

September 19, 2004 by Steve Brandon



A Communion Meditation

Matthew 20:17-19

In a few moments we will be celebrating the Lord's Supper together. Before we do so, I want to remind you again of why we do this. So, open your Bibles to Matthew, chapter 20. As a communion meditation, I would like for us to consider verses 17-19.

Matthew 20:17-19

And as Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and on the way He said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up."

These verses are verses of anticipation. Jesus was anticipating His arrival in Jerusalem. Jesus was anticipating His arrest and unfair trial. Jesus was anticipating His death and resurrection. He wanted to communicate these things with His disciples. Verse 17 says that Jesus "took the twelve disciples aside by themselves" to tell them of what will soon take place. The idea we get is that there were a fair number of people around Him, but He took the disciples away from the multitudes so that he could tell them these things. It may have looked much like a huddle does in a football game. There are lots of people all over the field, but eleven of them are discussing what they are going to do on the next play. So, Jesus gathered these twelve disciples together to speak with them of what was going to take place in the next few weeks.

Jesus' communication with them wasn't anything new. On two other occasions, Jesus had told them exactly the same thing. Turn back in Matthew to chapter 16, verse 21. When the revelation from above came to Peter, identifying Jesus as the Messiah, Jesus began to reveal His plan. "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" (Matt. 16:21). Turn over to Matthew 17, verse 22. We read a similar statement. Jesus said, "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" (Matt. 17:22-23). Now look again at Matthew 20. The words are almost identical. If you spend a few moments comparing these words side by side, you see very little difference. Jesus had already identified the city of Jerusalem -- where these things must take place. Jesus had already identified those who would be the instigators in His sufferings -- the chief priests and scribes. Jesus had already identified what these men would do to Him -- he would suffer and be killed. Jesus had already identified what would happen after He died -- he would be raised from the dead. The only difference is that these verses add a little bit of detail, as things come into greater focus for the disciples. It's a bit like going from regular television to HDTV. All of the details are there, but now, you can see them with a bit more clarity.

In verse 19, we find out that Jesus would be delivered over to the Gentiles. It wasn't actually the Jews who would kill Him. The Jews would hand Him over to the Romans, who would kill Jesus for them. The reason for handing Him over to the Romans was simple: The Romans didn't allow the Jews to execute its criminals. It was the job of the Roman government to discern their guilt and to execute the judgment. It must also be noted that the Jews took full responsibility for His death. They cried out in Matthew 27:25, "His blood be on us and on our children!"

In verse 19, we also find out the actual mode of death. It was to be crucifixion. Earlier, Jesus had only mentioned that He would be killed. Here we see the mode: crucifixion. We also find out exactly how He would suffer before the crucifixion: these Gentiles would "mock and scourge and crucify Him." They would mock Him as a king. They would scourge Him with whips before He was ever taken to the cross. They would crucify Him, upon a cross. Every single one of these things took place, exactly as Jesus had anticipated, as I want to show you.

In chapter 21 of Matthew, we find Jesus entering Jerusalem, during the last week of His earthly life. In chapter 26 of Matthew, we find the details of how Jesus was actually betrayed and delivered into the hands of the chief priests and scribes. It was through the hands of Judas as he led them by stealth into the garden at night. In Matthew 26:66, the Sanhedrin pronounced the verdict of His trial, "He is deserving of death." In Matthew 27, we find Jesus being handed over to the Pilate, the Roman governor, who succumbed to the wishes of the Jews, and ordered His crucifixion. Indeed, Jesus was **mocked** and **scourged** and **crucified**.

Matthew 27:27-31

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him. And they stripped Him, and put a scarlet robe on Him. And after weaving a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they kneeled down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head. And after they had mocked Him, they took His robe off and put His garments on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.

In Matthew 28, we find that Jesus was raised from the dead, exactly as He had anticipated.

The question that comes to us is, "Why?" Why did Jesus subject Himself to these things? If Jesus knew what was going to happen, why did He continue? The answer to this question comes in Matthew 20:28, one of the greatest verses in the Bible. Jesus said, "Just as the Son of

Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). When Jesus died, it wasn't without purpose. When Jesus died, it wasn't just another man dying as a criminal. There was a specific reason why He died. "He gave His life a ransom for many." As we know from the rest of the scriptures, He gave His life to purchase the souls of those sinners who would believe in Him. It was one life for many. His single death paid for the life of many others.

We are here today, worshiping Jesus Christ, because His death two thousand years ago paid for our sin today. This is the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We, who are sinners and deserve to die because of our sin, don't die because of the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf to pay the debt that we owed to God for our sin. As we believe that news and trust that news, we are redeemed from our sin. God has bought us back from the bondage in which we found ourselves due to our sin. God will no longer judges us because of our sin. The Scripture declares, "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

The death of Jesus redeemed us from our sin. That's what verse 28 is speaking about. That's what being a Christian is all about. It's about believing and trusting in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. In the Lord's Supper, we have the opportunity to remember Jesus and His work upon the cross, and to remember how our redemption was accomplished for us. It's a time of great celebration as we proclaim once again of His wondrous love for us.

If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, this supper is not for you. If you don't believe that Jesus went up to Jerusalem; was delivered to the chief priests and scribes; was condemned to death; was delivered to the Gentiles; was mocked and scourged; was crucified, and was raised up, then, this supper is not for you. I would exhort you to repent of your sin and believe in Jesus Christ, the lamb of God. It's more than simply saying that you believe in Jesus. It's a genuine trust in Jesus, as the risen Lord. It's placing your entire life in His hands. Jesus is the Lord of the universe. Our lives are to bow to Him, in word and in deed.

There are many in this world who claim to believe this, but don't. For instance, I think about last Wednesday. I was in my office working and I receive a phone call from my neighbor, who said, "Hey, I have four tickets to the Milwaukee Brewers' game tonight. Would you be interested in coming with SR?" It didn't take me long to figure out that we would love to go. At the time, Barry Bonds had 699 home runs. There was the possibility that he might hit his 700th home run. When we arrived, we discovered that our seats were three rows behind the San Francisco Giants' dugout on the third base side. Barry Bonds didn't hit his 700th home run. But we still had a wonderful time. Our neighbors came home with two foul balls. We came home with a T-shirt and a Milwaukee Brewers hat. Late in the game, the people behind us were getting a bit drunk and obnoxious. They began to swear and curse. At one point, one of them took the name of Jesus in vain. They said, "Jesus Christ." It was too much for me. My blood was boiling, because he was mocking the name of my Savior. So, I turned around and said to the guy, "Jesus Christ rules the universe." He was a bit startled. After a few seconds, he said, "Yeah, I agree with that. Jesus rules the universe." But his actions had betrayed his profession. One can hardly trust in the Lord and repeatedly use His name in vain. In many ways, this man at the ball park was like the Roman soldiers, who clothed Jesus in a scarlet robe, put upon him a crown of thorns, knelt down before Him, and mocked Him saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" (Matt. 27:28-29). To profess faith and yet curse His name is to betray your confession. As we celebrate the Lord's Supper, you can do the same thing by not believing in Jesus and eating the supper with us.

Have you bowed the knee to Jesus Christ? Do you trust in His atoning sacrifice for your sins? Then, today should be a wonderful time of celebration, as you remember Jesus paying the ransom for your sins. Examine yourself before the Lord and confess your sins to Jesus. Know that He receives those who come humbly confessing their sin.

This communion meditation was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on September 19, 2004 by Steve Brandon.
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