

# The Gospel of the Kingdom Pt 20

## ***Matt 8:18-9:8***

After the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' ministry is starting to take off and word begins to spread about this rabbi, this prophet, this miracle worker, and people begin to flock to Capernaum, His home base. The Kingdom that He has come to establish is beginning to take hold.

An analogy would be WW2 when the allies took the beach at Normandy and began to push inland. Jesus had established a beachhead and was now expanding His ministry and with it the Kingdom of God.

### **1. The Cost of Following Jesus**

***18 Now when Jesus saw a great crowd around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. 19 And a scribe came up and said to him, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." 20 And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."***

The crowd was starting to get a bit overwhelming, and He knew it was time to move on and take His message to another town on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. By this time, he had a number of followers, known as disciples. These folks wanted to learn from him as they saw him as a learned Rabbi unlike any other.

Among them was a scribe. Scribes were very adept at writing things down quickly and accurately. A scribe was an expert at handling written documents. They were tasked with not only writing, but teaching, and interpreting the Law. Here's the thing. They were paid to do what they did, often being housed and fed by the Rabbi's.

Jesus wants to set the expectations of following him. If you want to follow me, don't think that you will get room, board, or any financial gain from it. To follow me is to live like I do, a plain life of sacrifice. So much for your prosperity Gospel. Jesus owned nothing but the clothes on His back. The Christian life is not one of ease and comfort.

He calls Himself the Son of Man, to show Himself as God incarnate, indicating the true meaning of His ministry;

- the humble servant who has come to forgive sinners,
- the suffering servant whose death and resurrection will be the atonement for those sins and would redeem His people.

***21 Another of the disciples said to him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." 22 And Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead."***

Don't misunderstand, Jesus upholds the Biblical command to honor your father and mother as we see later in Chapter 15. So why does he tell this disciple not to worry about burying his father?

Jesus wants to make sure that we understand that while there is place for honor and allegiances, the call to follow Him rises above all other allegiances. Anything that hinders unqualified commitment to Him and the new family of faith must be set aside.

While this seems harsh, we need to read between the lines and understand this disciple's heart. He could have buried his father and then come back and dedicated himself to following Jesus, but Jesus can see that in his heart he is hedging his bets and coming up with excuses. Jesus wants to make sure that all who follow Him have undivided loyalties.

## **2. Jesus Calms a Storm**

***23 And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. 24 And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. 25 And they went and woke him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing." 26 And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. 27 And the men marveled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?"***

We need to understand that these disciples are an early group of followers from all walks of life. These are not the complete Twelve as He hasn't chosen all of them yet. This group includes Peter, Andrew, James, and John. It also includes other undetermined followers of Christ.

These disciples have been following Him and hearing His teachings as well as seeing Him perform healings and cast out demons. However, they still view Him as a Rabbi, a teacher. They don't really have any understanding of Him as Messiah, or God incarnate. Casting out demons and healing the sick is one thing, but when nature itself obeys His commands, that is something else entirely. They still couldn't grasp His true identity.

In the Greek, the word for storm is "siesmos", this is the word from which we get seismic activities or earthquakes. It would seem that the waves were being caused by both an earthquake and high gale force winds. Regardless of the cause, Jesus was able to calm things down with a word.

This left them asking this question, "What sort of man is this?"

## **3. Jesus Casts Out Demons**

***28 And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. 29 And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?" 30 Now***

***a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them. 31 And the demons begged him, saying, "If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs." 32 And he said to them, "Go." So they came out and went into the pigs, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters. 33 The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, especially what had happened to the demon-possessed men. 34 And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region.***

As He crosses the Sea of Galilee, he enters the Decapolis which is Gentile country and the region of Gadara.

While His disciples had no idea who He really was, when He encounters the demon possessed men, the demons instantly recognize who He is. While He uses the term Son of Man to describe Himself, the demons call Him the Son of God. The demons understand that there is an appointed time when Satan and his minions will be judged, and they will meet their final fate of being cast into the lake of fire.

#### ***Rev 20:10***

***"and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."***

In a preview of that, the demons are allowed to go into a herd of pigs and immediately they are cast into the Sea of Galilee where they drown.

Remember that to the Jew, pigs are considered unclean.

To the Gentiles, they are a source of food, much like lambs are to the Jews. For the herdsmen the meant both a loss of income and food from their tables. Rather than rejoicing that the demon possessed men had been delivered, they were only concerned with their loss. For them, they had already written these men off, the way Jews wrote off lepers.

#### **4. Jesus Forgives Sins**

***9:1 And getting into a boat he crossed over and came to his own city. 2 And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." 3 And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." 4 But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? 5 For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? 6 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he then said to the paralytic—"Rise, pick up your bed and go home." 7 And he rose and went home. 8 When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.***

Jesus again gets in a boat and returns to Capernaum, probably back to Peter's home.

News gets out and they bring Him a paralytic. As we discussed last week, Jesus doesn't have a formula for how He heals people. This time, He instead pronounces that the paralytic's sins are forgiven and doesn't even address his physical ailment. This enrages the scribes from the synagogue who hear Him say something that only God has the authority to do. In the Law, God had set up a whole system for the atonement of sins through sacrifices, ritual cleansings, offerings, and other processes that involved the priesthood. Jesus is neither a priest nor, in their eyes, God. They get incensed and accuse Him of blasphemy.

One of the things that I have learned is that God sees us through different eyes than we do with our physical eyes. He sees what is inside, and not just what is on the outside. While physically this man suffered from paralysis, it seems that there was some underlying sin that needed to be addressed first. Healing this man's body was not nearly as important as healing his relationship with God.

When Jesus says, "which is easier", it implies that, it would seem that saying, "Your sins are forgiven" would be easier because there is no way of verifying whether or not this has happened.

In actuality, it is the other way around, for the forgiveness of sins can only be done by God or by His direct representative, who is in very nature God, in this case His Son.

No man or priest can forgive or absolve anyone from their sins. Jesus is introducing to them the concept that He is the Messiah, the Son of God.

Then, so that they would understand that as the Son of God He does have the authority, He heals the man, who then gets up, picks up his bed and goes home.

At every step Jesus is revealing more and more of His identity.

- First, they hear Him preach in new ways with authority,
- then He heals the sick and casts out demons.
- He continues by showing His authority over nature by calming the storm and
- now He forgives sins and backs it up with even more healing.

Just as the disciples on the boat asked themselves, "what sort of man is this?" This crowd is in disbelief. So much so that they are afraid because they are seeing a man to whom God has given this sort of power and authority.

Could it be that this was the long-awaited Messiah? They didn't even dare entertain the thought.

## **Conclusion**

- Do you follow Christ because of what He does?
- Do you follow Him because of His teaching?
- Do you follow Him because you don't want to go to hell?

Or do you follow Him because you have fallen in love with Him and you want to submit to Him, sacrifice for Him, obey Him and show others His love?