

January 18th, 2009 “The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 30”

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Luke 17:22-24

22 Then [Jesus] said to the disciples, “The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it.

23 And they will say to you, ‘Look here!’ or ‘Look there!’ Do not go after them or follow them.

24 For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day.

Thank you very much for coming to hear the message for today. Before we begin our next lesson, let us reiterate our reason for attending Church.

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

In our last lesson, we discussed the correlation between marriage and Christianity. My analysis of the Scriptures has brought me to the conclusion that marriage is the relationship in which we have the greatest responsibility to exercise our Christian commitment. The key to Christian love is interpersonal intensity, and relationships other than marriage do not require the interpersonal intensity needed for us to seriously exercise our ability to love. Jesus says, in **John 13:34**:

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

The commandment is that we love the cause of Christ by loving one another. And while it is important that we participate in the further extension of the great work of kingdom building, the commandment of the Christ is that we develop intense interpersonal relationships with one another. And the Bible verifies for me that marriage, the initial human relationship, is the relationship that God uses as the paradigm for all relationships. Paul gives us this example in **2Corinthians 11:2-3**, as he discusses the fact that the Corinthian church is beginning to believe in false doctrine. He says:

2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

3 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

The apostle John uses the marriage metaphor as he discusses the meeting of those who are saved with the Christ in heaven. **Revelation 19:6-9** says:

6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and

as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!

7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.”

8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

9 Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’ ” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.”

The ceremonies marking the end of earthly time and the joining of the Kingdom to the King are referred to as a marriage. After the judgment at the Great White Throne is completed, John continues his reference, in **Revelation 21:1-4, 9-11, 22-27:**

1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”

9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”

10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

11 having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

22 But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

23 The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

24 And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.

25 Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).

26 And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.

27 But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

God’s initial plan from the book of Genesis was that man would be in a marital relationship. And at the end of time, the relationship that God has with man is one of a marriage. The biblical paradigm for relationships is marriage. And while I suppose that it is theoretically possible for unmarried people to have a discipleship relationship with one another with the intensity of the one that Jesus had with his disciples, I have never heard of or seen such a relationship in practical application.

To further understand this example, let us look at the dichotomy between Paul's thinking early in his ministry, when he writes of the church at Corinth, and then later, near the end of his ministry, when he writes to Timothy as to how the church is to continue after his demise. Paul says, in **1Corinthians 7:1-2, 8-9**:

1 Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

2 Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.

8 But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am;

9 but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

Paul's initial writing in **1Corinthians 7** implies that marriage is actually a sort of sop, or concession, to those that do not have the self-control required to keep themselves sexually pure without a physical marital relationship. Paul's position is that it is preferable to not marry, although one who feels the need to marry has not sinned, as he says in **1 Corinthians 7:32-33, 38**:

32 But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord.

33 But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife.

38 So then he who gives her in marriage does well, but he who does not give her in marriage does better.

It is relevant that **1Corinthians** is one of Paul's first four letters, written between 49 and 54 AD, along with the two letters to the Thessalonians and the letter to the Galatians. **1Timothy**, on the other hand, was written by Paul when he was in prison at the end of his travels, which would put the time between 62-67 AD, as Paul was martyred in 67 AD. **1Corinthians**, at the beginning of Paul's ministry, characterized marriage as a lesser good needed to keep a man from sin, but Paul gives us a different interpretation of marriage in **1Timothy 3:1-5**:

1 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.

2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach;

3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous;

4 one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence

5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?);

Paul then goes on to say, in **1Timothy 3:8-13**

8 Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money,

9 holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.

10 But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless.

11 Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.

12 Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses

well.

13 For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

In Paul's later letters in which he gives instructions to the future church as to how it should operate, Paul makes longevity in marriage a prerequisite for leadership. And not just longevity in marriage, but fatherhood, and the raising of a child to becoming a member of the Christian community, as he notes that a bishop must have his children in submission and a deacon must rule his children well.

These instructions do not denote a change in Paul's perception of the truth, as Paul does not denigrate marriage in his earlier letters, but they do denote a change in perspective, as Paul makes longevity in marriage and the proper training of children in deportment the rite of passage for qualifying a man for leadership in his later letters. In his list of qualifications for leadership, Paul does not require that a church leader have academic training or missionary experience, but Paul makes it clear that a church leader needs to be a good husband and father.

John calls Jesus Christ the Bridegroom and His Church His bride, and Paul makes it clear that marriage is a prerequisite for leadership in the Church. As we read last week, in **Ephesians 5**, husbands are called to use the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made for the church as their standard of behavior towards their wives. Interestingly, both in **Ephesians** and **1 Timothy**, Paul talks about submission. We have already read **1 Timothy 3:4**, which says that the role of a husband is to be:

4 one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence.

And **Ephesians 5:22-24** tells us:

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

There can be no doubt that the church is subject to Christ, as **Revelation 21:6-8** tells us:

6 And [Jesus] said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.

7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

8 But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

So, the Biblical paradigm is that husbands need to select wives that agree to submit and husbands also need to train their children to be submissive, which is the way that children should go, so that when they are older, they will not depart from it, as **Proverbs 22:6** instructs us.

In our generation, the concept that wives are to submit to their husbands is not generally received well. Of course, the Bible predicts that this will be the case, even among wives that believe in God, as **Romans 10:2-3** tells us:

2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

Submission is a difficult concept for those who are ignorant of God's righteousness. Now ignorance does not mean that we have never heard of God's righteousness, but simply that we do not agree that the righteousness of God actually is righteous. In other words, we know what God says but we just disagree with Him.

Submission demands that we put our thoughts, and more importantly, our feelings, aside and make the conscious decision to follow the admonition of God, whether we desire to do so or not. In other words, desire and agreement are not prerequisites for obedience. Submission means that we will obey whether we agree and desire to or not. Anyone who has ever gone through any form of athletic training or physical self-discipline will understand this concept.

And while it is true that wives are called to submit to their husbands, and children are called to submit to their parents, those are not the only instances of submission for which the Bible calls. **1Corinthians 11:3** tells us:

3 But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

Starting from the end of this verse, the Bible tells us that Christ is submissive to God. Jesus showed His submission in the Garden of Gethsemane, as recorded in **Matthew 26:37-39**

37 And [Jesus] took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed.

38 Then [Jesus] said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me."

39 [Jesus] went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

The essence of submission is the ability to say, as Jesus said to God, **"nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will"** and to mean it.

Submission is the ability to realize that the one to whom we submit is actually the planner. Being submissive means that we recognize that we are not developing the plan, but that we are following the plan. We acknowledge that the planner has more information about the situation than we do, thus the planner is more qualified to develop the plan than we are. In the case of Jesus Christ, God's plan for Him contained benefits that superseded the pain that Jesus suffered. **Hebrews 5:5-10** tells us:

5 So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was [God] who said to Him: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You."

6 As [God] also says in another place: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek";

7 who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear,

8 though [Jesus] was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

9 And having been perfected, [Jesus] became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,

10 called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek,"

Melchizedek is the eternal priest of the Most High God, as **Genesis 14:18** tells us:
18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High.

Salem is not a place, but Salem is the designation for peace. The King of Salem is the King of Peace, and the priest of the Most High God. **Genesis 14:19-20** continues:

19 And Melchizedek blessed Abram and said: “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth;

20 And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” And Abram gave Melchizedek a tithe of all.

This eternal priesthood of Melchizedek is different than the human priesthood in Israel under the lineage of Aaron. The job of a priest is to offer sacrifices to God to atone for sin. Aaron and the Israelite priests in his line all performed animal sacrifices, which could never atone for sins, as **Hebrews 10:1-4** tells us:

1 For the [Mosaic] law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.

2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins.

3 But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.

4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

But, unlike the priesthood of Aaron, the priesthood of Melchizedek is an eternal priesthood, one in which the sacrifice is not offered annually, but once for all. Thus the sacrifice of the eternal priesthood cannot be an animal sacrifice, which has no power but is simply one in which an animal is symbolically killed as a sign that the person offering the sacrifice has put his sin to death. The sacrifice of the eternal priesthood must be an eternal, living sacrifice, one that will not need to be repeated, but one that can change the hearts and minds of men in any generation. The sacrifice of the eternal priesthood must live and endure.

That is why Jesus Christ had to offer Himself as a sacrifice. His death on the Cross was the full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice in that every sin that God will ever forgive was atoned for by Jesus Christ during that three hour period in which God turned out the sun and poured down His wrath upon Jesus Christ. Everyone through all generations will be able to be changed by the Holy Spirit through belief in the eternal sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Sacrifices for sin are no longer necessary for atonement, because the sin of each man of each generation, past, present and future, can be cleansed by each man's acceptance of the sacrifice of God the Son and the mind of each man in each generation, past, present or future, can be renewed and regenerated by each man's acceptance of the ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' resurrection from the dead made His sacrifice a living sacrifice, and as long as Jesus Christ is alive, He can interact with all future generations to make any further sacrifices unnecessary.

This is the great plan of God, but in order for the plan to be in effect, Jesus Christ had to sacrifice Himself in such a way as to atone for all sin. It was not just enough for Jesus Christ to die; Jesus Christ had to take our place in death and bear our punishment for sin.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus Christ saw the hideous agony that would be sufficient to pay the penalty for the sin of every person, past, present and future, and was faced with the choice to either submit to the punishment or to allow all of us to go to hell. No one else could perform this sacrifice, because no one else had the combination of the power of God flowing through Him and no hint of sin within him that Jesus Christ had.

So, although Jesus Christ was all powerful, and although Jesus Christ was totally sinless, His power and sinlessness were not sufficient. Jesus Christ also had to submit to the Plan of God. Jesus Christ had to submit to a punishment to which He did not want to submit; He had to lay aside His omnipotence and allow Himself to be physically tortured to the point of being too weak to make it up Calvary's Hill bearing a cross. He had to lay aside His sinlessness and take the sinfulness of all mankind upon Himself, so much so that God turned His face away from Jesus Christ and severed the Divine Connection, causing Jesus to cry out, as **Matthew 27:46** records: **46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"**

Jesus had to say to God, **"nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will"** and to mean it. That is the definition of submission and the true meaning of "the head of Christ is God, as **1Corinthians 11:3** tells us:

3 But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

But, the verse also tells us that the head of every man is Christ. God does not intend that man be a free agent making up the rules as he goes along, and catering to that which he wishes to do. God has given man, through His Word, the Bible, a specific set of behaviors to which we are called to submit ourselves. For instance, God has made it clear to us that we are to treat our wives with the same sacrificial love with which He treated us. Now, on any given day we may not feel loving, but our feelings do not negate our responsibility to follow the instructions that God has given us.

Jesus had to say to God, **"nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will"** and to mean it. We, as men, have the same responsibility. And we have to learn to ignore our feelings. Feelings are not facts, and our emotions are not necessarily intelligent. If our emotions and desires are in conflict with the law of God, we have the responsibility to ignore them. That is the meaning of **"nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will"**.

Women have the same responsibility to be submissive. Paul says, in **1Corinthians 11:3**: **3 But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.**

Ladies, you may feel that this admonition is unfair, but keep in mind the fact that you are not the planner. If you choose to indulge your feelings of disagreement with God, remember that in so doing you are showing your ignorance of God's righteousness, and you are going about to establish your own righteousness, and not submitting yourselves to the righteousness of God, your feelings notwithstanding.

Now, our text, **Luke 17:22**, tells us:

22 Then [Jesus] said to the disciples, "The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it."

The simple truth of the matter for both husbands and wives is that Jesus is not physically

here with us so that we can consult with Him. Now, when Jesus was here, His presence comforted His disciples. Jesus gave His disciples both an explanation and a demonstration of His purposes. Jesus met with the disciples virtually every day of His ministry, and walked with them in the way that husbands and wives are supposed to walk together.

He and the disciples communicated, and Jesus reassured them that He had the situation, however negative it might have appeared to be, under control. Jesus repeatedly warned the disciples about His departure, as He did in **Luke 18:31-33**:

31 Then [Jesus] took the twelve aside and said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished.

32 For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon.

33 They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.”

When Jesus was actually taken to be delivered to the Gentiles, the Romans, **Matthew 26:55-56** records:

55 In that hour Jesus said to the multitudes, “Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me.

56 But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.

Probably the most important reason for us to learn submission is so that we can react properly when we are faced with trial, tribulation and trouble. Everyone feels capable of making their own decisions when things are going well, but even the most self assured individual calls on Jesus or somebody when they find themselves in a desperate situation. When the doctor says “cancer”, you desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man. When the pediatrician says “your child is autistic”, you desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man. When the banker says “foreclosure”, you desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man. When the CEO of your company says, “layoff” or “bankruptcy, and the pension fund is depleted”, you desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man.

But the key to reassurance in those days is submission. Submission to God during our prosperous years allows us to build up the confidence in God that we need during our years of trials, tribulation and trouble. If we submit to God during our good days, He will give us the strength to bear our cross during the days of our trial. And only the planner knows the plan from beginning to end, and only by submitting to the plan can we achieve the goal to which the plan points.

Yes, the day is going to come to each of us in which we will wish to see Jesus in our hospital room, entering our praying ground, walking with us on the way, interceding for us in our trouble. And we can only have the confident assurance that He is with us as we practice submission to Him, following His commandments despite our desire to do differently, and thus developing confidence that He has our best interests at heart and is in control of our situation.

Another word for submission is faith; we submit to His way because we have faith in Him, and **Hebrews 11:6** tells us:

6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Submission is nothing more than the exercise of faith. Jesus went to the Cross because He had faith in the plan of God, as He said, **“nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will”** and to meant it. When Paul was preparing to be beheaded by Nero, he would have much rather have seen Jesus Christ return to rescue him, but he submitted to his death with equanimity because he had faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. When Peter faced crucifixion upside down, he would have much rather have seen Jesus Christ return to rescue him, but he submitted to his death with equanimity because he had faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is not returning to rescue any of us. He has given us His instructions, and expects us to submit to them. Our submission is our rescue, as Jesus Christ is working out our situations by our adherence to the plan of God. Heaven is in our view if we believe in Jesus. Victory is in our grasp if we follow Jesus’ plan. He tells us, in **John 3:16-17**:

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

The evidence of our belief in Jesus Christ is our faith in His reality and our submission to His will. We may not see and understand the purpose of His will, but we have to submit to His will in the assurance that He is the planner and that He has successfully planned for us with our salvation in mind. As we are all called by the Word of God to submit, children to parents, wives to husbands and husbands to Christ, let us leave this place with a spirit of submission and faith in the Word of God.

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