

# Matthew 20 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

[Matthew 20:1](#)

[Matthew 20:2](#)

[Matthew 20:3](#)

[Matthew 20:4](#)

[Matthew 20:5](#)

[Matthew 20:6](#)

[Matthew 20:7](#)

[Matthew 20:8](#)

[Matthew 20:9](#)

[Matthew 20:10](#)

[Matthew 20:11](#)

[Matthew 20:12](#)

[Matthew 20:13](#)

[Matthew 20:14](#)

[Matthew 20:15](#)

[Matthew 20:16](#)

[Matthew 20:17](#)

[Matthew 20:18](#)

[Matthew 20:19](#)

[Matthew 20:20](#)

[Matthew 20:21](#)

[Matthew 20:22](#)

[Matthew 20:23](#)

[Matthew 20:24](#)

[Matthew 20:25](#)

[Matthew 20:26](#)

[Matthew 20:27](#)

[Matthew 20:28](#)

[Matthew 20:29](#)

[Matthew 20:30](#)

[Matthew 20:31](#)

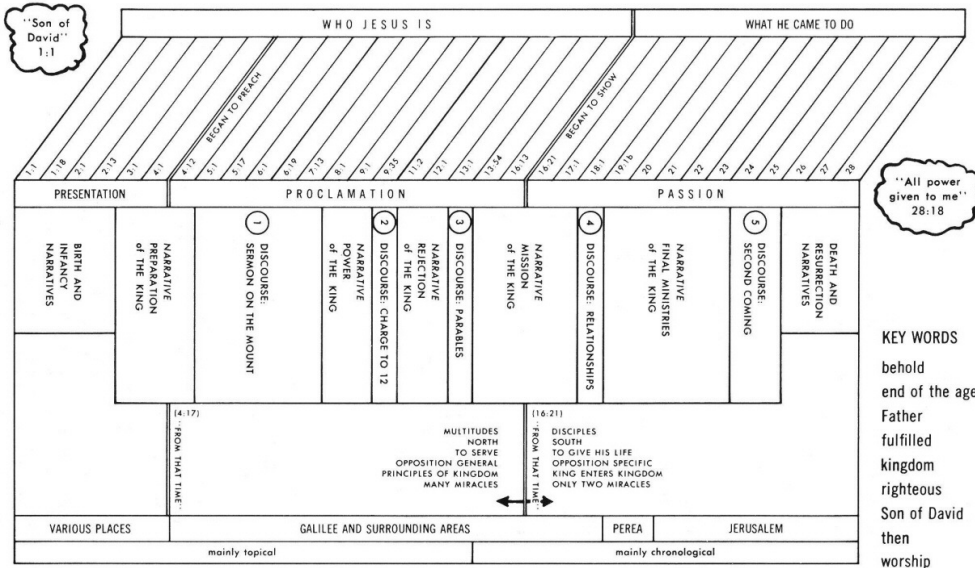
[Matthew 20:32](#)

[Matthew 20:33](#)

[Matthew 20:34](#)

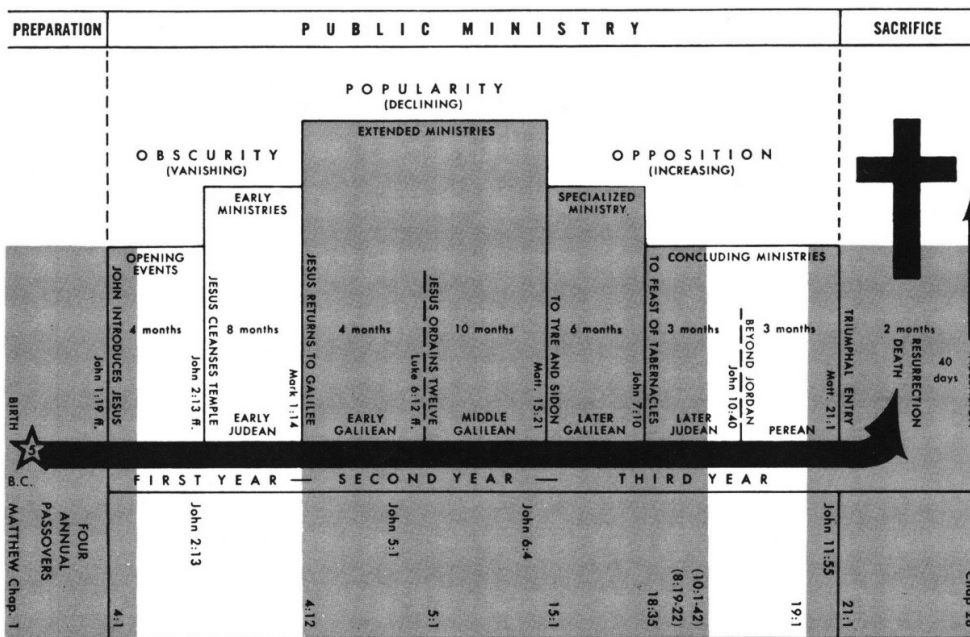
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MATTHEW CONTAINS 15 PARABLES 20 MIRACLES KEY VERSES: 1:1 "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." 2:2 "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."

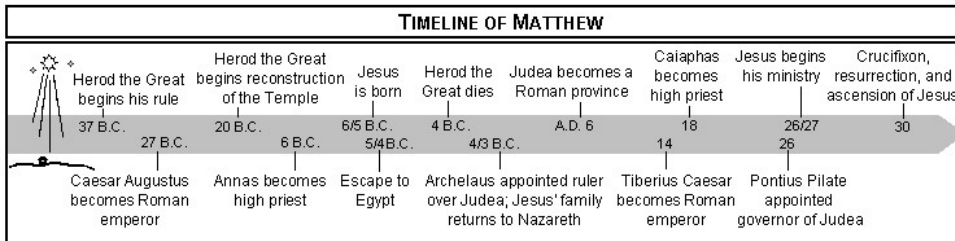


Click chart to enlarge  
 Charts from Jensen's Survey of the NT - used by permission  
 Another Chart from Swindoll

**THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED BY MATTHEW (shaded area)**



Click chart to enlarge



Source: Borrow Ryrie Study Bible

**PLEASE NOTE - THIS PAGE IS INCOMPLETE AND IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION - JULY, 2024 EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED IN 2024**

Matthew 20:1 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.

- **the kingdom:** This parable was intended to illustrate the equity of God's dealings, even when "the first are placed last, and the last first." Mt 3:2 13:24,31,33,44,45,47 22:2 25:1,14
- **a landowner:** Mt 9:37,38 21:33-43 Song 8:11,12 Isa 5:1,2 Jn 15:1
- **a landowner:** Mt 23:37 Song 8:11,12 Jer 25:3,4
- **laborers:** Mk 13:34 1Co 15:58 Heb 13:21 2Pe 1:5-10

## WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN LIKE?

For the kingdom ([basileia](#)) of heaven ([ouranos](#)) is like ([term of comparison/simile](#)) a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers ([ergates](#)) for his vineyard

**Ryrie Study Bible** ([borrow](#)) - Mt 20:20:1-16 The subject is the reward of willingness to serve, whether one comes early or late. Christ is not teaching economics.

**Kingdom of Heaven** - 32x/31v - Matt. 3:2; Matt. 4:17; Matt. 5:3; Matt. 5:10; Matt. 5:19; Matt. 5:20; Matt. 7:21; Matt. 8:11; Matt. 10:7; Matt. 11:11; Matt. 11:12; Matt. 13:11; Matt. 13:24; Matt. 13:31; Matt. 13:33; Matt. 13:44; Matt. 13:45; Matt. 13:47; Matt. 13:52; Matt. 16:19; Matt. 18:1; Matt. 18:3; Matt. 18:4; Matt. 18:23; Matt. 19:14; Matt. 19:23; Matt. 20:1; Matt. 22:2; Matt. 23:13; Matt. 25:1; Matt. 25:14

**Matthew Henry Concise - Mt 20:1-16.** The direct object of this parable seems to be, to show that though the Jews were first called into the vineyard, at length the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles, and they should be admitted to equal privileges and advantages with the Jews. The parable may also be applied more generally, and shows, 1. That God is debtor to no man. 2. That many who begin last, and promise little in religion, sometimes, by the blessing of God, arrive at a great deal of knowledge, grace, and usefulness. 3. That the recompense of reward will be given to the saints, but not according to the time of their conversion. It describes the state of the visible church, and explains the declaration that the last shall be first, and the first last, in its various references. Till we are hired into the service of God, we are standing all the day idle: a sinful state, though a state of drudgery to Satan, may be called a state of idleness. The market-place is the world, and from that we are called by the gospel. Come, come from this market-place. Work for God will not admit of trifling. A man may go idle to hell, but he that will go to heaven, must be diligent. The Roman penny was sevenpence halfpenny in our money, wages then enough for the day's support. This does not prove that the reward of our obedience to God is of works, or of debt; when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants; but it signifies that there is a reward set before us, yet let none, upon this presumption, put off repentance till they are old. Some were sent into the vineyard at the eleventh hour; but nobody had hired them before. The Gentiles came in at the eleventh hour; the gospel had not been before preached to them. Those that have had gospel offers made them at the third or sixth hour, and have refused them, will not have to say at the eleventh hour, as these had, No man has hired us. Therefore, not to discourage any, but to awaken all, be it remembered, that now is the accepted time. The riches of Divine grace are loudly murmured at, among proud Pharisees and nominal Christians. There is great proneness in us to think that we have too little, and others too much of the tokens of God's favour; and that we do too much, and others too little in the work of God. But if God gives grace to others, it is kindness to them, and no injustice to us. Carnal worldlings agree with God for their penny in this world; and choose their portion in this life. Obedient believers agree with God for their penny in the other world, and must remember they have so agreed. Didst not thou agree to take up with heaven as thy portion, thy all; wilt thou seek for happiness in the creature? God punishes none more than they deserve, and recompenses every service done for him; he therefore does no wrong to any, by showing extraordinary grace to some. See here the nature of envy. It is an evil eye, which is displeased at the good of others, and desires their hurt. It is a grief to ourselves, displeasing to God, and hurtful to our neighbours: it is a sin that has neither pleasure, profit, nor honour. Let us forego every proud claim, and seek for salvation as a free gift. Let us never envy or grudge, but rejoice and praise God for his mercy to others as well as to ourselves.

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**Theocratic Kingdom**—The phrases “Kingdom of Heaven,” “Kingdom of God,” “Kingdom of Christ,” etc., denote the same Kingdom

It has already been shown (Props. 20–23, etc.) how the Jews understood and employed these phrases, and how the first preachers adopted them.

Obs. 1. Now attention is called to the fact that they are used as synonymous in the New Testament What Matthew pronounces “the Kingdom of heaven,” is said by Mark, Luke, and John to be “the Kingdom of God,” as e.g. comp. Matthew 5:3, with Luke 6:20, and Matthew 13:11 with Mark 4:11. So also “the Kingdom of God” is designated Christ’s Kingdom, as e.g. comp. Matthew 16:28 with Luke 9:27, Mark 9:1, etc.

So also “the Father’s Kingdom” and Christ’s are represented as identical. Comp. e.g. Matthew 13:41–43 with Ephesians 5:5, and Matthew 26:29 with II Peter 1:11, etc., and Prop. 83. In reference to the usage of those phrases, comp. Props. 22 and 23, and

the note by Dr. Craven in Lange's Com. Revelation, p. 93.

Obs. 2. These phrases thus interchangeably employed to denote the one Kingdom (Prop. 35) were understood to mean the Davidic Kingdom restored, as e.g. Acts 1:6, Matthew 20:21, Acts 15:16, Luke 1:32, etc. (comp. Props. 19–23).

This has been so frankly admitted by our opponents (as e.g. Dr. Campbell, Knapp, Neander, etc.) that more need not be added, leaving our argument to bring in the additional proof. On every side do we find this testimony, given, too, without any thought of its bearing on the subject. Thus e.g. Farrar (Life of Christ, vol. 1, p. 22) informs us that "waiting for the Consolation of Israel" is equivalent to Mark 15:43, "waiting for the Kingdom of God," and that among the Jews a prayer for the coming of the Messiah was, "may I see the Consolation of Israel." The Messiah and the Kingdom were united. We merely suggest that in addition to the meanings and derivation usually given to the phrase used by Matthew, "the Kingdom of heaven" (viz.: that the God of heaven gives it to the Christ, that through it the Father's will is manifested, that heavenly principles, etc., are exhibited, etc.), may there not, in the employment of the plural form, "heavenlies," be an allusion to the peculiar form of government (Theocratical) under chosen heavenly rulers (comp. Prop. 154). Dr. Meyer (Com. on Matthew 3:2) says: "It is called the Messianic Kingdom, not because the words 'of the heavens' express God, but because this Kingdom is conceived as descending from heaven and entering the world, Galatians 4:26." This idea may (comp. Revelation 19:11–16 and 21:2, etc.) indeed be included, but it does not exclude the old Jewish notion derived from Daniel, or the one just stated. It may include them all, making it the more expressive.

Obs. 3. In addition to the abundant testimony already adduced, that they were regarded as denoting the same Kingdom, and that the restored Theocracy, as existing under David, we add a few more. Nast (Com. on Matthew 11:1–6), allowing the Church-Kingdom theory as correct, frankly says: "Though John the Baptist, Zecharias, and those other Israelites who waited for 'the Consolation of Israel,' expected the Messiah to establish a spiritual Kingdom, a reign of righteousness, they connected, nevertheless, with it, the idea of a visible, terrestrial Kingdom, that he would literally sit on David's throne, and extend His reign from the river to the ends of the earth." Doddridge (Com. Matthew 3:2), cordially adopting the Church-Kingdom idea as intended by the phrase, says: "It is plain that the Jews understood it of a temporal monarchy, which God would erect; the Beat of which, they supposed, would be Jerusalem, which would become, instead of Rome, the capital of the world. And the expected Sovereign of this Kingdom they learned from Daniel to call 'the Son of Man'" (Were the Jews mistaken? Comp. Props. 19–23 and 31–35). Fairbairn (Herm. Manual, p. 41–43) tells us that the phrase, "points back to those prophecies of the Old Testament, in which promise was made of a King and Kingdom, that should unite heaven and earth in another way than could be done by a merely human administration," etc., which we cordially receive as true, remarking, however, that the plain Theocratical meaning contained in the grammatical sense (which he carefully avoids), as held by the Jews, by the disciples and apostles, introduces just such a union of heaven and earth (as e.g. God in Jesus condescending to reign as earthly Ruler, etc.) as he advocates. Our entire argument thus far conclusively proves that all these phrases do not denote separate things (as e.g. intimated by Lange, Com. Matthew, p. 73), or are given (so Fleck, quoted by Lange) "in order to distinguish the Christian Kingdom of God more fully from the Jewish Theocracy," but the restored Theocracy, as covenanted and predicted under the Messiah. They were applied to a definite, well-known Kingdom, viz.: the Theocratic-Davidic.

But able writers, wedded to the spiritual Church-Kingdom theory, can see nothing in the phrase but another and differing Kingdom, viz.: the Church regarded as militant and triumphant. Thus, to illustrate how confidently they appeal to its simplicity in their teaching, we refer to Gregory (Four Gospels, p. 146), who, speaking of "the Kingdom of heaven," and that Matthew by its use intended to correct false Jewish views (when Acts 1:6, he still held them), confidently asserts: "The phrase clearly expresses the idea that it is a Kingdom distinct from all these kingdoms of this world after which the Jew had fashioned his idea of the Messiah's dominion. Its origin is in the heavens, where God dwells; its throne, the seat of the King, is there; its highest present and prospective glories are there. This simple phrase taught that the Kingdom of the Messiah was to be a spiritual and heavenly Kingdom, unlike the old Theocracy with its temple and throne in Jerusalem; unlike the magnificent empire patterned after Rome, which the worldly Jew was dreaming of; wholly unlike the temporal empire of the Papacy long after established." Here is a tissue of assumptions: (1) It ignores the fact that it was a Jewish phrase, adopted without explanation by Matthew, and that it could not possibly convey the idea assumed, being definitely used to designate the restored Davidic Kingdom and its extent, etc., as given by Daniel; (2) it engrafts upon it a modern notion, which the Jews never entertained, being bound by the plain covenant and prophetic language which locates the Kingdom, not in heaven but on the earth; (3) he assumes that the phrase is so clearly full of his doctrine that it ought to have taught the Jew such a view, when the facts are just the reverse, viz.: that its usage fortified them and the disciples (including Matthew) in believing that it unmistakably taught the restoration of the downfallen Theocracy, which was—as we have shown—a Kingdom of God and of heaven; (4) its simplicity of teaching established and confirmed the almost universal Pre-Millenarianism of the early Church and its connected doctrine of the Kingdom—a position just directly opposite to that which Gregory finds in the "simple phrase," and which Shedd (His. of Doc, p. 291) calls a peculiarity of the Jewish-Christian."

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**QUESTION - [What is the meaning of the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard?](#)**

**ANSWER -** This lengthy parable is found only in the gospel of Matthew. Jesus tells the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard

(Matthew 20:1-16) in response to Peter's question in Matthew 19:27: "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?" Peter wanted to know what reward would be given to those who give up everything to follow Jesus. In response, Jesus explains this truth about the kingdom of heaven.

Planting, maintaining and harvesting vineyards in first-century Israel was strenuous work requiring hard physical labor in the heat of summer. Often, additional laborers were required to get all the work done. The owner of this particular vineyard went to the marketplace at the first hour of the morning (6:00 a.m.) to find workers for the day. His offered wage of one denarius, a Roman's soldier's pay for a day, was generous indeed. The workers in the first group were more than happy to work for the generous wage.

As the day progressed and more workers were hired, the specific wage was not mentioned, but the landowner promised to pay "whatever is right." Apparently, the workers were sufficiently confident of the landowner's character that they trusted him at his word. Altogether, four groups of workers were hired, the last group just one hour before the end of the day. When the time came for the wages to be paid, the first group of workers saw the last group being paid a denarius and were naturally thinking they would be paid more since they had worked the longest. Their anger against the landowner spilled forth when they saw they would all be paid the same, even though they got exactly what they had agreed upon when they were hired. The landowner was forced to defend his actions to the first group, even though he had dealt with them in perfect fairness according to the contract.

The landowner, whose decision to pay all the workers the same was an act of mercy—not injustice—represents God, whose grace and mercy are shed abundantly upon those of His choosing. "For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy" (Romans 9:15-16). In the matter of salvation, His grace and mercy are given to those whose self-righteous works could never obtain it. We are all sinful and "fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), but His grace is sufficient to redeem all who believe. Whether God calls someone early or late in life to partake of His grace, the glory and praise for our salvation is His and His alone and in no way amounts to unfairness. Just as the landowner has a right to do what he wishes with his own money, so does God have the right to have mercy on whom He will have mercy.

The first group of workers in the vineyard resented receiving the same wage as the last group. Their attitude was similar to that of the Pharisees, who were incensed at Jesus' teaching that others could inherit a heavenly kingdom they thought was reserved for them alone. They despised Jesus for offering the kingdom to poor, oppressed, weak sinners whom He made equal to them. In verse 15, the landowner asks, "Is your eye evil because I am good?" The "evil eye" was a Hebrew expression referring to jealousy and envy. God's goodness and mercy produced in the self-righteous Pharisees the evil eye of envy. The rest of the workers received their wages without complaint or envy of others. In the same way, as Christians, we should rejoice when others come to the Savior, as we should rejoice in the service others render to Him. He is faithful to reward us for our service as He has promised, and how He rewards others should be of no consequence to us, nor should it affect our devotion to Him.

The message in verse 16, "the last will be first, and the first last," is that no matter how long or how hard a believer works during his lifetime, the reward of eternal life will be the same given to all—an eternity of bliss in heaven in the presence of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43), whose life of service was limited to a moment of repentance and confession of faith in Christ, received the same reward of eternal life as the apostle Paul. Of course, Scripture also teaches that there are different [rewards in heaven](#) for different services, but the ultimate reward of eternal life will be achieved by all equally.

**Matthew 20:2 "When he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard."**

- **he had:** Mt 20:13 Ex 19:5,6 De 5:27-30
- **for a denarius** Mt 18:28 22:19 Lu 10:35 Rev 6:6
- **he sent:** 1Sa 2:18,26 3:1,21 16:11,12 1Ki 3:6-11 18:12 2Ch 34:3 Ec 12:1 Lu 1:15 2Ti 3:15



Marcus Aurelius on Denarius

When he had agreed ([sumphoneo](#)) with the laborers ([ergates](#)) for a denarius ([denarion](#)) for the day, he sent them into his vineyard

**Henry Morris** - Note that this first group of workers wanted a definite contract with the householder before they would work. The

later groups were willing to work simply by faith in the employer's word that "whatsoever is right I will give you" (Matthew 20:4), and he rewarded their faith abundantly. Even those hired at the eleventh hour received the same wages, for they would have been willing to work all day (Matthew 20:7) if they had known. Thus, rewards for Christian service are based more on motive and opportunity than on quantity (1 Corinthians 3:13-15).

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**Agreed** (4856) **sumphoneo** from **sun** = together + **phoneo** = make a sound) literally means to sound together. **Vine** = "to be in accord, primarily of musical instruments." To be in harmony or unison. To fit in with or agree with (Acts 15:15, Lk 5:36). To fit together - secular use the joints of the stones fit together. To match in sound. To have common interests - be in agreement with. To come to an agreement (Mt 18:19, 20:2, Acts 5:9). **Vine sumphoneo** "is used in the NT of the "agreement" (a) of persons concerning a matter, Matt. 18:19; Matt. 20:2, 13; Acts 5:9; (b) of the writers of Scripture, Acts 15:15; (c) of things that are said to be congruous in their nature, Luke 5:36. Note: Cp. symphōnēsis, "concord," 2 Cor. 6:15, and symphōnia, "music," Luke 15:25."

**Denarius** (1220) **denarion** from Latin origin) denoted a Roman silver coin equivalent to a laborer's average daily wage. Here the specific name of the coin was retained in the translation, because not all coins in circulation in Palestine at the time carried the image of Caesar. See [ROMAN COINAGE](#) It was the practice of all new emperors to issue new coins with their own likeness stamped on the face. There is a sense in which the coin was considered to be the personal property of the king. It bore testimony to the rule of the king whose likeness it carried. The first thing that a conqueror would do would be to issue new coins with a new face.

**DENARIUS [ISBE]** - de-na'-ri-us (denarion): A Roman silver coin, 25 of which went to the aureus, the standard gold coin of the empire in the time of Augustus, which was equal in value to about one guinea or \$5,25; more exactly ?1.0,6 = \$5.00, the ? = \$4,866. Hence, the value of the denarius would be about 20 cents and this was the ordinary wage of a soldier and a day laborer. The word is uniformly rendered "penny" in the King James Version and "shilling" in the American Standard Revised Version, except in Mt 22:19; Mk 12:15 and Lk 20:24, where the Latin word is used, since in these passages it refers to the coin in which tribute was paid to the Roman government.

**NET Glossary:** a larger silver coin in use in New Testament times; most carried the likeness of the Roman emperor and one denarius constituted the accepted salary for a day's work by a common laborer

**Hughes** - The silver denarius, weighing 3.8 grams, had been in use in the Roman world since 268 B.C. and continued to be used into the reign of L. Septimius Severus (A.D. 193–211). Denarii bore the head of Tabors and the inscription TI. CAESAR DIVI AVG. F. AVGVSTVS (Tabors Caesar, son of the divine Augustus, Augustus). (See [Luke: That You May Know the Truth](#))

**Matthew 20:3 "And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market place;**

- **the third:** Mk 15:25 Ac 2:15
- **standing:** Mt 20:6,7 11:16,17 Pr 19:15 Eze 16:49 Ac 17:17-21 1Ti 5:13 Heb 6:12

**And he went out about the third hour (9 AM) and saw others standing idle ([argos](#) - doing nothing) in the market place;**

**Matthew 20:4 and to those he said, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' And so they went.**

- **Go:** Mt 9:9 21:23-31 Lu 19:7-10 Ro 6:16-22 1Co 6:11 1Ti 1:12,13 Titus 3:8 1Pe 1:13 4:2,3
- and whatsoever: Col 4:1

**and to those he said, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right([dikaios](#) - righteous, what is fully justified) I will give you.' And so they went.**

**Matthew 20:5 "Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did the same thing.**

- **sixth:** Mt 27:45 Mk 15:33,34 Lu 23:44-46 Jn 1:39 4:6 11:9 Ac 3:1 10:3,9
- **and did:** Ge 12:1-4 Jos 24:2,3 2Ch 33:12-19 Heb 11:24-26

Again he went out about the sixth (noon) and the ninth hour (3 PM), and did the same thing.

**Matthew 20:6** “And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing around; and he \*said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day long?’

- the eleventh: Ec 9:10 Lu 23:40-43 Jn 9:4
- Why: Pr 19:15 Eze 16:49 Ac 17:21 Heb 6:12

And about the eleventh hour (5 PM) he went out and found others standing around; and he \*said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle ([argos](#) - doing nothing) all day long

**Matthew 20:7** “They \*said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He \*said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’

- Because: Ac 4:16 17:30,31 Ro 10:14-17 16:25 Eph 2:11,12 3:5,6 Col 1:26
- Go: Mt 22:9,10 Ec 9:10 Lu 14:21-23 Jn 9:4
- and: Eph 6:8 Heb 6:10

They \*said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He \*said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too (and join the others)

**Matthew 20:8** “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard \*said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last group to the first.’

- when: Mt 13:39,40 25:19,31 Ro 2:6-10 2Co 5:10 Heb 9:28 Rev 20:11,12
- unto: Ge 15:2 39:4-6 43:19 Lu 10:7 12:42 16:1,2 1Co 4:1,2 Titus 1:7 1Pe 4:10

When evening came, the owner of the vineyard \*said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last group to the first.

**Matthew 20:9** “When those hired about the eleventh hour came, each one received a denarius.

- they received: Mt 20:2,6,7 Lu 23:40-43 Ro 4:3-6 5:20,21 Eph 1:6-8 2:8-10 1Ti 1:14-16

When those hired about the eleventh hour (5 PM) came, each one received a denarius ([denarion](#))

**Matthew 20:10** “When those hired first came, they thought that they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius.

When those hired first came, they thought (assumed, expected) that they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius ([denarion](#)) (a day's wage) -

**Matthew 20:11** “When they received it, they grumbled at the landowner,

- they murmured: Lu 5:30 15:2,28-30 19:7 Ac 11:2,3 13:45 22:21,22 1Th 2:16 Jude 1:16

When they received it, they grumbled ([gogguzo](#)) at the landowner - Grumbled is in the imperfect tense depicting them as murmuring over and over.

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**Grumbled** (1111) **gogguzo** means to **murmur**, **mutter**, make complaining remarks or noises under one's breath. In 1 Co 10:10 it is used with idea of complaint (cf Nu 11:1). Gogguzo is an **onomatopoeic** word derived from the sound made when murmuring or muttering in a low and indistinct voice with the idea of complaint. In short this word gives us a vivid picture to help us imagine this scene of religious hypocrites making audible expressions of their dissatisfaction with Jesus and His acceptance of a despised tax collector even to the point of willingness to fellowship over a meal with him! Philosophers also warned against grumbling, noting that one ought to accept whatever the gods and Fate would send. Webster's English Dictionary has this note on **grumble** - to complain in a low harsh voice and often in a surly manner <workers grumbling about the low wages. Synonyms include croak, grouch, grouse, grunt, murmur, mutter, scold; compare complain, bellyache, crab, fuss, gripe, holler, squawk, whine; groan, moan; complain, kick.

**Gogguzo** - 7v - Matt. 20:11; Lk. 5:30; Jn. 6:41; Jn. 6:43; Jn. 6:61; Jn. 7:32; 1 Co. 10:10

**Matthew 20:12 saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the scorching heat of the day.'**

- wrought but one hour: or, continued one hour only
- equal: Lu 14:10,11 Ro 3:22-24,30 Eph 3:6
- borne: Isa 58:2,3 Zec 7:3-5 Mal 1:13 3:14 Lu 15:29,30 18:11,12 Ro 3:27 9:30-32 10:1-3 11:5,6 1Co 4:11 2Co 11:23-28

**saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the scorching heat of the day - NLT - "Those people worked only one hour, and yet you've paid them just as much as you paid us who worked all day in the scorching heat.'**

**Matthew 20:13 "But he answered and said to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius?"**

- Friend: Mt 22:12 26:50
- I do: Ge 18:25 Job 34:8-12,17,18 35:2 40:8 Ro 9:14,15,20

**But he answered and said to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree (sumphoneo) with me for a denarius (denarion)**

**Believer's Study Bible** - Mt 20:13-16 "Denarius" is a lawful day's wage. The goodness of the householder is in his willingness to pay the equivalent of a day's wage to those who labored for only one hour. No offense can be charged to him since he agreed with each group to pay what was right. His sovereignty guaranteed him the right to pay more generously if he so desired. Also, the story may have Jewish-Gentile overtones, with the Gentiles' coming belatedly into the great plan of God. Whatever the case, the lesson in the parable is surely that God is both fair and generous with His servants.

**Matthew 20:14 'Take what is yours and go, but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you.'**

- thine: Mt 6:2,6,16 2Ki 10:16,30,31 Eze 29:18-20 Lu 15:31 16:25 Ro 3:4,19
- I will: Jn 17:2

**Take what is yours and go, but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you.**

**Ryrie** - This is the point of the parable: God's grace and generosity know no bounds, and man's ideas of merit and earned rewards are irrelevant.

**Matthew 20:15 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?'**



- it: Mt 11:25 Ex 33:19 De 7:6-8 1Ch 28:4,5 Jer 27:5-7 Jn 17:2 Ro 9:15-24 11:5,6 1Co 4:7 Eph 1:11 2:1,5 Jas 1:18
- Is thine: Mt 6:23 De 15:9 28:54 Pr 23:6 28:22 Mk 7:22 Jas 5:9
- because: Jon 4:1-4 Ac 13:45

**Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own(money)?**

**Or is your eye envious because I am generous (*agathos*)** - Literally “Is your eye evil because I am good?”

### Matthew 20:16 “So the last shall be first, and the first last.”

- the last: Mt 8:11,12 19:30 21:31 Mk 10:31 Lu 7:47 13:28-30 15:7 17:17,18 Jn 12:19-22 Ro 5:20 9:30
- for: Mt 7:13 22:14 Lu 14:24 Ro 8:30 1Th 2:13 2Th 2:13,14 Jas 1:23-25

**So the last shall be first, and the first last.**

**Ryrie** - Not that they trade places but that there will be an equality of rewards for equal faithfulness to differing opportunities given to each of us.

### QUESTION - [What did Jesus mean when He said the first will be last and the last will be first?WATCH VIDEO](#)

**ANSWER** - Jesus made the statement “many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first” (Matthew 19:30) in the context of His encounter with the [rich young ruler](#) (Matthew 19:16–30). After the young man turned away from Jesus, unable to give up his great wealth (verse 22), Jesus’ disciples asked the Lord what reward they would have in heaven, since they had given up everything to follow Him (verses 27–30). Jesus promised them “a hundred times as much,” plus eternal life (verse 29). Then He said, “But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first” (verse 30).

Jesus reiterated this truth in Matthew 20:16 at the end of the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, a story designed to illustrate the last being first and the first being last. What exactly did Jesus mean when He said, “Many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first”? First, we should eliminate what He did *not* mean. Jesus was not teaching that the way to get to heaven is to live a life of poverty in this world. Scripture is clear that salvation is by grace through faith, not of works (Ephesians 2:8–9)—and independent of one’s financial status. Also, Jesus was not teaching an automatic reversal of roles in heaven. There is no heavenly law wherein the poor and oppressed must rule over the rich and powerful. The rich aren’t *always* last in heaven, and the poor aren’t *always* first. Nor will believers who enjoy wealth and prestige on earth be required to somehow be abased in heaven. Earthly rank will not automatically translate into an inverse heavenly rank.

When Jesus told the disciples they would be greatly rewarded in heaven for what they had given up on earth, He was contrasting their sacrifice with the rich young ruler’s lack thereof—the young man had been unwilling to give up much of anything for Christ’s sake (Matthew 19:16–22). God, who sees the heart, will reward accordingly. The disciples are an example of those who may be first, and they happened to be poor (but their poverty was not what makes them first in heaven). The rich young ruler is an example of those who may be last, and he happened to be rich (but his wealth was not what makes him last).

The Lord’s statement that the last would be first and the first last might also have held special meaning for Peter, who had just spoken of having “left all” (Matthew 19:27). Perhaps Jesus detected in Peter’s statement a bit of boasting—Peter was on the verge of becoming spiritually complacent—as the rich young ruler was, but for a different reason. Jesus’ response in verse 30 may have been an indirect warning to Peter to always find his sufficiency in Christ, not in his own sacrifice. After all, without love, even the greatest sacrifice is worthless (1 Corinthians 13:3).

In the chapter following Jesus’ statement that the first will be last and the last will be first, Jesus tells a parable (Matthew 20). The story concerns some laborers who complain that others, who did not work as long as they, were paid an equal amount. In other words, they saw their own labor as worthy of compensation but considered their companions’ labor to be inferior and less worthy of reward. Jesus ends the parable with the statement, “The last will be first, and the first last” (Matthew 20:16). The most direct interpretation, based on the content of the parable, is that all believers, no matter how long or how hard they work during this lifetime, will receive the same basic reward: eternal life. The thief on the cross (Luke 23:39–43), whose life of service was limited to a moment of repentance and confession of faith in Christ, received the same reward of eternal life as did Timothy, who served God for years. Of course, Scripture also teaches that there are different rewards in heaven for different services, but the ultimate reward of eternal life will be given to all equally, on the basis of God’s grace in Christ Jesus.

There are several ways in which “the first will be last and the last first” holds true. There are some who were first to follow Christ in

time yet are not the first in the kingdom. Judas Iscariot was one of the first disciples and was honored to be the treasurer of the group, yet his greed led to his undoing; Paul was the last of the apostles (1 Corinthians 15:8–9) yet the one who worked the hardest (2 Corinthians 11:23). There are some who were first *in privilege* yet are not first in the kingdom. Based on the terms of the New Covenant, the Gentiles had equal access to the kingdom of heaven, although they had not served God under the Old Covenant. The Jews, who had labored long under the Old Covenant, were jealous of the grace extended to the Gentile “newcomers” (see Romans 11:11). There are some who are first *in prestige and rank* yet might never enter the kingdom. Jesus told the Pharisees that the sinners they despised were being saved ahead of them: “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you” (Matthew 21:31–32).

What Jesus is teaching in Matthew 19:30 is this: there will be many surprises in heaven. Heaven’s value system is far different from earth’s value system. Those who are esteemed and respected in this world (like the rich young ruler) may be frowned upon by God. The opposite is also true: those who are despised and rejected in this world (like the disciples) may, in fact, be rewarded by God. Don’t get caught up in the world’s way of ranking things; it’s too prone to error. Those who are first in the opinion of others (or first in their own opinion!) may be surprised to learn, on Judgment Day, they are last in God’s opinion.

**Matthew 20:17 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,**

- Jesus: Mk 10:32-34 Lu 18:31-34 Jn 12:12
- took: Mt 13:11 16:13 Ge 18:17 Jn 15:15 Ac 10:41

**As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside by themselves(privately), and on the way He said to them** (“an told them what was going to happen to him” - NLT),

**Believer's Study Bible** - Mt 20:17-19 On numerous occasions, after Peter’s Caesarea Philippi confession (Matt. 16:16), Jesus predicts with great specificity the events leading to His death, burial and resurrection (cf. also Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-33). The great accuracy with which Jesus foretells these future happenings is another clear evidence of His deity.

**Matthew Henry Concise** - Mt 20:17-19. Christ is more particular here in foretelling his sufferings than before. And here, as before, he adds the mention of his resurrection and his glory, to that of his death and sufferings, to encourage his disciples, and comfort them. A believing view of our once crucified and now glorified Redeemer, is good to humble a proud, self-justifying disposition. When we consider the need of the humiliation and sufferings of the Son of God, in order to the salvation of perishing sinners, surely we must be aware of the freeness and richness of Divine grace in our salvation.

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#### **QUESTION - [How many times did Jesus predict His death?](#)**

**ANSWER** - Jesus’ death was the final sacrifice that paid the debt of sin for all (Hebrews 9:28). His death was the ultimate purpose of His ministry. In fact, Jesus predicted His death at least three times in the [Synoptic Gospels](#) (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), and the book of John offers even more predictions.

The first time Jesus predicted His death is detailed in Matthew 16:21–23, Mark 8:31–32, and Luke 9:21–22. Jesus had [justified the multitudes](#), and He said that the “Son of Man must suffer many things” (Mark 8:31); be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes; be killed; and be raised again. Peter then rashly began to rebuke Jesus, and Christ responded, “Get behind me, Satan!” (Matthew 16:33; Mark 8:33). Jesus knew that His death must happen. It was necessary in God’s plan to save the world.

Jesus predicted His death a second time in Matthew 17:22–23, Mark 9:30–32, and Luke 9:43–45. This occurred shortly after the Transfiguration, when Peter, James, and John saw Christ in His heavenly glory. Perhaps this was the reason the disciples were so confused by Jesus telling them He was going to die. At this point, they believed His kingdom was just around the corner. Despite their lack of understanding, they were “afraid to ask” for clarification (Mark 9:32; Luke 9:45).

Matthew 20:17–19, Mark 10:32–34, and Luke 18:31–34 describe the third time Jesus predicted His death. He spoke to His disciples as they were heading up toward Jerusalem for Passover, and He told them how He would be mocked, scourged, crucified, and then rise again. On this occasion also, the disciples did not understand Jesus’ saying because the meaning was hidden from them. They would soon learn what Jesus meant in the events of Good Friday and following.

The Gospel of John gives a few more predictions of Jesus’s death, but they are slightly more subtle. For instance, when Mary anointed Jesus with the [costly perfume](#), and Judas asked if she should have sold it for the poor, Christ said, “Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me” (John 12:7–8).

While not an explicit prediction like the previous three, this statement of Jesus clearly pointed to His coming death and burial. Again, in John 13:33, Jesus hinted that His time was short as He told the disciples, "Where I am going you cannot come." Finally, in John 14:25, Jesus talked about giving the Holy Spirit in His absence, which hinted at His death as well as the future of the church.

Jesus intentionally came to earth to die for our sins. Jesus gave His disciples predictions about His death and the events that followed "so that when it does take place you may believe" (John 14:29).

**Matthew 20:18 "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 the: Mt 16:21 17:22,23 26:2 Ps 2:1-3 22:1-31 69:1-36 Isa 53:1-12 Da 9:24-27 Ac 2:23 4:27,28
- they: Mt 26:66 27:1 Mk 14:64,65 Lu 22:71

**Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered(betrayed) to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn (sentence) Him to death,**

**Matthew 20:19 and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up."**

- shall deliver: Mt 27:2-10 Mk 15:1,16-20 Lu 23:1-5 Jn 18:28-38 Ac 3:13-16 1Co 15:3-7
- to mock: Mt 26:67,68 27:27-31 Ps 22:7,8 35:16 Isa 53:3 Mk 14:65 Mk 15:16-20,29-31 Lu 23:11 Jn 19:1-4
- the third: Mt 12:40 16:21 Isa 26:19 Ho 6:2 Lu 24:46 1Co 15:4

**and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up**

**Henry Morris** remarks that "The Lord Jesus told His disciples at least fourteen times that He would be put to death; yet, when the event came, they were still unprepared. There are fourteen references to Christ's resurrection on "the third day" in the New Testament. In terms of days of the week, it seems clear that He was slain on the sixth day of the week, the same day on which man had been created. He then rested in the tomb on the seventh day, the same day on which God rested after completing His work of creating and making all things. He rose again victoriously, never to die again, on the first day of the new week.

**NET NOTE** - Traditionally, "**scourged**" (the term means to beat severely with a whip, L&N 19.9). BDAG 620 s.v. *μαστιγῶω* 1.a states, "The 'verberatio' is denoted in the passion predictions and explicitly as action by non-Israelites Mt 20:19; Mk 10:34; Lk 18:33"; the verberatio was the beating given to those condemned to death in the Roman judicial system. Here the term *μαστιγῶω* (*mastigoō*) has been translated "flog ... severely" to distinguish it from the term *φραγελλῶω* (*phragelloō*) used in Matt 27:26; Mark 15:15. **Crucifixion** was the cruelest form of punishment practiced by the Romans. Roman citizens could not normally undergo it. It was reserved for the worst crimes, like treason and evasion of due process in a capital case. The Roman historian Cicero called it "a cruel and disgusting penalty" (Against Verres 2.5.63–66 §§163–70); Josephus (J. W. 7.6.4 [7.203]) called it the worst of deaths.

**Matthew 20:20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him.**

- came: Mk 10:35
- the mother: Mt 4:21 27:56 Mk 15:40, Salome
- worshipping: Mt 2:11 8:2 14:33 15:25 28:17

**Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down(knelt respectfully) and making a request (ask a favor) of Him**

**Matthew Henry Concise** - Mt 20:20-28. The sons of Zebedee abused what Christ said to comfort the disciples. Some cannot have comforts but they turn them to a wrong purpose. Pride is a sin that most easily besets us; it is sinful ambition to outdo others in pomp and grandeur. To put down the vanity and ambition of their request, Christ leads them to the thoughts of their sufferings. It is a bitter cup that is to be drunk of; a cup of trembling, but not the cup of the wicked. It is but a cup, it is but a draught, bitter perhaps, but soon emptied; it is a cup in the hand of a Father, John 8:11. Baptism is an ordinance by which we are joined to the Lord in

covenant and communion; and so is suffering for Christ, Ezekiel 20:37; Isaiah 48:10. Baptism is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace; and so is suffering for Christ, for unto us it is given, Philippians 1:29. But they knew not what Christ's cup was, nor what his baptism. Those are commonly most confident, who are least acquainted with the cross. Nothing makes more mischief among brethren, than desire of greatness. And we never find Christ's disciples quarrelling, but something of this was at the bottom of it. That man who labours most diligently, and suffers most patiently, seeking to do good to his brethren, and to promote the salvation of souls, most resembles Christ, and will be most honoured by him to all eternity. Our Lord speaks of his death in the terms applied to the sacrifices of old. It is a sacrifice for the sins of men, and is that true and substantial sacrifice, which those of the law faintly and imperfectly represented. It was a ransom for many, enough for all, working upon many; and, if for many, then the poor trembling soul may say, Why not for me?

**Matthew 20:21 And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She \*said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left."**

- What: Mt 20:32 1Ki 3:5 Es 5:3 Mk 6:22 10:36,51 Lu 18:41 Jn 15:7
- Grant: Mt 18:1 19:28 Jer 45:5 Mk 10:37 Lu 22:24 Ro 12:10 Phm 1:2,3
- the one: 1Ki 2:19 Ps 45:9 110:1 Mk 16:19 Ro 8:34 Col 3:1
- in thy: Lu 17:20,21 19:11 Ac 1:6

**And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She \*said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit (in the places of honor) one on Your right and one on Your left."**

**Matthew 20:22 But Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They \*said to Him, "We are able."**

- Ye know not: Mk 10:38 Ro 8:26 Jas 4:3
- the cup: Mt 26:39,42 Ps 75:3 Jer 25:15-38 Mk 14:36 Lu 22:42 Jn 18:11
- baptized with the: Mk 10:39 Lu 12:50
- We: Mt 26:35,56 Pr 16:18

**But Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup (of suffering) that I am about to drink?" They \*said to Him, "We are able." -**

**NET NOTE** - The verbs in Greek are plural here, indicating that Jesus is not answering the mother but has turned his attention directly to the two disciples. **We are able.** - No more naïve words have ever been spoken as those found here coming from James and John, "We are able." They said it with such confidence and ease, yet they had little clue as to what they were affirming. In the next sentence Jesus confirms that they will indeed suffer for his name.

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**QUESTION - [Why did Jesus ask God to "let this cup pass from me"?](#)**

**ANSWER** - The gospels contain an account of the time the disciples and Jesus spent in the [Garden of Gethsemane](#), just before Jesus was arrested. In the garden Jesus prayed to his Father three times, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will"—the KJV says, "Let this cup pass from me" (Matthew 26:39). A little later, Jesus prays, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done" (Matthew 26:42). These prayers reveal Jesus' mindset just before the crucifixion and His total submission to the will of God.

The "cup" to which Jesus refers is the suffering He was about to endure. It's as if Jesus were being handed a cup full of bitterness with the expectation that He drink all of it. Jesus had used the same metaphor in Matthew 20:22 when prophesying of the future suffering of James and John. When Jesus petitions the Father, "Let this cup pass from me," He expresses the natural human desire to avoid pain and suffering.

Jesus is fully God, but He is also fully human. His human nature, though perfect, still struggled with the need to accept the torture and shame that awaited Him; His flesh recoiled from the cross. In the same context, Jesus says to His disciples, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). In praying, "Let this cup pass from me," Jesus was battling the flesh and its desire for self-preservation and comfort. The struggle was intense: Jesus was "overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death" (Matthew 26:38),

and Luke the physician observed that Jesus was [sweating blood](#)—a sign of extreme anguish (Luke 22:44). If anything shows that Jesus was indeed fully man, this prayer is it.

Jesus knew of what was to come (see Mark 8:31). The agony He faced was going to be more than physical; it would be spiritual and emotional, as well. Jesus knew that God's will was to crush Him, to allow Him to be "pierced for our transgressions" and wounded for our healing (Isaiah 53:5–10). Jesus loves mankind, but His humanity dreaded the pain and sorrow He faced, and it drove Him to ask His Father, "Let this cup pass from me."

Jesus' prayer to "let this cup pass from me" contains two important qualifications. First, He prays, "If it is possible." If there was any other way to redeem mankind, Jesus asks to take that other way. The events following His prayer show that there was no other way; Jesus Christ is the only possible sacrifice to redeem the world (John 1:29; Acts 4:12; Hebrews 10:14; Revelation 5:9). Second, Jesus prays, "Yet not as I will, but as you will." Jesus was committed to the will of God, body, mind, and soul. The prayer of the righteous is always dependent on the will of God (see Matthew 6:10).

In Gethsemane, Jesus conquered [the flesh](#) and kept it in subjection to the spirit. He did this through earnest prayer and intense, willful submission to God's plan. It is good to know that, when we face trials, Jesus knows what it's like to want God's will and yet not to want it; to act out of love yet dread the hurt that often results; to desire righteousness and obedience, even when the flesh is screaming out against it. This conflict is not sinful; it is human. Our Savior was "fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God" (Hebrews 2:17). He had come "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10), and He accomplished His mission, even though it meant drinking the cup of suffering to the bitter end.

**Matthew 20:23 He \*said to them, "My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father."**

- Ye: Ac 12:2 Ro 8:17 2Co 1:7 Col 1:24 2Ti 2:11,12 Rev 1:9
- to sit: Rather, "to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, except to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."
- for: Mt 25:34 Mk 10:40 1Co 2:9 Heb 11:16

**He \*said to them, "My cup you shall drink;** They would indeed drink of His cup, for as early as Acts 12:2 James was martyred.

**but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father."**

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#### QUESTION - [Who is greatest in the kingdom?](#)

**ANSWER** - The greatest person in [the kingdom](#) will of course be Jesus. After that, ranking the greatest is full of surprises. Matthew 18:1–5 records, "At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' [Jesus] called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me'" (see also Mark 9:35–37; Luke 9:46–48).

This incident occurred after the Transfiguration and after Jesus' second prediction of His death. Jesus had also just spoken about paying temple taxes, essentially claiming exemption as the Son of God yet miraculously providing for both Peter's tax and His own so as not to cause offense. Too, Jesus had healed a demon-possessed boy whom His disciples were unable to heal (Matthew 17:14–21). Jesus' power was evident, and the disciples recognized Him as Messiah and King. Evidently, they were interested in what their roles would be in Jesus' kingdom. Rather than provide qualifications for the greatest or talk about a hierarchical structure, Jesus said those who became like children—humble—were the greatest (Matthew 18:4).

Interestingly, after Jesus talks about the greatest being like a child, John tells Jesus that he had tried to stop others who were casting out demons in Jesus' name (Mark 9:38; Luke 9:49). Apparently, the lesson had not quite sunken in, or perhaps John was convicted by Jesus' words and chose to confess his mistake. Jesus explained that what mattered was not who was doing the works but the Name in which the works were being done. It is God who deserves the glory, not an elite group of His followers. We also see in Matthew 20 and Mark 10 a request from John and James to sit with Jesus in His kingdom. Jesus replied by asking them if they were able to suffer as He was going to suffer. He then said, "To sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father" (Matthew 20:23). Being great in God's kingdom is not about prestige or privilege. Rather, it involves responsibility and sacrifice. Jesus told His disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for

their soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done" (Matthew 16:24–27). To be great is to serve self-sacrificially. Being great in God's kingdom is about giving oneself for the sake of God's glory and for the benefit of others.

Luke 22 tells about another dispute among the disciples about who was the greatest, this time during the Last Supper. Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:25–27). This is the same night Jesus performed the service of the lowest of servants by [washing His disciples' feet](#). John 13 tells us Jesus did this because of His love for the disciples and also fully knowing His own relationship with the Father. Again, we see that the greatest is not the one with power or prestige, but the one who is secure in the Father's love and willing to serve.

Consistent in Jesus' teaching is that His kingdom is not like the kingdoms of this world. Humans tend to be concerned with social status, political clout, and pecking order. We tend to rank people according to how things look to us in this world, but Jesus warned that using earthly criteria will never give us an accurate picture of rank in God's kingdom. Human judgment will give way to God's some day: "Many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first" (Matthew 19:30).

Rather than strive to be the greatest in this world, we should simply trust in Jesus and serve others, thereby serving Him. Positions of power are meant to be positions of service. Rather than lord power over others, we are to use any influence or resources we have to serve others. The greatest in the kingdom are those who have the humility of a child and the meekness of Jesus. "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). What is valued in God's kingdom is loving the way He loved us—selflessly.

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#### Related Resource:

- [What does the Bible say about humility?](#)

**Matthew 20:24 And hearing this, the ten became indignant with the two brothers.**

- they: Pr 13:10 Mk 10:41 Lu 22:23-25 1Co 13:4 Php 2:3 Jas 3:14-18 Jas 4:1,5,6 1Pe 5:5

**And hearing this, the ten became indignant** (sorely displeased, resentful) **with the two brothers**

**Matthew 20:25 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them.**

- called: Mt 11:29 18:3,4 Jn 13:12-17
- the princes: Mk 10:42 Lu 22:25-27
- exercise dominion: Da 2:12,13,37-45 3:2-7,15,19-22 5:19

**But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men** (high officials) **exercise authority over them**

**Matthew 20:26 "It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant,**

- it: Mt 23:8-12 Mk 9:35 10:43,45 Lu 14:7-11 18:14 Jn 18:36 2Co 1:24 2Co 10:4-10 1Pe 5:3 3Jn 1:9,10 Rev 13:11-17 17:6
- minister: Mt 25:44 27:55 Eze 24:13 Ac 13:5 2Ti 1:18 Phm 1:13 Heb 1:14 1Pe 4:11

**GREATNESS: SERVING OTHERS  
NOT RULING OVER OTHERS**

**It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant**

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## Matthew 20:27 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave;

- whosoever: Mt 18:4 Mk 9:33-35 Lu 22:26 Ac 20:34,35 Ro 1:14 1Co 9:19-23 2Co 4:5 11:5,23-27 12:15

### and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave

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#### QUESTION - [What does the Bible say about self-sacrifice / being self-sacrificial?](#)

**ANSWER** - Self-sacrifice is one of the major themes of the New Testament. Jesus modeled it for us in the way He lived. Though He was God, He did not demand His rights as God, but demonstrated servant leadership in everything He did (Philippians 2:6–8). He said to His disciples, “Whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:27–28).

Some people through the centuries have defined self-sacrifice as extreme forms of bodily punishment we must undergo in order to please God. Some branches of pseudo-Christianity have encouraged all manner of physical deprivation and abuse as though self-inflicted punishment could make people right with God. Certain sects of monks and nuns have lived in abject poverty, rejected legitimate marriage, and taken vows of silence that are nowhere suggested in Scripture. These are akin to the man-made laws that Jesus despised (Mark 7:7–9; Colossians 2:8). They do not represent the kind of self-sacrifice the Bible requires.

Jesus clarified the path to godly self-sacrifice in Luke 9:23, saying, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up his cross daily and follow me.” The kind of self-sacrifice that pleases the Lord is the natural result of having taken up our cross to follow Jesus. A cross always represents death. So, in order to take up a cross, we must be willing to die to ourselves, our agendas, and our rights. When we crucify our fleshly desire to be our own boss, we begin to make decisions based on what Jesus would have us do (Galatians 2:20; 5:24).

The greatest commandments require self-sacrifice. The first commandment is that we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. The second is to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:36–40). We can do neither of these while still demanding our own way. We must sacrifice our rights and desires in order to fully obey God. Biblical self-sacrifice is being willing to set aside one’s own desires for the good of others. Galatians 5:13–14 says, “You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

When we willingly limit our freedoms, set aside our own rights, and pursue the best interest of those God has called us to serve, we are being self-sacrificial biblically. Self-sacrifice demands that we daily die to the passions of our flesh that are in opposition to God’s will for our lives (Romans 6:6–7; Galatians 2:20). We don’t do this in order to appease God or earn His favor. We already have that because of Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:4–7). We choose it because we know it pleases our Father and we want to be more like His Son (Romans 8:29).

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#### QUESTION - [What is servant leadership?](#)

**ANSWER** - Servant leadership is best defined by Jesus Himself: “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:26–28). In the Christian realm, all leadership should be servant leadership.

A common misconception among those who want to exercise a leadership role over others is that it comes with glory, power, and positions of honor. In fact, such a mistaken belief was the occasion for Jesus’ words in the above passage. James and John had just asked Jesus to place them at His side when He assumed His throne in the kingdom to come. The other disciples became indignant at the arrogance of their request (Mark 10:41). And, as an object lesson, Jesus modeled the true servant style of leadership. He, the Lord incarnate, bent down and washed their feet, teaching them the true measure of leading by first serving others (John 13:12–17).

The word servant in Matthew 20:27 means “slave.” Not every servant was a slave, but every slave was a servant. It is sad commentary in the church today that we have many celebrities but very few servants. There are many who want to “exercise authority” (Matthew 20:25), but few who want to take the towel and basin and wash feet. Paul reminds us that our attitude is to be like Christ’s in that we consider others better than ourselves and do nothing out of vanity or selfishness. Rather, we look out for the interests of others (Philippians 2:3–4). In this sense, then, every Christian is a servant.

The focal point of servant leadership within the church is “to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:12). This means, with Christ being the head of the church, the entire church body is served in the act of providing leadership. It’s not just the church leaders who become acutely aware of their place at the foot of the cross but all those

within the body of Christ. We all mutually submit ourselves to Jesus just as He was in submission to the Father. From a biblical perspective, servant leadership frees the church of the abuse of power and coercion and promotes mutual respect and love for one another.

A servant leader seeks to invest himself in the lives of his people so that, as a whole, the church community is challenged to grow to be more like Christ. This is demonstrated in the leader's willingness to give of himself to meet the needs, but not necessarily the wants, of his people. Like a good parent, the true servant leader knows the difference between the needs of his spiritual children and their selfish wants and desires.

The bottom line to the application of servant leadership is that we don't emulate the examples of the world; our example is Jesus, who came as a servant. Therefore, our mission is to serve one another, to give of ourselves. Christ came to give His life. We are to give of our lives not only in service to Him but to our fellow man, including those in the church and outside it (Mark 12:31).

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#### Related Resources:

- [What was the significance of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples?](#)
- [Why should I want to serve God?](#)

**Matthew 20:28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”**

- came: Lu 22:27 Jn 13:4-17 Php 2:4-8 Heb 5:8
- and to: Job 33:24 Ps 49:7 Isa 53:5,8,10,11 Da 9:24-26 Jn 10:15 Jn 11:50-52 Ro 3:24-26 Ga 3:13 Eph 1:7 5:2 1Ti 2:6 Titus 2:14 Heb 9:28 1Pe 1:18,19 2:24 3:18 Rev 1:5 5:8,9
- for: Mt 26:28 Mk 14:24 Ro 5:15-19 Heb 9:28 1Jn 2:2

### HIS DEATH TO BE A SUBSTITUTION

**just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many**

**NET NOTE** - The Greek word for ransom (λύτρον, lutron) is found here and in Mark 10:45 and refers to the payment of a price in order to purchase the freedom of a slave. The idea of Jesus as the “ransom” is that he paid the price with his own life by standing in our place as a substitute, enduring the judgment that we deserved for sin.

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**For** (on behalf of, for sake of) ([5228](#) [huper](#)) can mean "on behalf of" and thus pictures the substitutionary aspect of Christ's sacrifice (Ro 5:6 2Co 5:15, 21 Ga 3:13 Philemon 13 Gal 1:4, 1Co 15:3; Ga 2:20). He did not become a sinner on the Cross, but our sin bearer (Jn 1:29, 1Co 5:7, 1Pe 2:24, Isa 53:4-6)

**He Died for You:** When Lincoln's body was brought from Washington to Illinois, it passed through Albany and it was carried through the street. They say a black woman stood upon the curb and lifted her little son as far as she could reach above the heads of the crowd and was heard to say to him, “Take a long look, honey. He died for you.” So, if I could, I would lift up your spirit to see Calvary. Take a long look, He died for you.

**Huper**, a common preposition, appears approximately 160 times in the New Testament, about 135 times with the genitive case meaning “for,” etc.; 20 times with the accusative case meaning “above, beyond,” etc.; and once as a separate adverb meaning “more” ([2 Corinthians 11:23](#)). In compounds with verbs, nouns, or adverbs it adds the ideas of: (1) “over” or “beyond,” spatially; (2) “for” someone or something; or (3) “beyond (normal) limits.” (Compare the English hyper- and super- forms which are derived from this Greek word and its cognate Latin form, respectively.)

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**QUESTION** -[What does it mean that the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve \(Mark 10:45\)?](#)

**ANSWER** - As Jesus prepares His disciples for His death, James and John—nicknamed the Sons of Thunder—come to Him with a request: “When you sit on your glorious throne, we want to sit in places of honor next to you, one on your right and the other on your left” (Mark 10:37, NLT). Their selfish ambition to be recognized as “the greatest” of the disciples reveals that they had not yet grasped the nature of Christ's kingdom that He would establish through His suffering and death on the cross. Jesus cautions them to consider the cost of all they will have to endure as His followers (Mark 10:38–40). Then the Lord delivers a brief and astonishing



synopsis of His extensive teachings on servanthood: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45; see also Matthew 20:28).

James and John mistakenly presumed that prominence in God’s kingdom is based on position, power, and authority. Jesus explained that the path to greatness is a harrowing journey of suffering—the same kind of suffering Jesus would endure (Mark 10:38–39; John 15:20). Ironically, James and John would indeed suffer much like Jesus. [James](#) would go on to become the first Christian martyr, beheaded by Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:2), and John would experience severe persecution throughout his life and eventually be exiled on Patmos Island.

Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of a servant in God’s kingdom (Luke 22:27; Philippians 2:6–7). Everything He did while He lived and ministered with the apostles set an example for them and us today. Jesus healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ministered to the weakest, most marginalized members of society (Matthew 8:2–3; 9:32–33; 20:29–34; Luke 6:17–19; John 6:1–14). Jesus came to pour out His life in service; consequently, we ought to give our lives in service to Him and others.

The Lord and Creator of the universe, who “knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God,” stood up from the Passover table, “took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel he had around him” (John 13:3–5, NLT). The ever-emotional Peter resisted Christ’s humble ministrations, but Jesus explained: “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (John 13:14–17ESV).

In God’s kingdom, greatness is measured by the extent we are willing to serve one another humbly. No one gave up more to become a servant than Jesus. The apostle Paul describes the steep drop that Jesus experienced when He lowered Himself to earth to serve and die for us: “Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross” (Philippians 2:6–8, NLT). Considering what Jesus did, it’s absurd for His followers to take offense or feel demeaned when performing down-to-earth, unassuming, and even unrewarding tasks. Jesus left behind a glorious and exalted position in heaven yet obediently obeyed His Father in everything (Luke 22:42; John 5:19; 1 Corinthians 15:27–28; Hebrews 5:7–8; 10:5–7). Christ, the Good Shepherd, laid down His life for us (John 10:11). “So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters” (1 John 3:16, NLT).

The basis for greatness in God’s kingdom does not rest on status, power, or authority but on humble, Christlike character. In [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#), Warren Wiersbe states, “We get a throne by paying with our lives, not by praying with our lips. We must identify with Jesus Christ in His service and suffering, for even He could not reach the throne except by way of the cross” ([Vol. 1, Victor Books, 1996](#), SEE PAGE 62).

Jesus is our [Suffering Servant King](#). If our supreme representative, the Son of Man, did not come to be served, but to serve, then so we ought to serve others. No matter who we are in God’s kingdom—whether the most distinguished leader or meekest acolyte—we must strive to be like Christ, demonstrating the same kind of humble, sacrificial servanthood.

#### Related Resources:

- [What was the significance of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples?](#)

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#### QUESTION - [What does it mean that Jesus is the Son of Man?WATCH VIDEO](#)

**ANSWER** - Jesus is referred to as the “Son of Man” 82 times in the New Testament (NIV and ESV). In fact, Son of Man is the primary title Jesus used when referring to Himself (e.g., Matthew 12:32; 13:37; Luke 12:8; John 1:51). The only use of Son of Man in a clear reference to Jesus, spoken by someone other than Jesus, came from the lips of Stephen as he was being martyred (Acts 7:56).

**Son of Man is a title of humanity.** Other titles for Christ, such as [Son of God](#), are overt in their focus on His deity. *Son of Man*, in contrast, focuses on the humanity of Christ. God called the prophet Ezekiel “son of man” 93 times. In this way, God was simply calling Ezekiel a human being. *Son of man* is simply a periphrastic term for “human.” Jesus Christ was truly a human being. He came “in the flesh” (1 John 4:2).

**Son of Man is a title of humility.** The Second Person of [the Trinity](#), eternal in nature, left heaven’s glory and took on human flesh, becoming the Son of Man, born in a manger and “despised and rejected by mankind” (Isaiah 53:3). The Son of Man had “no place to lay his head” (Luke 9:58). The Son of Man ate and drank with sinners (Matthew 11:19). The Son of Man suffered at the hands of

men (Matthew 17:12). This intentional lowering of His status from King of Heaven to Son of Man is the epitome of humility (see Philippians 2:6–8).

**Son of Man is a title of deity.** Ezekiel may have been a son of man, but Jesus is *the* Son of Man. As such, Jesus is the supreme example of all that God intended mankind to be, the embodiment of truth and grace (John 1:14). In Him “all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9). For this reason, the Son of Man was able to forgive sins (Matthew 9:6). The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28). The Son of Man came to save lives (Luke 9:56; 19:10), rise from the dead (Mark 9:9), and execute judgment (John 5:27). At His trial before the high priest, Jesus said, “I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matthew 26:64). This statement immediately ended the trial, as the court accused the Lord of blasphemy and condemned Him to death (verses 65–66).

**Son of Man is a fulfillment of prophecy.** Jesus’ claim before the high priest to be the Son of Man was a reference to the prophecy of Daniel 7:13–14, “I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the **Son of Man**, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed” (NKJV). Daniel saw glory, worship, and an everlasting kingdom given to the Messiah—here called the “Son of Man”—and Jesus applied this prophecy to Himself. Jesus also spoke of [His coming kingdom](#) on other occasions (Matthew 13:41; 16:28). The author of Hebrews used a reference to the “son of man” in the Psalms to teach that Jesus, the true Son of Man, will be the ruler of all things (Hebrews 2:5–9; cf. Psalm 8:4–6). The Son of Man, in fulfillment of [Old Testament prophecy](#), will be the King.

Jesus was fully God (John 1:1), but He was also fully human (John 1:14). As the Son of God and the Son of Man, He is deserving of both titles.

- [Why is Ezekiel called son of man if it is a title for Jesus?](#)

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#### QUESTION - [What is the doctrine of substitution?](#)

**ANSWER** - Substitution is one of the major themes of the Bible. God instituted the principle of substitution in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned. By killing an animal to cover their nakedness (Genesis 3:21), God began to paint a picture of what it would take to bring humanity back into proper relationship with Him. He continued that theme with His chosen people Israel. By giving them the Law, God showed them His holiness and demonstrated their inability to achieve that holiness. God then granted them a substitute to pay the price for their sin, in the form of blood sacrifices (Exodus 29:41–42; 34:19; Numbers 29:2). By sacrificing an innocent animal according to God’s specifications, human beings could have their sins forgiven and enter the presence of God. The animal died in the sinner’s place, thereby allowing the sinner to go free, vindicated. Leviticus 16 (ED: SEE COMMENTARY) tells of the [scapegoat](#), upon which the elders of Israel would place their hands, symbolically transferring the sins of the people onto the goat. The goat was then set free into the wilderness, bearing the sins of the people far away.

The theme of substitution is found throughout the Old Testament as a precursor to the coming of Jesus Christ. The Passover feast conspicuously featured a substitute. In Exodus 12, God gives instruction to His people to prepare for the coming destroyer who would strike down the firstborn male of every family as a judgment upon Egypt. The only way to escape this plague was to take a perfect male lamb, kill it, and put the blood on the lintels and doorposts of their houses. God told them, “The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt” (Exodus 12:13). That Passover lamb was a substitute for every male firstborn who would accept it.

God carried that theme of substitution into the New Testament with the coming of Jesus. He had set the stage so that mankind would understand exactly what Jesus came to do. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” God’s perfect Lamb took the sins of the world upon Himself, laid down His life, and died in our place (John 1:29; 1 Peter 3:18). The only acceptable sacrifice for sin is a perfect offering. If we died for our own sins, it would not be sufficient payment. We are not perfect. Only Jesus, the perfect God-Man, fits the requirement, and He laid down His life for ours willingly (John 10:18). There was nothing we could do to save ourselves, so God did it for us. The Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 53 makes the substitutionary death of Christ abundantly clear: “He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed” (verse 5).

Jesus’ substitution for us was perfect, unlike the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament. Hebrews 10:4 says, “For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” Someone might say, “You mean, all those sacrifices the Jews made were for nothing?” The writer is clarifying that animal blood itself had no value. It was what that blood symbolized that made the difference. The value of the ancient sacrifices was that the animal was a substitute for a human being’s sin and that it pointed forward to the ultimate sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews 9:22).

Some people make the mistake of thinking that, since Jesus died for the sins of the world, everyone will go to heaven one day. This is incorrect. The substitutionary death of Christ must be personally applied to each heart, in much the same way that the blood of the Passover had to be personally applied to the door (John 1:12; 3:16-18; Acts 2:38). Before we can become “the righteousness of God in Him,” we must exchange our old sin nature for His holy one. God offers the Substitute, but we must receive that Substitute personally by accepting Christ in faith (Ephesians 2:8-9).

**Matthew 20:29 As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him.**

- Mk 10:46-52 Lu 18:35-43

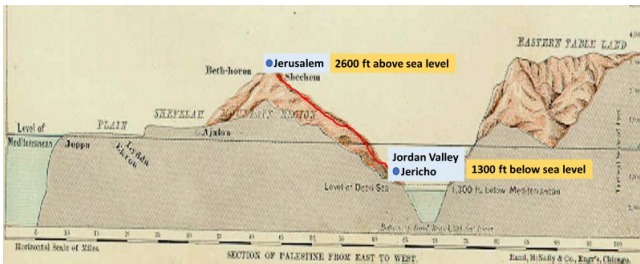


DIAGRAM DEMONSTRATING WHY ONE ALWAYS GOES “UP” TO JERUSALEM

**As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him.**

**Matthew Henry Concise - Mt 20:29-34.** It is good for those under the same trial, or infirmity of body or mind, to join in prayer to God for relief, that they may quicken and encourage one another. There is mercy enough in Christ for all that ask. They were earnest in prayer. They cried out as men in earnest. Cold desires beg denials. They were humble in prayer, casting themselves upon, and referring themselves cheerfully to, the Mediator's mercy. They showed faith in prayer, by the title they gave to Christ. Surely it was by the Holy Ghost that they called Jesus, Lord. They persevered in prayer. When they were in pursuit of such mercy, it was no time for timidity or hesitation: they cried earnestly. Christ encouraged them. The wants and burdens of the body we are soon sensible of, and can readily relate. Oh that we did as feelingly complain of our spiritual maladies, especially our spiritual blindness! Many are spiritually blind, yet say they see. Jesus cured these blind men; and when they had received sight, they followed him. None follow Christ blindly. He first by his grace opens men's eyes, and so draws their hearts after him. These miracles are our call to Jesus; may we hear it, and make it our daily prayer to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

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**QUESTION - [Did Jesus heal two blind men \(Matthew 20:29-34\) or one blind man \(Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43\)?](#)**

**ANSWER -** In spite of apparent discrepancies, these three passages do refer to the same incident. The Matthew account cites two men healed as Jesus left Jericho. Mark and Luke refer to only one blind man healed, but Luke says it happened as Jesus was entering Jericho while Mark records it happening as He left Jericho. There are legitimate explanations for the apparent discrepancies. Let's look at them rather than deciding this is a contradiction and the Bible is in error.

That this is the same incident is seen in the similarity of the accounts, beginning with the two beggars sitting on the roadside. They call out to Jesus, referring to Him as “Son of David” (Matthew 20:30; Mark 10:48; Luke 18:38), and in all three accounts, they are rebuked by those nearby and told to be quiet but continue to shout out to Jesus (Matthew 20:31; Mark 10:48; Luke 18:39). The three accounts describe nearly identical conversations between Jesus and the beggars and the conclusions of the stories are also identical. The beggars receive their sight immediately and follow Jesus.

Only Mark chooses to identify one of the beggars as Bartimaeus, perhaps because Bartimaeus was known to Mark's readers, or they knew Bartimaeus's father, Timaeus, whereas the other blind man was a stranger to them. In any case, the fact that Mark and Luke only mention one beggar does not contradict Matthew's account. Mark and Luke never say there was *only* one beggar. They simply focus on the one, Bartimaeus, who was probably the more vocal of the two. Matthew refers to both of the blind men calling out to Jesus, clearly indicating there were two.

The other issue in question is whether Jesus was entering Jericho or leaving it. Bible commentators cite the fact that at that time there were two Jerichos—one the mound of the ancient city (still existing today) and the other the inhabited city of Jericho. Therefore, Jesus could have healed the two men as He was leaving the ancient city of Jericho and entering the new city of Jericho.

In any case, to focus on these minor details to the exclusion of all else is to miss the point of the story—Jesus healed the blind men, proving that He was indeed the Son of God with powers beyond anything a mortal man could have. Unlike the Pharisees who refused to see what was before their eyes, our response to Jesus should be the same as that of the blind men—call on Him to give us eyes to see spiritual truth, recognize Him for who He is, and follow Him.

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#### Related Resources:

- [What is the story of blind Bartimaeus?](#)
- [Why are there two demon-possessed men in the Gerasene tombs in Matthew, but only one in Mark and Luke?](#)
- [What does it mean that the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve \(Mark 10:45\)?](#)
- [Does the Bible contain errors, contradictions, or discrepancies?](#)
- [Are the miracles in the Bible to be taken literally?](#)
- [Why doesn't God still perform miracles like He did in the Bible?](#)

**Matthew 20:30 And two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"**

- two: Mt 9:27-31 12:22 21:14 Ps 146:8 Isa 29:18 35:5,6 42:16,18 Isa 59:10 61:1,2 Mk 10:46 Lu 4:18 7:21 Jn 9:1-12
- Have: Mt 12:23 15:22 21:9 22:42 Ac 2:30 Ro 1:3,4

**And two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"**

**NET NOTE** - **Have mercy on us** is a request for healing. It is not owed to the men. They simply ask for God's kind grace. There was a tradition in Judaism that the Son of David (Solomon) had great powers of healing (Josephus, Ant. 8.2.5 [8.42–49]).

**Son of David** - 26x/25v in the Bible - 2 Sam. 13:1; 1 Chr. 29:22; 2 Chr. 1:1; 2 Chr. 11:18; 2 Chr. 13:6; 2 Chr. 30:26; 2 Chr. 35:3; Prov. 1:1; Eccl. 1:1; Matt. 1:1; Matt. 1:20; Matt. 9:27; Matt. 12:23; Matt. 15:22; Matt. 20:30; Matt. 20:31; Matt. 21:9; Matt. 21:15; Matt. 22:42; Mk. 10:47; Mk. 10:48; Mk. 12:35; Lk. 3:31; Lk. 18:38; Lk. 18:39

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#### QUESTION - [What does it mean that Jesus is the son of David? WATCH VIDEO](#)

**ANSWER** - Seventeen verses in the New Testament describe Jesus as the "son of David." But the question arises, how could Jesus be the son of David if David lived approximately 1,000 years before Jesus? The answer is that Christ (the Messiah) was the fulfillment of the prophecy of the seed of David (2 Samuel 7:12–16). Jesus is the promised Messiah, which means He had to be of the lineage of David. Matthew 1 gives the genealogical proof that Jesus, in His humanity, was a direct descendant of Abraham and David through Joseph, Jesus' legal father. The genealogy in Luke 3 traces Jesus' lineage through His mother, Mary. Jesus is a descendant of David by adoption through Joseph and by blood through Mary. "As to his earthly life [Christ Jesus] was a descendant of David" (Romans 1:3).

Primarily, the title "Son of David" is more than a statement of physical genealogy. It is a Messianic title. When people referred to Jesus as the Son of David, they meant that He was the long-awaited Deliverer, the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.

Jesus was addressed as "Lord, thou son of David" several times by people who, by faith, were seeking mercy or healing. The woman whose daughter was being tormented by a demon (Matthew 15:22) and the two blind men by the wayside (Matthew 20:30) all cried out to the Son of David for help. The titles of honor they gave Him declared their faith in Him. Calling Him "Lord" expressed their sense of His deity, dominion, and power, and calling Him "Son of David," expressed their faith that He was the Messiah.

The Pharisees understood exactly what the people meant when they called Jesus "Son of David." But, unlike those who cried out in faith, the Pharisees were so blinded by their own pride that they couldn't see what the blind beggars could see—that here was the Messiah they had supposedly been waiting for all their lives. They hated Jesus because He wouldn't give them the honor they thought they deserved, so when they heard the people hailing Jesus as the Savior, they became enraged (Matthew 21:15) and plotted to destroy Him (Luke 19:47).

Jesus further confounded the scribes and Pharisees by asking them to explain the meaning of this very title: how could it be that the Messiah is the son of David when David himself refers to Him as "my Lord" (Mark 12:35–37; cf. Psalm 110:1)? The teachers of the Law couldn't answer the question. Jesus thereby exposed the Jewish leaders' ineptitude as teachers and their ignorance of what the

Old Testament taught as to the true nature of the Messiah, further alienating them from Him.

Jesus' point in asking the question of Mark 12:35 was that the Messiah is more than the physical son of David. If He is David's Lord, He must be greater than David. As Jesus says in Revelation 22:16, "I am the Root and the Offspring of David." That is, He is both the Creator of David and the Descendant of David. Only the Son of God made flesh could say that.

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#### Related Resources:

- [Who is Jesus Christ?](#)
- [What does it mean that Jesus is the Son of God?](#)
- [Was Jesus the biological son of Mary? If so, how did He not inherit a sin nature?](#)
- [What does it mean that Jesus is God's only begotten son?](#)

**Matthew 20:31 The crowd sternly told them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"**

- rebuked: Mt 15:23 19:13
- but they cried: Mt 7:7,8 Ge 32:25-29 Lu 11:8-10 18:1-8,39 Col 4:2 1Th 5:17

**The crowd sternly told them to be quiet, but they cried out (shouted) all the more, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us**

**NET NOTE - be quiet** Or "rebuked." The crowd's view was that surely Jesus would not be bothered with someone as unimportant as a blind beggar.

**Matthew 20:32 And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?"**

- What: Mt 20:21 Eze 36:37 Ac 10:29 Php 4:6

**And Jesus stopped (KJV - stood still) and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you**

**Matthew 20:33 They \*said to Him, "Lord, we want our eyes to be opened."**

- Lord: Ps 119:18 Eph 1:17-19

#### Related Passages:

Psalm 119:18+ Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Your law.

Ephesians 1:17-19+ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might

**They \*said to Him, "Lord, we want our eyes to be opened**

**Matthew 20:34 Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.**

- Jesus: Mt 9:36 14:14 15:32 Ps 145:8 Lu 7:13 Jn 11:33-35 Heb 2:17 Heb 4:15,16 1Pe 3:8
- touched: Mt 9:29 Mk 7:33 Lu 22:51 Jn 9:6,7
- and they: Mt 8:15 Ps 119:67,71 Lu 18:43 Ac 26:18

**Moved with compassion** (felt sorry - [splanchnizomai](#)), **Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him**

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**Moved with compassion** (4697) [splanchnizomai](#) from [splanchnon](#) = bowel, viscera - see [splanchnon](#) note below) means to experience a deep visceral feeling for someone, to feel compassion for, to feel [sympathy](#), to take [pity](#) on someone. [Compassion](#) is the sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it. This verb expresses an outward flow of one's life in contrast to our natural tendency toward self centeredness. It is notable that 8/12 NT uses describe this deep seated emotion in Jesus. It follows that if we desire to imitate Jesus, we need to be men and women of deep compassion!

**Zodhiates** note on [splanchnon](#) - In Class. Gr. writers, it is chiefly spoken of the upper viscera of animals, as the heart, lungs, and liver which were eaten during or after the sacrifice... Figuratively, the inward parts indicating the breast or heart as the seat of emotions and passions. In the NT, of the gentler emotions as compassion, tender affection indicating the mind, soul, the inner man (2Co 6:12, Philemon 1:7, 20; 1Jn 3:17; Sept.: Pr 12:10 (cf. Ge 43:30; 1Kgs. 3:26) [The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament. AMG](#))