

Leading Up to Palm Sunday

Matthew 16:21-28, *“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee. But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom.”*

Note the words that open this paragraph in Scripture. It indicates a new beginning in Christ’s ministry. Verse 21 reads, *“From that time **began** Jesus to show unto His disciples that he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things...to be killed and the third day raised up.”* Jesus didn’t say all these things at once exactly in this form, but He “began” to tell them these things. this declaration constitutes the key to the final section of Christ’s earthly ministry – leading up to Palm Sunday, His crucifixion and, finally, His resurrection!

Christ’s ministry was no longer mainly to the multitudes, but now He sought to teach and prepare His disciples. He devoted Himself largely to preparing them for His coming death. He was going up to Jerusalem – up to Palm Sunday! For the first time, Jesus unveils the cross, He was to die on, to His disciples

Secondly, Jesus officially turns from the Hebrew nation. Thirdly, He gives His disciples the program of the coming economy. And, finally, He is passing to His passion – and His triumph!

Everything that follow is mirrored in this scene described in this passage of Scripture. This is the preface to the rest of the Gospel of Matthew. Here we see the principles that will operate to the end of the story. The principles in action from this moment until Palm Sunday. The understanding of these principles is absolutely necessary if we are to understand the Lord’s plan and purpose in these last days of His life on earth.

Note:

1. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN “THE THINGS OF GOD”
AND
“THE THINGS OF MEN”

Verse 22 shares the antagonism between Christ's talk of the cross and Peter's objection. Verse 22 reads, *"Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto."*

This is so important. Don't miss it! Jesus began to speak of the fact that He must suffer and Peter began to object and say, *"Be it far from Thee, Lord."* Other translations render, *"God have mercy! God forbid! This will never happen to You!"* The principle is this, *"things of God"* were Jesus' estimate of necessity – and God's method would be carried out! Jesus had said, *"The Son of Man must go unto Jerusalem and suffer, be killed, and be raised up."*

"The things of men" are revealed in Peter's response – *"Lord, not this, pity Yourself, have mercy on Yourself, far be it that anything like this should ever happen!"*

1. *"The things of God"* is the way of the cross that merges into the victory of resurrection!
2. *"The things of men"* is a method of self-seeking that shuns the cross and ends up in ultimate destruction.

First, let's look at "The things of God"

Verse 21, *"Christ **must** go into Jerusalem"* – the place of danger and peril! Jesus said, *"I must be killed, and must be raised again the third day."* To understand what Jesus said, in this passage of Scripture, from the original punctuation, we need to realize the word *"must"* before each of Jesus' declaration. Jesus is here referring to the *"must"* of human surroundings – *He **must** suffer...He **must** be killed."* Jesus is saying, *"I am compelled to go to Jerusalem."* It was not heroism. He was not dying for some cause, nor, did He mean that He didn't have a choice. He did not have to suffer and die – if He would have just accommodated men; lower His ideals; compromise, but, because of His conviction, He **MUST** go unto Jerusalem.

What Jesus was saying was, *"I can never lower My standard, can never deny My ideals; can never unsay My manifesto – I will not abandon My teachings. My teachings have been the fiber of My personality. Men will carry their hostility to its consummation. I **must** suffer and be killed."* But, Jesus' dying would not be the end – He **must** be raised again!

The result of Jesus going to Jerusalem was that He would suffer and die – but, beyond this, would be God's divine power to raise Him from the dead. And, this **"MUST"** of Christ's resurrection has thundered out of eternity.

There was a force of the Holy Spirit that caused Him to set His face toward Jerusalem, and compelled Him to say, *"I must go!"* The Spirit of God was a force that propelled Him, was driving Him to finish His work of redemption!

Peter didn't understand this at the time – later he would! On the Day of Pentecost, he preached, *"Christ was delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay"* (Acts 2:23). Peter came to realize that what Jesus' **"musts"** meant! We understand that Jesus saw beyond His bloody suffering and death to the radiant morning of His resurrection. Peter came to see *"the things of God"*

"The things of men" would miss Jerusalem. They would reason, "Where ever else He went, He should not go to Jerusalem."

WHAT ARE "THE THINGS OF MEN?"

Peter did not see, on this occasion, the ultimate picture of what God was doing. He was living in the small concept of the *"immediate"* – living in the power of *"things seen."* Later, in his writings, Peter speaks of, *"those who see only the things that are near"* – They are near-sightedness! But, on this occasion, in the passage we are looking at, Peter suffering from this very thing – living for the *"now!"* He could not see the light of the future because of his limited outlook. He misunderstood the present.

Don't miss this -- The reason the disciples feared the present was because of enthronement of *"self"* – They were living for *"SELF!"*

Jesus was so absolutely void of a self-centered lie that no matter what the suffering, He was willing to suffer in order to achieve God's ultimate victory! Hebrews 12:2 tells us, *"Jesus...who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame – and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."* All Peter could see was the present pain and suffering – because of the affliction of *"near-sightedness."*

How would we have prayed under the same circumstance? How do we react in the face of a suffering? Do we pray out of a refined *"self-nature"* – the assertion of *self love*? A self-centered man is controlled by immediate circumstances, living in his own circle. A God-centered man is led by God's Holy Spirit – living for eternity.

Peter, on this occasion, because he was self-centered was self circumference – his actions were based on living in the dust of the present, seeing only the pain of the process and none of the glory of God's ultimate purpose.

Here was the contrast of the two ideals

"The things of God" are a stumbling block to the man who is minding the *"Things of man."* Jesus placed before Peter the reason of His work and told him of the Cross – and it became a stumbling-block. Later, Peter would say, *"The Cross has become a 'stumbling-block' to some."*

The principle is: To the man who minds *"the things of man,"* the cross becomes a stumbling-block – and – to the man who minds *"the things of God,"* the things of man become a stumbling-block!

See this scene: Peter takes Jesus aside – (literally, *"a little ways away"*) – and begins to *"rebuke"* Jesus. This word, rendered *"rebuke,"* means *"to chide,"* even, *"to become angry with."* Don't soften this word! It was because of this that Jesus turns back on Peter and says, *"Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men"* (Matthew 16:23).

Peter was a man who loved the Lord with all his heart, yet, because he ignores God's method, his reaction is a stumbling-block to God's plan and purpose. Jesus said of Peter, just a very short while before this, declared, *"Thou art the Christ the Son of the Living God!"* Jesus replied, *"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church."* Now, Peter's action is a stumbling-block. Jesus said to Peter, *"You are standing in My*

Pathway to hinder God's will." Jesus rebuked him – and the devil who was behind the scene. why? Because Peter was *"minding the things of men."* How often the *"stones of the Church,"* become *"stones of offence"* because we see only the *"Now!"*

When does a *"rock of the Church"* become a *"stumbling-block?"* We as a believer begin to promote our own view of how things should be done, as against God's view. When that happens, the believe becomes a *"stumbling-block"* in God's way. When we attempt to build God's Kingdom without the Cross, without suffering – when we venture to answer God's *"must"* by saying, *"No, not that way"* – we become a stumbling-block!

What happens when God's will is revealed, we may feel surely it must be a mistake there has to be an easier way. We attempt a *"soft"* way, a way without blood, without suffering, or agony. In doing so, we become a stumbling-block to God!

To illustrate – We have no right to make a sacrifice, even for Jesus, that He does not appoint for us. We must not make some sacrifice simply because we *"feel"* it is the right thing to do. To not wait for orders from our Master, is as wrong as not to *"deny self."*

A true disciples of Jesus Christ does not choose whether life is a song, or a time of crying; sunshine or shadow. He has no choice, but to know His Master's will – and do it! If our Master appoints for us blue waters, sunshine and summer, let's rejoice, but if He appoints us the via Delarosa pathway, with sunless sky, we should be willing to joyfully receive from His hand – because it is His appointment.

Jesus said, *"Follow Me,"* -- that is our *"must!"* The *"must"* of our life is to follow Jesus! Does that mean suffering – it may, or it may not! Suffering is not the dearest consecration in the *"must."* The dearest consecration is to co-operate with God's purpose, whatever that may be. God plan and purpose will ultimately bring us to the *resurrection!* God's will may be laughter or crying; sorrow or singing. The secret is, as Jesus said, *"Follow Me,"* whatever that may entail.

Jesus stresses the point by saying, *"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it"* (Matthew 16:25). Then, Jesus makes His appeal in the form of two questions: *"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Matthew 16:26). Which do you choose? You don't have to go very far in life to find this confrontation, this contrast. Look within your own heart and you will hear God's *"must!"* Don't respond with the attitude, *"Not that, Lord, let me escape. Take that far from me!"*

Which *"must"* will Master you? Will you decide with Christ? the forces of eternity may drive us to suffer and die with Him – but on the other side is God's triumph! Or we can choose for *"self"* and stand alone, saving our own miserable life and lose all that God has planned for us. God help us to decide for Him.