

The Just shall live by Faith

Volume 2 - Study 1 '**...the last shall be first, the first last: ...many be called, but few chosen**'
C. Ronald Johnson, Christian Wilderness Press: Matthew 19:16-20:33 '**...every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.**'

These are brief studies, not
"teachings" or "doctrines".

Volume 2, Study 1 (7-21-09)

Introduction

During the last twenty or so years, teachings by many evangelical churches have offered to their members vainglorious (artificial) relationships with God. We have forgotten that Jesus is our Shepherd and that we are his little sheep, not his partners. May the passage of this study help us to rethink the relationship of God to His children...and in the process humble us.

In Matthew 19 and 20, Jesus was nearing the end of his three year ministry and was traveling towards Jerusalem with his disciples and with *crowds following them*. Of the great many people who believed in Jesus and who *followed* him around *there were but few actual 'disciples'*. In other words, *following Jesus* did not make Jesus' followers '*disciples*'.

Modern teachings that equate "following Jesus" with 'discipleship' interpret the phrase '**come and follow me**' in 19:21 as equivalent to "**become my disciple**". Moreover, many such teachings interpret '**the kingdom of heaven**' in 23 and '**the kingdom of God**' in 24 as equivalent to "the overall Church on earth" or "Christians saved by Grace" or some other reference to "God's people in the church".

Let us, then, follow along in the lengthy passage studying what Matthew detailed of certain incidents, for Matthew wanted us to know something of '**disciples**', '**workers**' and '**kingdom of heaven** thinking' and how typical human thinking differs from God's thinking.

Who can become Jesus' '**disciple**'? Is there a list of requirements? Is there a series of tests to go through? Are there things to accomplish or overcome within one's self to become Jesus' '**disciple**'? Is it possible for every child of God to become Jesus' '**disciple**'? Is becoming a '**disciple**' the primary means of becoming "spiritual so as to do God's work"?

There has always been human confusion on this and similar topics. In the Gospels, Jesus' twelve disciples demonstrated typical human confusion about many of God's things and ways; in that, the things of heaven were and remain mysterious to earth dwellers. Yet, more confusion exists in the many teachings of today on these subjects because many sincere Christians are *ever focused on the things we do for God, more things we can do for God, and things we should do for God*. Our egos tell us that God in heaven needs us to be mighty on earth for Him. Therefore, many church teachings (that the church might function "with power" on earth and in the world) have become *church-agenda driven*.

Kingdom of God Values

Beginning in 19: 16 is the account of the rich young ruler and in 22 the young ruler sadly departed for he had great possessions. Please read the text in your Bible. Thus, it is often taught, "The young man failed *the test of discipleship* because he loved possessions (or money)."

Is there such a test and, in fact, was the young man looking to be a disciple? Did he not approach Jesus and ask, '**Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?**' The question was not about discipleship. But yes, I suspect that he was seeking a position among Jesus' disciples. Moreover, I suspect that the '**good thing**' he thought he *might do* for God (i.e. to join those who had '**eternal life**' with Jesus) *was to add* his '**great possessions**' unto Jesus' outstanding ministry.

We Christian *doers* have always thought highly that we can *do* for Almighty God. Yet,

take note of Jesus' disciples who on the one hand thought they could *do things* for the Master and on the other hand were regularly startled at their *ineptness in doing and/or understanding*. They were regularly torn (i.e. frustrated) between *the desire to do and/or understand* and the *actual results* of their human doing and understanding.

But Jesus actually answered the actual question (which was not about discipleship): **'If thou wilt be perfect [i.e. 'complete'],...'**. Jesus spoke of becoming **'perfect'** (i.e. **'complete'**) in regards to **'eternal life'**. In regards to this passage, then, this kind of **'life'** was much more about *'life quality'* than it was about the *'length or place of life'*. It was the kind or quality of **'life'** that the young man saw in Jesus, and as well he saw it in the often bumbling disciples.

Following the answer, then, Jesus invited the young man to join in with the many people following along with him and the disciples as they journeyed to Jerusalem, where Marvelous Things of God would soon occur. In other words, Jesus implied, "Get your priorities straightened out and then come and witness the things that Almighty God is going to do."

Now also consider that *Jesus had no use for such possessions or for the young man's things or for their worth or for the money that could be acquired from selling them...*

Matthew 16:8-10) Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?

To pass through 'the eye of a needle'

Next (and in line with the topic of *valued things*) in 23 and 24 Jesus wanted the disciples (who would soon be apostles of the Church) to know that **'...it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.'** In our considerations of this verse we usually get all caught up with "what are a needle and its eye" and with "a very large camel going through it". Therefore, consider a teaching of today as it is applied to *discipleship*: "A person must sell what he has and give the money to the poor (or the lesser version: 'a person must at least *be willing* to sell it and give the money to the poor'). In other words, to truly follow Jesus and become his disciple a Christian must have no attachments to earthly things. It is a *requirement for discipleship*."

Other *requirements* are usually mentioned also like "self-sacrifice", "serving the brethren", etc. "*Fulfill the requirements*: and the Christian becomes Jesus' disciple."

Now, with this Bible verse in mind, let us picture the typical camel with its typical load of goods traveling along and then trying to squeeze through the **'eye of a needle'** (whatever that is). Now picture the typical rich man traveling along following after Jesus. See him psychologically and spiritually trying to squeeze through the **'eye of a needle'** with all his baggage...baggage that would fill up ten or more camel-loads. As the rich man fails to maneuver his wealthy baggage through (and Jesus is continuing on down the road), will he then say, "I shall forget all this stuff and go on with Jesus"...setting down the baggage and leaving it to whoever might come by?

Few modern Christians in the USA would do it. Indeed, few of the wealthy among us would do it. Like with the rich young ruler, it makes little human sense because we have so many talents to offer Jesus and so much of what we have already accomplished with those talents. Our talents that we work with and the things earned by those talents by the sweat of our worthy brows are valuable to us and very hard to leave behind.

Dear reader, Jesus has drawn a distinction between earth-wealth of man (familiar to us)

and kingdom-wealth of the Father (unfamiliar to us). We all know that a person's wealth and/or possessions often can cause earthly and worldly difficulties. How much more difficulty, then, would it cause the Christian that is trying to carry all of it while *following* Jesus? Therefore, we should respectfully consider the people of the multitude (wealthy and poor) *following Jesus toward Jerusalem*. They were not Jesus' disciples and were not in Jesus' inner circle.

How much more impossible, then, to carry along such things being *one of Jesus' disciples* ...so often mystified by his words and deeds (like in verses 23 and 24)? In 1Corinthians 7:33-35, the Apostle Paul emphasized the difficulty (i.e. burden) of being a *close follower* of Jesus and at the same time being married. (For Barbara's part and my part in our marriage, it is more a *joint endeavor* than a *burden* as we follow along. We more lean on each other than try to carry each other.)

Each person is connected to what he or she is connected. Whether it is riches, family, career, etc., each is connected to them since they are considered quite valuable. Few Christians would attempt to squeeze through '**the eye of a needle**' or pass over a narrow one-person bridge to follow Jesus...thereby leaving behind all that cannot fit through into *the scanty limits of true discipleship* (the kind of discipleship that Jesus described and portrayed for us above).

In regards to 'wealth', the question is, "What is most valuable to us, Jesus and the walk of faith in him or the things that you and I have always considered valuable?" Ah, but wealth, or the love of wealth, or the lack of wealth is but a subtopic in this ongoing passage in Matthew. To put it differently, "Would you allow God to change your value system to become something like His value system?"

A Disciple is Chosen

Another question: Should we even be studying scripture for what is "required of a person to become a disciple"? The rich young ruler sought out Jesus, perhaps thinking of joining the band of disciples. Who of the twelve disciples sought to be Jesus' disciple? Answer: None. Jesus pointed out to them that they did not choose Jesus; rather, Jesus chose them. Let me emphasize the word "chose" that Jesus used. Would Jesus have "chosen" the rich young ruler if he had sold all and given the proceeds to the poor? *Too often we read scripture according to the groove (i.e. doctrinal mindset) in which our minds run*. Jesus simply emphasized the fact that the young man lacked something that would, and did, disqualify him from *even the possibility of becoming one of Jesus' disciples*. On the other hand, Jesus did want him to witness, along with the many people following, the Wondrous Things that soon the Father would do in Jerusalem. But the young man was focused on his possessions and '**went away sorrowful**'.

Note that Jesus did not say, or imply, that if the young man did as Jesus said that he would become a disciple. Indeed, the young man was not meant to be (i.e. was not chosen by the Father) to be one of Jesus' disciples. As Master, Jesus did not *invite* men into discipleship. As Master, Jesus *chose* the men that the Father had *fore-chosen* for him. These men were not looking for it. They were caught by surprise.

Each man reacted properly to Jesus only because the Father had already prepared him to react properly. This is why when other disciples (i.e. having left home and were closely walking with Jesus) were leaving, the *chosen ones* responded, '**Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.**' (Again we note the *quality of life* in Jesus' words more than the *length or place of life*...John 6:68)

Biblically defined, 'discipleship' is not *how much a person needs to sacrifice for God* or *how much a person needs to give back to Him in time and money*. Nor is it any other *requirement that a person must fulfill*. It is not about "sacrifice" or "a list of requirements" or even "personal values". A master *seeks out and chooses* a person to become *his apprentice*. (In Jesus' case, the Father had already chosen them for Jesus.) If the person accepts (i.e. is drawn to the master) then he *lets go of the things of his path* and he *turns a step or two behind the master into the master's*

path. We see this in 1Kings 19:19-21 with Elisha and Elijah: this is being ‘chosen into discipleship’. *Willingness* on the disciple’s part and *enabling* on the master’s part are the two necessary things when walking the master’s (Master’s) path.

Lot’s wife was *chosen* in God’s Plan and she *sacrificed* much in leaving her *valued* home to *follow* the angels and her husband. You know what happened to her as she disqualified herself from the Plan. More than a few people had *followed* Jesus (i.e. as *called* to be disciples) and in fact they were accepted to *follow* him; even so, at some point they found that they could not go on. *Desiring* to become a disciple, or even being *called* toward discipleship, is not discipleship. Discipleship is 1) having been called, 2) having answered the call, and 3) continuing on to the end within the Master’s enabling. *Chosen* Lot simply marched on in obedience, being enabled in faith by God so as to follow the angels into whatever God had *chosen* for him.

The great many believers in Jesus as the Messiah were remaining at home; they were *not following* him. Many others were *following* him because they were attracted to him; but these were not *called spiritually toward discipleship*. Then there were more than a few who *had left home when feeling a spiritual call toward discipleship* and they were *following* him; and these were included (i.e. *called*) into Jesus’ inner circle. Nonetheless, only the twelve *chosen of the Father* stayed with Jesus to the end.

Most Christians are not ‘**called**’. Moreover, though ‘**many are called, few are chosen**’. Our problem in trying to understand these things (which are of the kingdom of heaven) is that we inspect the things of scripture using our earthly minds that are set in our varied concepts and mindsets that have been established by our personal desires and church teachings. Indeed, we usually go to church where teachings appeal to us and make sense to us, which is why we go to differing churches.

Forsake All...and Then What?

After the ‘**eye of a needle**’ lesson, amazed Peter (27) responded to say, ‘**We have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?**’ Jesus responded to Peter in 28-29, ‘**Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me...in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory...ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And [furthermore] every one [i.e. every individual person] that hath [become my disciple and has] forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold [i.e. of whatever he or she had left behind], and shall inherit everlasting life.**’ [Again, this is *quality of life* more than *length or place of life*.]

Jesus said that in his future kingdom these particular disciples shall have a special position which already has been *chosen* for them. And then Jesus went on to give a promise to other disciples whom the Father will use similarly in the world in God’s Plan of the Ages in Christ Jesus.

30) But [i.e. speaking to disciples about disciples] **many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.**

Now is introduced a kingdom-methodology: ‘**first shall be last...last shall be first**’. Jesus is about to explain the Father’s methodology in a parable about hired *workers*. (Jesus spoke verse 30 about disciples. However, all who are *hired, called, disciplined*, etc. by God to work for Him are ‘workers’ or ‘laborers’ in the following parable.) To say it differently, this kingdom-methodology is how the Father operates regarding all children of God in any kind of true work for Him.

Furthermore, Jesus has just given notice that the Father will use it for the disciples mentioned in verses 28 and 29. That is, for those who ‘**shall receive an hundredfold**’, etc., it shall be distributed to them according to ‘**first last and last first**’.

However, in no sense did Jesus’ words in verses 28 and 29 define a set of *requirements*

to receive ‘**an hundredfold, and shall inherit** [the Jesus kind of] **everlasting life**’. Nor were these things *requirements to become Jesus’ disciples*, for in fact Jesus was speaking of future men and women fore-chosen of the Father (like the twelve) who would similarly leave all behind them and be led through similar paths to experience similar hardships for Jesus’ sake.

Jesus was near the end of his earthly ministry and would undergo great hardships, and so would the chosen twelve disciples (if they would continue with him to the end...and the Father was seeing to it that they would continue with the Son to the end). Lot also received his Inclusion in God’s Plan of the Ages and his scheduled reward, but Lot’s wife missed what God had for Lot. She had thought more upon her *sacrifice* and *what she was giving up* than upon *God’s enabling*, which was as available to her as it was to Lot.

The passages to this point (and other passages) are often interpreted as “requirements for becoming a disciple”, meaning “do them and you will become a disciple”. Yet, real discipleship **begins** with a *call to simply turn from the world and its ways and follow Jesus*, and it **culminates** in being *chosen* (in the sense of *confirmed*) when one follows on to the end of the calling. And dear reader, we see from all scripture that *it is impossible except that God Himself enables a called person to make it through into the condition of ‘chosen or confirmed’*.

Yet, please note in the above paragraph that I described the process as *from the human point of view*. However, *from heaven’s point of view* it is that *God has fore-chosen a shall-be-disciple and He shall enable him to go through to the end of the process*.

Please note that not until the time of this passage in Jesus’ ministry did he make such difficult-to-hear statements to those following him *trying* to be his disciples. We know that most of the would-be-disciples returned home (believing in Jesus as Messiah) as they discovered that they could not continue in the path (i.e. were not enabled by the Father). To put it more soberly, this is God’s *culling process* to arrive at a *continuing remnant*.

‘Chosen’ does not mean “Earned”

Sadly, too many Christians think that ‘**chosen**’ means “earned”. Remember when as kids we chose up sides to play a game of ball. Everyone acknowledged a person on each side to be a team captain and then each captain took turns choosing a person from the overall group. No matter how much you might jump up and down and yell “choose me, choose me” to your desired captain, each captain chose as he saw fit according to his requirements for his team. Moreover, he chose only the number of players required for the game. All the other hopeful players in the overall group remained on the sidelines watching. That was “choosing” and “being chosen”.

Being chosen by a team captain is not “you earning a position on the team”. A Christian does not “earn a position as disciple”. Jesus told his disciples, “You did not choose me. I chose you.” The rich young ruler did not miss out on being a disciple because he loved possessions and wealth. Note that this young man had not even been sought out by Jesus. Even if he had been ‘called’ he would never have made it to the end...which is the essence of what Jesus was saying. Yes he was wealthy, but he could have desired any other thing enough not to leave it behind. Judging from within his value system, the young man viewed Jesus’ words as illogical.

The young man’s loving idea (which the disciples admired and appreciated) was to use his wealth as a help to Jesus and the ministry. All ministries need financing, right? The disciples thought so and when they heard what Jesus said ‘**they were exceedingly amazed**’. They thought that the young man and his wealth would have been a great help. “Jesus, what are you thinking?”

We do not have Kingdom-Minds

Matthew was concerned that his readers of the New Testament Church understand what

Jesus meant in 19:30, for in chapter 20 Matthew continued the theme. However, instead of Matthew writing his own comments, he continued giving some of Jesus' specific deeds and words meant to give enlightenment on the subject. Jesus did and said many things as he and the disciples approached Jerusalem, but Matthew chose certain situations and teachings to explain 19:30. Therefore, read again Jesus' words in 19:30.

To show that this passage is about what Jesus had said in 19:30 let us consider 20:15,16... **'Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So [indeed] the last shall be first, and the first last:... for many be called, but few chosen.**

Crowds accompanied Jesus along the way, but his entire and continued teaching was directed to his disciples and to those in the crowd who would become disciples in the future. Jesus wanted them to know that there are *distinctions* between 1) the kingdom of heaven and 2) this world. Moreover, there are *distinctions* between 1) the way God in heaven thinks and 2) the way we humans in the world think.

While we Christians are bound on this sod and walk in this world (i.e. born in sin, though saved by grace) we do *not have kingdom minds*. Some of us may have grown spiritually to the point of having 'renewed minds in the spirit'; yet, we are limited to where we are walking. And where we are walking is *not in the kingdom of heaven* (which is in heaven). We see mistakes in the Acts and the Epistles made by the apostles and later made by men and women discipled by the apostles.

So instead of thinking (as we usually do) of what you and I can spiritually receive for ourselves out of this chapter of Matthew, let us simply consider what Jesus is saying about *the differences* between 'kingdom ways' and our own ways of "the things we Christians do on earth for God".

I repeat: we shall be looking at *differences* in *distinctions* in regards to 1) God working His way and 2) the typical ways that disciples *in themselves* would work for God if God were not carrying the heavy load for them. Dear reader, Jesus' teaching is sober and humbling. He did not teach it for those who would like to be disciples. He taught it to those who already were disciples...who must soon choose to stay or leave in the face of changing values and in the face of the many, sometimes dreadful, fears that arrive with changing values.

Jesus was not talking to the average faithful church member or church worker. He was talking to men who had already given up much of the world, left home, and had been following him for many months, if not for years.

Early on, Jesus had never said such difficult things to them. Only now, near the end of his earthly ministry, did Jesus begin to speak such words because things would get very rough for him and for any of the disciples that might be willing to hang around. He knew who would remain (by the Father's enabling help) and who would leave.

Christians think in Earthly Ways

Matthew 20:1,2) For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them [i.e. 'the first'] into his vineyard.

20:3,4) And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they [faithfully] went their way [to the work].

20:5) Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

20:6,7) And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye [i.e. 'the last'] also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is

right, that shall ye receive.

20:8,9) So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they [i.e. ‘the last’] received every man a penny.

20:10-12) But when the first [in turn] came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

Here, dear reader, is how most of us Christian ‘**laborers**’ typically think. We think that we should receive pay according to how much we work (as we gaze around comparing ourselves to other workers). Instead we should believe and honor the pure Word of God regarding ourselves (and how fortunate we are to even be able to work for the Lord). Too quickly we lose focus on the Mercy and Compassion of our Lord toward all the brethren.

We think too much of “earning” something (when all has been paid for by the Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus)...which why we think in terms of “earning” discipleship.

Yes, ‘the first’ were *equal in necessary pay* to ‘the last’, but ‘the first’ had the high privilege of the longest time in the Master’s vineyard work. What matters the day’s pay in comparison to being chosen first for the hardest and longest work?

20:13-15) But he answered one of them [i.e. even as the Lord would single out you or me], and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

The penny represents the earthly need of the laborer for him and his family. No one will truly work for God and see his family begging for bread. The Good Master and His Good work guarantee it and the laborers work in the promise of it.

Straight from the Son’s mouth is how the Father in His kingdom thinks and works. Jesus earlier had said that the methodology of ‘**last first and first last**’ would apply to his disciples throughout the ages. Now we see it is also to be applied to *invited* or *called* workers in the vineyard. They will be provided for according to ‘**last first and first last**’.

20:16) So [i.e. therefore, take note that] the last shall be first, and the first last:...for many be called, but few chosen.

Discussion for ‘...many be called, but few chosen’ is below. There were no ‘**chosen**’ labourers laboring in the vineyard. The only ‘**chosen**’ one was the ‘**steward**’ (8).

Not yet are they Kingdom-thinkers

20:17-19) And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve [chosen] disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.

Surely much was happening and Jesus was saying and teaching much, but Matthew continues recording what he wants us to know.

20:20) Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him [even as a faithful mother would approach her king].

She lived near the Sea of Galilee where her sons had worked as fishermen. She (and only the Lord knows who else of that region) had followed Jesus for many days over a long distance into Judea so as to be approaching Jerusalem.

Obviously she thinks that she is worthy (i.e. for her worthy disciple sons) to make a

request of the Lord for her sons. Obviously she believes that Jesus is the Messiah-King. Obviously she has been a willing follower.

20:21) And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.

Had any other mothers or wives of Jesus' disciples been following for so long a time? Perhaps this mother had proved herself more faithful (in her mind, at least) and now she thinks that she has the right to make such a request. Her sons were by her side in this request and so Jesus responds to them.

20:22) But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.

This mother and her sons truly believe that they are true believers. They are convinced that they can go the distance...and Jesus knows that as 'first disciple' they shall.

20:23) And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.

As was said at the beginning of this little study, Jesus was not talking to the average faithful church member; he was speaking to men whom the Father had chosen and for whom things had been prepared; and they had already given up much of the world and had been following him for years. Early on, Jesus never said such difficult things; only now near the end of his earthly ministry does he share his heart about things becoming much tougher for him and for the disciple (soon to be apostle) willing to stay around.

As was also said, there are *distinctions* between 1) how God in heaven thinks and 2) how we humans in this world think differently from God. We think according to our ideas about what "we earn or deserve" due to our '**labours**' ('**first**', '**middle**', or '**last**'). But the Lord thinks in terms of God's Plan of the Ages in Jesus Christ. Moreover, His thinking is always in accord with what has been *chosen* and *prepared* in The Plan.

20:24) And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

Here is more proof of how we think! Even *chosen* men...soon to become apostles... think in their natural and earthy flesh. We all think this way. Oh yes, we think otherwise from time to time, but only as on occasion God in heaven might intervene in one's thought processes. Thank you Lord for that!

Chosen ones: Some will rule. Some will be great.

20:25) But Jesus called them [i.e. the chosen disciples] unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion [i.e. rule] over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

Note that Jesus said this about the Gentile nations and not about the Israelite nation under God and the Mosaic Law. By the law, the princes of Israel did not '**dominate or rule**' over God's people. Even when Israel had a king, it was always understood (i.e. Scripturally and theoretically) that their ruler was God.

Great ones like kings and some of the prophets whom God had made '**great**' in Israel, according to the Law they were meant to '**exercise authority**' only in God and not in themselves. This is why, when Jesus taught and spoke in God-given '**authority**', many of the people realized that he was '**great**'...perhaps a great prophet or even perhaps the great Messiah. Others believed that such '**authority**' must come to Jesus from another '**great**' source, Satan.

Yet, dear reader understand that to the Israelite mind '**dominion**' and '**authority**' meant '*of God (or Satan), but not of men*'.

20:26) But it shall not be so among you...

Therefore, note that Jesus pointed out the Gentile way of doing things. Then he said that as disciples and as apostles they shall not be doing things that way. Why did Jesus make this *distinction*? It is because his disciples were thinking *in a Gentile fashion*. But why had they begun to think *in a Gentile fashion*? It was because being with Jesus for so long they knew that he *was not thinking in a Mosaic Law fashion*. And the only *other fashion* they could think of at this point was *a Gentile fashion*.

Understand that these men would normally have thought *in the Mosaic Law fashion*, but Jesus and God the Father were changing them. On the other hand, these men were not yet even able to think *in a kingdom of God fashion*.

However, with the Spirit's help, on many occasions soon they would be thinking *in the kingdom of God fashion*. In fact, this is what Jesus was telling them beforehand, which they did not yet comprehend.

...but whosoever will [at the end of this study see a discussion of 'whosoever will'] be great among you, let him be your minister;

Jesus is speaking about an apostle who will become '**great**' (Jesus is not naming him) as the Father works out His Will. This particular apostle shall become '**great**' among the apostles and, like Jesus, he shall '**minister**' to the other apostles.

Often we misinterpret this passage to be "if a person wants to be great he must minister to others and then he will become great for God". From the above discussion note that the word '**great**' is used by Jesus of persons like kings and prophets made '**great**' by God. This has to do with '**authority** within such **greatness**'. In other words, God's '**authority**' (among other things) is for *ministering by the authoritative power of God*...even as the Father has been showing the disciples how it is done in Jesus. Indeed, in the name of Jesus such authority shall be working among the apostles.

20:27) And whosoever will [at the end of this study see a discussion of 'whosoever will'] be chief among you, let him be your servant:

Here Jesus makes a distinction between 1) '**great**' with its *authority* and 2) '**chief among you**' which has to do with *rule over* them (by God) through the means of an apostle among them. The latter is a position of rule, as Jesus ruled over them. Jesus was great (i.e. with *authority*), and he also *ruled* over them; thus, he *distinguished* between a ruling apostle and apostles not in ruling positions who, nevertheless, shall also have heavenly *authority*. Interestingly, both types shall '**minister**' to the others.

'...for many be called, but few chosen.' The disciple-sons of the mother were '**called**' (and in fact '**chosen**' unto discipleship and apostleship), but only some of the apostles would be '**chosen**' of the Father to be '**great**' and/or become '**chief**' among them.

Regarding apostleship over the Israelite church, it turned out that James, the brother of Jesus, would *rule over* the apostles in Jerusalem. And Peter would be *the greatest* apostle among them, his *greatness* being manifest in varied ways, one of which is described in Acts 5:15.

And regarding apostleship in the Gentile church as recorded in the Bible, Paul became a '**great**' one. But it seems that no apostle had '**rule**' over the Gentile churches. The Gentile churches later, on their own, came up with that idea.

Jesus said that the '**ruler**' of the apostles to the Israelite church would be a '**servant**' ruler. That is, he would '**serve**' God and at God's discretion he would authoritatively *serve the brethren*.

Note that Paul did not '**rule**' or '**serve**' the Gentile churches in any capacity of position. Paul '**served**' his Lord and Master and authoritatively in the Spirit he passed on God's instructions to the Gentile churches that had no earthly laws or history for guidance. Indeed, the only laws or history for them were riddled with worldly ways. On the other hand, they did have the Bible (Old Testament) and so Paul preached and taught God's

instructions to the Gentile churches constantly intermingled within the Authoritative Word. That is, in his preaching and teaching he constantly quoted Scripture. Indeed, the things he taught in a Gentile way of speaking (when speaking to Gentiles) were not new, but were grounded in the Old Testament.

20:28) Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Over the course of Jesus' ministry, his disciples ministered unto him; yet, in the greater scheme of things Jesus ministered unto them. In these verses (in regards to ministering) Jesus spoke of the greater things of God and of the kingdom of heaven.

We Christians read scripture (indeed study scripture) thinking that we understand what we read...and in a general and earthly manner...colored by the world we live in...we do have some understanding. Yet, we should realize that none of us typically and habitually see and/or read holy scripture through kingdom-colored glasses. If a Christian thinks otherwise then he has his head in the sky...but not in heaven.

It does not come easily to us. Even when some Christians are in the Word regularly and are regularly humbled by God's Spirit...all struggle in our lack of understanding...even as we think that we understand. The Lord is compassionate as He regularly shows us our ignorance.



20:29) And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.

We will see that Matthew is still dealing with the subject matter of kingdom-thinking.

20:30) And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David. And the multitude [most faithfully following Jesus] rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.

The multitude (containing Jesus' disciples and people like the mother of the two disciples) were in reverence of Jesus regarding his 'great' works and his 'authoritative' teaching about the 'kingdom of heaven'.

We see here that to have a high regard (even a high reverence) for Jesus...and for the Father...and for the things of heaven...does not necessarily relate to kingdom-thinking. The Father was about to have His Son perform a Merciful Wonder for the two blind beggars and the disciples and the multitude were missing the importance of the occasion.

20:32) And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you? [These are nearly the same words that Jesus spoke to the mother of two disciples.]

Here is the Son of God...teaching about kingdom things with kingdom authority...and he pauses as the Father infers in the Spirit to the Son to hearken unto the two blind men. Such is the 'ministry' of the 'great' and 'authoritative' Prince of Heaven ('ruler') unto the common and earthy children of God. Matthew knew that we Christians *usually do not get it* even as we *study to understand*. Matthew looked back on this occasion when he, too, *did not get it*. This is why we have the Scriptures. This is why God led the Gospel writers to write as each wrote. In other words, each writer of scripture had a particular concern or burden from the Lord as he wrote any given passage.

20:33) They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.

Discussion on the Words 'whosoever will'

Modern translations usually have 'whosoever desire', which amounts to "*anyone who*

desires to do". Thus, often today 20:26-28 is taught that any Christian in a congregation who really wants to be a 'disciple' and 'great' (i.e. recognized as 'well known') with God or to have a position of 'rule' (i.e. 'leadership') among God's people can do so if he or she "truly becomes a servant to other Christians for the Lord". The teaching of course is *church-agenda driven*.

However, consider the very topic...of which Jesus was speaking...even as Matthew put it in writing to explain it...using these particular episodes of those days in walking to Jerusalem... which time-wise was near the end of Jesus' ministry. Read again verses 20-24 because there is the frame within which Jesus gives the specific teaching to his disciples. It is clear that not just any one of them, no matter how much he might desire it, can be great in the position of right or left of Jesus in his kingdom. On the other hand, it is clear that each one of them was *chosen to suffer* for Jesus, which would (in the *chosen* case of each apostle) secure for him a throne in Jesus' kingdom pertaining to the judging of the tribes of Israel.

We must come to understand 1) what Jesus *was not* saying: he was *not* saying that anyone, (nor any of his own disciples) could be '**great**' and/or have a God-given position of '**rule**' among the brethren; and 2) what Jesus *was* saying: these things of God are determined by God and not determined in church *service* to the brethren or in church *politics* among the brethren.

Thus, let us consider '**whosoever**': two Greek words. The first word means '*the one which or the one that*' (i.e. a person or a thing). The next word is conditional, meaning '*in case that or provided that*'. At the moment of Jesus saying these things it was *indefinite* (i.e. Jesus did not know, Jesus' disciples did not know, but the Father knew and would make His *choice* known).

In the context of this passage (and the passage like it in Luke 22:25-27) the meaning is not rightly "whosoever", that is the meaning is not "any or every Christian hearing the preaching or teaching of these words". Sadly, in many churches "servitude to the brethren in the church" has become a *doctrine of service* accompanied by *earned rewards of higher spirituality*. However, at another time when the disciples were joyfully telling Jesus '**we cast out demons in your name**', Jesus responded, '**Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.** (Luke 10:20)

The doctrine implies, "We need workers in the church for the many programs, and we need leaders in the church (and denominations) to lead and shepherd the many workers." The doctrine focuses on *service to the church*, though it claims "servitude to God in His work".

Now let us consider '**will**'. For this passage it is modernly translated '**desire**'. In the Greek it is a verb '*determine*' or '*choose*' or '*prefer*' pointing to the future...*not yet definite*. Just above we discussed that (in the future) a *chosen* man will rule in leadership over the apostles; but his identity was *yet indefinite* at the time of the passage (Jesus did not know who he was and the disciples did not know). Yet, the Father *definitely* knew having fore-chosen him.

Put the words together and we have what I consider a better translation, especially in the context of Jesus' teaching: '*the one* (i.e. the apostle) *in the case of* having been *chosen* by the Father will '**be great among you**'... And for the next verse: '*the one* (i.e. the apostle) *in the case of* having been *chosen* by the Father will '**be chief among you**'...

If this rendering makes sense to you then you see "*it is not the one who desires*" but "*it is the One who chooses*" that established Jesus' words as a fact in heaven and soon in the world.

1Corinthians 9:24) Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that [perhaps] ye may obtain.

Chosen vs. Called

Dear reader, there is a world of difference between *church doings* and *God's Plan of the Ages in Jesus Christ*. Jesus spoke of the latter and Matthew wrote in such a manner as to make Jesus' teaching clear to us regarding *true discipleship*...that is, if we can just for a little while tear ourselves away from our normal way of Christian-worker-thinking to consider all of the context of this passage. To repeat: there is *discipleship of the church* (dedicated church workers),

and then there are *Jesus' disciples*... '**many be called, but few chosen**'.

Choosing disciples belongs to the Father. Albeit, Paul encouraged every *called* Christian to '**run**' or work in the best sense of the word. Therefore, according to Hebrews 11:6 a Christian should run or work or walk 'in faith' since it is the only way 'to be pleasing to God'.

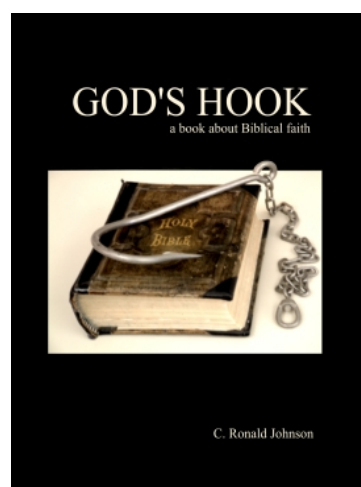
On the other hand '**...many be called**'. In Jesus' parable of 20:1-16 many 'laborers' were called to the Master's work. Throughout the lengthy day of the necessary work in the vineyard (which represents the Entire world and the Church world within God's Plan of the Ages in Jesus Christ) many were called at differing times and during differing stages of the work. Jesus wanted all workers to know (even the '**last**' workers doing little work and not having to bear up under the heat of the day) that the Father will provide in His merciful way for them.

Ah, but even more, Jesus wanted 'the first' workers that work long and hard through the heat of the day to understand (with the idea that they should accept) the Father's Compassionate Ways. Also, Jesus wanted 'the first' workers to know that they will be '**last**' to receive the promised needful pay. Now this can be frustrating (as with the workers in the parable) or it can be a wonderful and lengthy blessing...because such is the 'walk of faith'. The work was long and hard for 'the first' workers, beginning early and ending late, yet all the while they worked *in faith* that the Lord of the Vineyard shall be faithful in His part *to finish what He had begun and to do as He had promised*.

Dear reader if you are a *long-hard-worker* for God then do not be in turmoil as you see lesser workers doing lesser work while enjoying the Lord's necessary provisions even as you continue waiting (some workers perhaps with seemingly more "provisions" than other workers). Instead, empathize with Paul as he wrote and gloried in expectation of his heavenly home where he might be seated (when it is time to mingle in the feasts) with saints like Abraham and Moses.

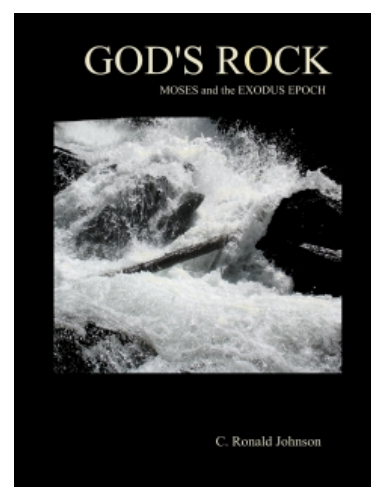
(The next study - Volume 2, Study 2 - carries on the theme that Christians do not have **kingdom-minds** and are not normally **kingdom-thinkers**.)

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