

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church,  
10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS  
LESSON 28B  
THE LIFE OF CHRIST**

**INTRODUCTION**

Jesus withdrew from Jerusalem to Perea after the Feast of Dedication in winter because the Jewish religious leaders wanted to arrest Him. He escaped because the hour for Him to lay down His life a ransom had not come. At this juncture, He was nearing the end of His ministry and would soon be making His way back to Jerusalem, and it would be His final entry into the Holy City. He concentrated on teaching His disciples, preparing them for the eventuality of His suffering, death and resurrection.

On this return trip to Jerusalem Jesus had used the different encounters with the Pharisees, mothers who were bringing their little children to Him, a young rich ruler, and the bold and presumptuous request of two of disciples, to teach some valuable and pertinent principles concerning marriage, attitude towards children, the love for money and possessions, and our aspirations and service to Him. This week's lesson shall deal with the last three encounters.

**OUTLINE**

1. The Rich Young Ruler (Matthew 19:16-20:16; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30)
2. Christ's Fourth Prediction of His Passion and Resurrection (Mark 10:32-34; Matthew 20:17-19; Luke 18:31-34)
3. Selfish Ambition of James and John (Mark 10:35-45; Matthew 20:20-28)

**COMMENTARY**

**The Rich Young Ruler**

When Jesus left the house, he was met by a rich young ruler. In those days it was thought that when a person is rich it meant that he was in God's favour. As a proud young ruler, he now wanted the public approval of Jesus Christ. It was his pride that prompted him to ask Jesus about eternal life. He called Jesus with a polite greeting, "Good master". Jesus asked him, "why callest thou me good, for there is none good but one that is God." (Matthew 19:17). If he had come to Jesus recognizing Him as God incarnate to seek the answer to his desire to have eternal life, he would have been prepared to do whatever Jesus said without question. But that was not the case as he refused to do what Jesus asked him to do.

Hence, his "Good master" was merely polite talk and perhaps he even wished that the LORD might return the

same greeting and call him good too. His question was a typical one which was asked by the religious people in those days, and even by people today who still ask the same question. Jesus was probing the heart of the man in order to draw out the true purpose and motivation for asking Him what good thing he must do to merit eternal life.

Jesus said to him, "...if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:17). By making this comment, did Jesus mean that by keeping the Ten Commandments, a person can gain eternal life? We all know that that is not what Jesus meant. We must understand that Jesus was probing the heart of the man. Jesus intended to lead the man to realize his own sinfulness and need. The man had displayed a spirit of self-righteousness. He responded to Jesus' injunction by asking what commandments he needed to keep. Jesus gave him the latter half of the Ten Commandments, and added "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Interestingly, Jesus omitted the tenth commandment which is on covetousness. The man proudly declared that he had kept all these commandments since he was a very young boy. He asked, "What more do I lack?" This young ruler was very sincere in his answer. He was taught this by the rabbis; the outward obedience to the oral laws and traditions make up the "law" to the young ruler.

Jesus replied that if he would be perfect, he ought to sell all that he had

and distribute it to the poor, and he would be rewarded in heaven, and to take his cross and follow Him." On hearing this, the young rich ruler walked away "very sorrowful for he had great possessions and was very rich."

The young rich ruler loved his money and possessions more than God. If he truly loved his neighbour as himself, as he had admitted that he had kept the commandment since he was young, he would obey Jesus and willingly sell all his possessions and follow Jesus. He did not do it. He preferred to keep his temporal wealth and possession and forfeit eternal life. By breaking this one commandment, he in fact broke all the rest of the commandments. **James 2:10**, "*For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*" Jesus led him to realize his need of God, but he was blinded to it; his wealth had blinded him! The only way for everyone to have eternal life is to trust and obey Jesus, and do what He asks him to do, instead of trusting in his money and possessions, and forfeit eternal life.

Then Jesus turned to His disciples and declared that it is very hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus further added, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." The "eye of the needle" is literally the eye of a sewing needle, and is not as some have imagined: a small gate in Jerusalem

which a camel could hardly pass through. This is to stress the impossibility of our salvation outside of the grace and mercy of God. The disciples' response affirmed the literal meaning for they exclaimed: "Who then can be saved?" Jesus aptly replied: "With men this is impossible; but not with God, for with God all things are possible." Salvation is always of the LORD. When we share the gospel with someone we must bear this in mind. We cannot save anyone for salvation is all of God's ability. We share the best way we know how with much prayer always remembering that it is God alone who saves. Therefore, beware that we do not compromise the gospel message and never resort to gimmicks to draw people to Christ. This is false salvation and any promise you give will be false too.

The disciples then remarked that they had left everything to follow Him, and what would be their reward (Matthew 19:27). Their asking of the question indicated that they misunderstood what Jesus was saying. They were expecting to be rewarded more than what they had been given on earth. Jesus did not scold them. Jesus was patient with them. He said to them *"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 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* (Matthew 19:28-29). The word "regeneration" (Greek *palingenesia*) is used only here and in Titus 3:5.<sup>1</sup> The word literally means new birth. Paul used it to refer to the personal new birth of believers in Titus. Jesus used it here to mean the new birth of the earth and the heavens. Peter the apostle, called it *"the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began* (Acts 3:21). Jesus promised His disciples that they would sit with Him in the throne of His glory, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, and all those who had forsaken all for His sake, would receive manifold now, and in the world to come everlasting life. In other words, those who have forsaken all to follow Jesus have been rewarded in full here on earth as well as with eternal life in the coming kingdom. Is the church family not your family?

Jesus then commented that "many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first" (Matthew 19:30). Jesus spoke a parable to illustrate this statement. The kingdom of God is like a man that is a landowner who went out early to hire labourers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay the labourers a denarius for a day's work. Some were hired at the third hour of the day (9.00 a.m.), some at the sixth hour (noon),

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<sup>1</sup> Titus 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

some at the ninth hour (3.00 p.m.) and some at the eleventh hour (5.00 p.m.). The first batch of labourers worked eight hours, the second batch six hours, the third batch three hours, and the last batch one hour.

At the end of the day, the landowner paid all of them the same wage. The first who worked eight hours and the last who worked one hour received one denarius. Those who went out first to work thought that they would get more, but they got the same as the last ones who worked for only one hour.

To understand the parable we must interpret who and what are represented in it. Jesus said that the parable is about the kingdom of God. Therefore the landowner is God the Father, and the steward is the Son, Jesus Christ. The labourers are the believers and unbelievers. The denarius is an embellishment to make the story complete. Jesus' intention is very clear. He wanted all His disciples to see that eternal life is not earned but is by the gracious sovereign will of God. The answer to this parable is found in the last statement of Christ when He said in Matthew 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 the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen."* This parable also shows that God calls men all the time to receive Christ and be saved, even at the last hour before the return of Christ. God redeems every one who is willing. God is compassionate to

all those who have no resources and acknowledge their hopelessness. The Pharisees and enemies of Christ may think they are first as they are the rabbis and part of the Sanhedrin Council but they are outside of God's kingdom for salvation cannot be earned. It is all of God's grace and mercy as this parable teaches. These are but some of the spiritual principles which we can learn from the parable. Many are called but few are chosen i.e. elected into God's kingdom. Many may hear God's truth and some may even defend God's truth and think that they are saved but in reality they have never been part of God's kingdom at all.

#### **Christ's Fourth Prediction of His Passion and Resurrection**

Jesus was on His way "going up to Jerusalem." It is probable that He had crossed the Jordan river and passed through Jericho (about 1,000 feet below sea-level), and He and His companions were literally "going up" to Jerusalem (about 2,400 feet above sea-level).

On the way, Jesus took His disciples aside and taught what things should happen to Him. Jesus told them that what were written by the prophets concerning Him would be fulfilled (fulfilment of prophecies!). He would be betrayed and delivered to the chief priests and the scribes. They would condemn Him to death, and would give Him to the Gentiles to be mocked, scourged and spat on, and then crucified by them, but on the third day he would rise again. Jesus gave His life

for the world. If Peter and all the other disciples had understood what Jesus was saying, they would have been embarrassed by Peter's early remarks that they had left all for His sake, and followed Him. Luke recorded that they did not understand what Jesus had just said to them. One day their eyes would be opened.

The truth of these words of Christ was stupendous. The climax of all the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures, the fulfilment of Genesis 3:15, and the reference point of all of man's history, existence and salvation was revealed to the disciples when the LORD said that He will be betrayed, crucified and die for the sin of the world!! What a revelation!! The disciples did not understand these things for the sayings were hid from them at this point in time. God has His timing including the understanding of certain doctrines of the Bible.

Who is the One who gives us the real understanding into God's Holy Word? **1 Corinthians 2:13-16**, *"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may*

*instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."*

### **Selfish Ambition of James and John**

Are we shocked at what the two brothers openly and unashamedly asked Jesus, "Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire." This open-ended request is presumptuous. They wanted to have the highest position of power, each seated on the left and right side of the Lord Jesus Christ in the earthly kingdom. They were selfishly ambitious. Jesus had just told them about His sufferings and death and resurrection, and what preoccupied the minds of these two brothers was their position of power in the earthly kingdom when Jesus would reign on earth.

But Jesus displayed patience and a willingness to hear them. Jesus told them that they did not know what they were asking. How true this is of us too that many a time we do not know what we are asking from the Lord. Jesus told the two brothers whether they could "drink of the cup that I drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with". They answered: "We are able." It happened to both of them but in different ways. James was killed by Herod (Acts 12:1,2), whereas John was the last prophet to be killed; he was the longest serving apostle of Jesus, and was imprisoned in the island of Patmos. Jesus explained to them that it is God His Father who decides who would sit on the left and right side of Him.

Jesus saw that when the other ten heard what James and John requested from Jesus, they were jealously angry against the two brothers. Jesus called them to him and taught them the meaning of greatness in the kingdom. Greatness in the kingdom of God is not patterned after the world's rulers. The world's rulers or leaders use the position of power to exercise "lordship" (dominion or absolute rule) and "authority" (tyranny or wielding power) over others. But Jesus said that it should not be so among them. Whoever wants to be great among them, must be their **minister**.<sup>2</sup> And whosoever wants to be "chief" shall be **servant** of all.<sup>3</sup> Both terms describe one who is ever ready to be used by Jesus to serve others for the extending and advancing of His kingdom. Jesus gave Himself as the perfect example of what He had just taught His disciples. He *came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many* (Mark 10:45).

To lead in God's church is to serve. To serve means to make decisions for the betterment of the well being of the congregation as a whole. The judgement is not based upon partiality but on God's truth, justice, mercy and grace. Justice must be tempered by compassion. This is how

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<sup>2</sup> The Greek word is *diakonos*. It means one who serves, waits upon others like a waiter, or attends to another.

<sup>3</sup> The Greek word is *doulos*. It means a slave. One who serves another to the disregard of his own interests.

God has always dealt with us (sinners saved by grace). This must be the manner in which we need to deal with one another.

To be an elder in God's church is a lowly position rather than a position of grandeur. When someone vies for any church position of leadership by carrying on an election campaign exercise then he has disqualified himself by this very act. He goes around making friends pretending to be kind and gentle when in reality he could very well be a wolf in sheep's clothing. He promotes himself by deception and once he gets into that position of power he will make merchandise of God's people. Such men will be found in any God honouring church as the Devil will surely sow his tares to confuse and mislead God's flock. Beware, be watchful and be very vigilant for the last days are already upon us.

### PRACTICAL VALUE

Beware of where we put our treasures. If we love money and our possessions, these things have a way of taking hold of our hearts and blinding our eyes towards things spiritual and eternal which are far more valuable. We should not be like the rich young ruler, who foolishly refuses to give away what he cannot keep in exchange for what he can have for all eternity, and much more. Naked we come into this world, and naked we shall leave this world. This pertains to things temporal. But what we have accumulated in this world,

as the Lord prospers, Jesus has taught us to invest our accumulated temporal wealth in the treasures of heaven. Do not think for a moment that the sin of the rich young ruler is for the unbeliever only for the Christian can also end up like Lot who was vexed daily because he refused to pick himself up and leave Sodom. Instead, he stayed behind until the day when Sodom was destroyed by the LORD and he lost everything including his wife and family! His wife died and his two daughters practiced the life of Sodom in the mountain when they made their father drunk and slept with him. They committed the sin of incest because their father refused to leave the life of Sodom. This sin of Lot caused his own daughters to be influenced by the Sodom lifestyle. It was easier to bring them out of Sodom but harder to bring Sodom out of their hearts.

The biblical feature of fulfilled prophecies is one of the most important and irrefutable truths that stamps the Bible to be the Word of God, infallible, inerrant and authoritative; and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, the coming Lord of lords and the King of kings! The prophecies concerning Jesus have been fulfilled to the letter and the prophecies concerning His glorious return to earth will be similarly fulfilled!

Man loves power and position in the world. But power and position without God's Word to guide, are limited and corrupt. To be a leader in God's kingdom is not about exercising our

power! Jesus teaches the true meaning of leadership. If we want to be a leader we must become a servant to all in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. Church pastors, elders and deacons must heed this principle of the Lord. In the church of Christ, there is no place for a leader who exercises dominion and tyranny in the Lord's vineyard. Such behaviour serves no good purpose for him and others. God will not be pleased by such worldly dominance. AMEN

#### QUOTES:

*"I'd rather get ten men to the job than to do the job of ten men."*

– D.L. Moody

*"The best test of whether one is a qualified leader is to find out whether anyone is following him."*

– Oswald Sanders

#### **The Odds of Finishing Well**

*Robert Clinton has done extensive research in the area of biblical scholarship. He has determined that there are approximately three hundred leaders chronicled in the Bible. In 1990, he studied one hundred of the most prominent of them. To his dismay, he discovered that less than one in four of these leaders finished well.*

*Leadership in any arena is difficult, but it is especially rough among spiritual leaders because of the Satanic*

*attacks which accompany the job. The odds of finishing well are clearly against those in ministry, so we must constantly seek spiritual empowerment and protection from God.*

(McHenry's Quips, Quotes & Other Notes).



**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION  
QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

**MONDAY:** Matthew 19:16 -20:16; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30

**TUESDAY:** Matthew 19:16 -20:16; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30

**WEDNESDAY:** Matthew 19:16 -20:16; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30

**THURSDAY:** Mark 10:32-34; Matthew 20:17-19; Luke 18:31-34

**FRIDAY:** Mark 10:35-45; Matthew 20:20-28

**Discussion Questions**

1. What was the hindrance that held the young ruler back?

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2. What did Jesus promise those who have forsaken all for His sake and followed Him? Have you experienced this in your life? Is this only for full time workers?

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3. Why is it impossible for a rich man to believe in Jesus Christ?

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4. What is the purpose of prophecies? Is it for the believer or the unbeliever?

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5. What is the difference between greatness in the world, and greatness in the kingdom of God? Why is there a difference?

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6. Are these kinds of leaders possible only in theory but in practice?

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