identifies Jesus as the Son of God; Jesus identifies Peter as the son of Jonah (Jn 21:15 has "of John". Peter identifies Jesus' position as Messiah; Jesus identifies Peter's position as the foundation of the church. That much is simple. But verse 18 complicates things a bit. What exactly is Peter's position as the "rock" of the church? Does this mean that Peter was the first pope with the power of Apostolic succession? That is the traditional Catholic response. Protestants have protested, however. They suggest that it is not Peter, but his confession that is the foundation of the church. They base this on the fact that Jesus' play on words changes from masculine [*Petros* = Peter], to feminine [*Petra* = rock]. Furthermore, they claim that a *petros* was a small throwing stone, but that *petra* was a huge rock. Thus, they hear Jesus say, "Peter, you are a little rock (cf. Jn 1:42; also 1 Cor 15:5; Gal 1:18), but the confession you have made is great enough to build a church upon," or "I, Jesus am the true bedrock of the church" (cf. 1 Pet 2:5-8). However, this subtle distinction between *petros* and *petra* is found only in Greek poetry. Its application here is questionable.

Besides, Jesus was probably speaking in Aramaic. At least he does when he addresses Peter as "Bar Jonah." And Aramaic does not have the subtle distinction between the Greek words for "rock." It simply uses *kepha*. Furthermore, even if Peter is not the "rock" (v. 18), he still has the "Keys of the Kingdom" (v. 19). That also must be explained.

- See how the church is synonymous with the Kingdom in this passage. That's not always the case, but to say it never is would be a mistake. Jesus didn't fail to establish the Kingdom.
- *What grabs my attention:*
 - This is more than an easy confession. It was a culmination of belief and conviction. Peter didn't totally understand the gravity of the statement, but as much as he could understand, he boldly proclaimed it. Not everyone understood it because they were blind. You had to be paying attention to get it. You had to be willing to accept Jesus for who He is, and Jesus didn't fit the typical picture of the Messiah. That was okay with Peter. While Peter did not hold authority over the other apostles, he was blessed to preach the news of a resurrected Lord for the first time to both Jews and Gentiles. Why? He confessed, without apology and sincere belief, that Jesus was Christ.

Where He's Headed? (21-27)

- *Harmonizing and/or explaining the text:*
 - Now, Jesus reveals that His road will end with a cross. Mark says He told them plainly.
 - Peter took Jesus to the side and rebuked Jesus. That could never happen! Jesus, after seeing His disciples, rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" Peter wasn't looking above but below.
 - It's about following Jesus. It's about losing yourself for Him. It's about being rewarded with the presence of Christ.
 - We may have the final judgment (vs. 27) coupled with the Kingdom of God, i.e., the church. This would point to Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 2:44; 7:13-14; Acts 1:6-8; 2; Hebrews 12:28-29.
- *What grabs my attention:*
 - Even the best of men get it wrong. Peter's heart was in the right place, but not his mind. Be patient with one another, but know when you're being earthly.
 - **Deny. Carry a cross. Follow.** Brethren, if we're following Jesus, we're all carrying a cross due to self-denial. Forgive my repetitiveness, but we are not the main characters. We're studying a non-fiction case today. Jesus really did visit His people. He really did put others first. It was tough, physically, emotionally, and mentally. He followed God to the point of death. We're getting to the heart of who we are. Who we are will be known by our fruit. Some never deny themselves, at all costs, because they only desire their own path.