

Having advised His disciples privately of His impending suffering, rejection, death and resurrection He began to lay down clear life choices. These distinguished between those who will follow Him and those who choose not to follow Him. The path of self denial, a cross and salvation of one's own soul, or, loss of one's own soul, which will they each choose? The challenge is put before not only His disciples but He called the people to Him and gave them the proposition to ponder. Preserve one's life for himself, gain the whole world for a while but in the end lose one's own soul? Lose his life for the Lord's sake and for the sake of gospel but receive eternal blessings with the Lord Jesus. The decision is ours individually but He will be the judge and rewarder.

The world [cosmos] here is the material world. The cross He offered was not the sacred religious symbol it is held to be by many nowadays. It signified the death penalty, capital punishment, the most severe judgement that the ruling authorities had available to punish convicted criminals. Today criminals refer to the death penalty "the chair," the electric chair. In Jesus' day capital punishment was the cross, a humiliating agonizing execution. After being scourged a condemned criminal was forced to bear his cross to the site where he would be crucified. They made Jesus do this and when He physically couldn't go any further the soldiers enlisted a passerby to bear it for Him.

[Note the Lord Jesus does not pronounce disapproval of the death penalty as such, nor the cruelty of crucifixion, or the possibility of injustice if an "innocent" person were executed, mistakenly or intentionally. In the years following the unjust crucifixion of Jesus His disciples clearly documented His innocence but do not question the government's authority to execute criminals. We shouldn't either, even though many a person has suffered unjustly at the hands of persecutors or simply because of a perverted or inept justice system.]

Taking up my cross indicates my willingness to bear the consequences of a faithful testimony for Christ in the world that crucified Him. Bearing the cross is identification with Him at all costs. Sometimes we hear of people referring to some ongoing suffering, hardship, or tragic personal loss as their cross to bear. Well, there are indeed painful troubles that enter a believer's life down here.

In the world ye shall have tribulation, John 16:33.

Another place we are told we will experience trials and troubles such as are common to man.

1Corinthians 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

These troubles are indeed real and difficult, and the Lord

will help us to bear them, but are they our cross? Not really.

The Lord next pointed out that the benefits of following Him far outweigh the cost of loving the world. Jesus clearly labeled those who loved the world for what they are, a wicked and adulterous generation. Adulterous not only in embracing immoral violations of the God given institution of marriage, but in the spiritual sense of having other gods besides Jehovah; idols and idolatrous ways, "covetousness which is idolatry," Colossians 3:5. The Old Testament clearly shows Jehovah viewed His relationship with the nation of Israel as a marriage. Jehovah divorced Israel, the nation. That national divorce still stands. They rejected Immanuel [God with Us], Jesus, who was then among them. The Lord then reminded the Jews of the **national** departure they were all part of, but offered them a way to **individually** return to a godly life of faithfulness and devotion, following Him. Over the centuries many Jew's have personally chosen to follow Jesus, not as Jews but as Christians, on the same ground as open to all individuals ("whosoever") responding to His call.

Jesus says when "The Son of Man comes in the glory of the Father" He will be ashamed of those who were ashamed of Him and His words while here on earth. Does this speak of eternal damnation or of eternal loss of reward and blessing for those who are saved. Certainly as believers enter heaven and the eternal state there will be differences in positions, recognition, rewards and blessings depending upon our faithfulness and conduct while here on earth. The works of some will be burnt up. Some will suffer loss, but still be saved, 1Corinthians 3. We form our capacity for eternal spiritual blessing while here on earth. How our hearts will grieve that He is ashamed of us, because we were ashamed of Him on occasions. Grief in heaven? Yes, but a humbling that leads to worship at His grace and faithfulness as a Man while He was here on earth. Others who make the miserable choice for what is in hand here rather than what is promised for eternity will not see life.

John 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

They will die in their sins, but not unloved.

Having established the solemnity of His coming in the glory of His Father Jesus proceed to give a preview of that momentous event. He states that "truly" some standing there at that moment would see the Kingdom of God come with power before they taste of death. He reveals several truths in His statement.

1. Only some would see the glory of the Kingdom before they die, not all.
2. These few would report it to the others and to those born later.

3. The Kingdom would not come until after the disciples who saw the preview died.
4. All Jesus' disciples would see it after they die.
5. There will be a resurrection of the dead, faithful dead and those who die in their sins.
6. The Kingdom will come. That is, it will come from above not rise from the earth or the sea as earthly kingdoms do.
7. After Jesus died He would rise again and ascend bodily to heaven, remaining there.
8. He a Man, is coming again, the Son of Man.
9. When He comes He will come in the glory of His Father, not His own glory.
10. He will be accompanied by a host of holy angels, under His command. The angels serve Him, a Man.

The Preview. After six days He took three of His disciples, a select inner circle, to a high mountain. The others including Judas were excluded. [The Lord took pains to exclude him from the preview without arousing suspicions in the others.] Which mountain is not important. It was not named so no shrines could be built there by the religious superstitious.

There they saw what few others have seen as living men earth. They saw what all who are alive when He comes in the glory of His Father will see. He was transfigured. He pulled aside the curtain hiding His glory revealing Himself as HE IS. What a sight!

Philippians 2:5 *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:*

The three accounts by Matthew, Mark and Luke were second hand, they weren't there personally. Two of the men present described what they saw in their writings. The third, James, was killed by Herod early on and left no inspired writings.

2Peter1:16 *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. 18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.*

John 1:14 *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

Others on earth saw Him, a Man in heaven, Stephen, Paul and John.

On the Mount Jesus was met by two men, Elias [Elijah] and Moses. The disciples realized who they were, how we aren't told. Perhaps Jesus greeted them by name.

They talked with Jesus. Other gospels tell they were talking of His decease which should be accomplished in Jerusalem. Had these Old Testament saints known about His imminent suffering and death before this visit with Jesus? Neither had directly prophesied of it, although the offerings in the Law given thorough Moses certainly spoke of the death of a redeemer. The disciples were awe struck as well they might be. Just the sight of two renowned Old Testament figures would have been overwhelming to a faithful Jew. Now here was their beloved Leader, Jesus, transfigured, His face shining as the Light so they could hardly bear to look upon Him. He was the One whom Moses and Elijah came to visit.

But these men had lived centuries before. Elijah never died. He was taken alive to Heaven. But Moses had died and God had buried him in a secret spot outside the Promised Land. But here he was in the body speaking with Jesus. He must have been raised from the dead. When? How? By whom? We aren't told much but we do know Moses' body was the subject of a dispute between Michael the archangel and Satan, Jude 9. The awe of the three disciples indicates these two men were extraordinary in appearance, most likely clothed in their changed bodies. Probably Elijah's body had been transformed upon reaching heaven, as ours will be in the rapture.

1Corinthians 15:52 *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

2Corinthians 5:1 *For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:*

So there were three glorious men on that mount. One displaying His intrinsic glory, the other two their glorified bodies received upon their ascension to heaven. They are forerunners of the vast companies of saints that will soon be raised or raptured by the Lord.

Peter, in his befuddled awe, burst out with a proposal to make three abodes there, one for each of the three glorified men before them. The Father immediately overshadowed them with a cloud and announced the absolute preeminence of His Son. **This is my beloved Son: hear him!** The two visitors disappeared. They would not take away any glory from their Lord. The disciples were silent.

As they descended Jesus charged them not to tell what they had witnessed until after He was risen from the dead. This time they obeyed Him. But they thought about what they had just experienced and they questioned one another. They couldn't seem to comprehend what rising from the

dead meant. Finally they asked Jesus. They wondered about Elijah. How did he fit in? What did the prophesies concerning him mean? Jesus explained. Elijah was prophesied to come and restore all things before the Messiah came, Malachi 4:5. Jesus told them that this would indeed occur. (A fulfillment still future to them and to us. See Revelation 11:6a) But first, He said, the Son of man would suffer many things and be set at nought. And Jesus did suffer many things including crucifixion. And He has been set at nought! He is still held as irrelevant, at naught, by the Jewish religious establishment despite what they have suffered as outcasts scattered among the nations since then. It is indeed chastening at the hand of God, but woe to any who participate in antisemitism, now or down through the ages. Jehovah chastens His people and uses human instruments to carry it out. But the Apostle Paul is our model.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every

one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

On the other hand Jesus revealed that Elijah had already come. The nation had neither received him nor the One he had faithfully announced. We realize Jesus spoke of John the Baptist when He referred to men doing to John whatever they pleased. By and large, all men set Him at naught. They still think they are in charge of their lives and can do whatever suits them, the powerful and rich, but even the poor. God faithfully warns us. Recently the southeast Asian tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, the twin towers in New York 9/11/2001. What next . . . ? How long, O Lord? Is there worldwide humbling and repentance? Nationally? Locally? New Orleans for instance? Anywhere? Anybody? God is still in the business of saving those who repent. Come, now while it is still called Today.

By Ron Canner, February 28, 2007