

for according to prophecy. And yet the real personality and office of Jesus far transcended all these. He was the Christ, the one to whom all the prophets pointed, the one in whom all the hopes of the Jewish nation centered. The very title was enough to send a thrill of triumphant expectation through every Jewish heart. In it was summed up every thing that was desirable, beautiful, honorable, glorious, and holy. East is not farther from west than is the conception of the Christ, or Messiah, from that which the Lord Jesus placed beside it, the idea of the cross.

The cross was the most extreme depth of degradation which could be reached by any man. It was a punishment inflicted by the foreign usurper, and by him ordinarily only on slaves or the lowest class of criminals. It meant all that was shameful and painful and horrible.

Yet these two things—Christ, in whom was summed up all that was desirable, and the cross, in which was summed up all that was repulsive—were placed together in the divine counsels of God, and in the familiar and confidential talk of Jesus with his disciples. The prediction of Christ's sufferings and death Peter resented. The warning with which our Lord followed up the strange announcement was not thoroughly understood, yet it must have been a great shock to the disciples to hear our Lord, in one breath as it were, acknowledging their confession of him as "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mat. 16, 16), and referring in immediate connection with himself to such a thing as the cross. It was as if the bright, unsullied snow on the top of Hermon had suddenly been laid in the dust at their feet.

Were we to find the jeweled crown of a monarch sparkling on a heap of rubbish we should wonder what possible contingency could have brought the two together; the contrast between the emblem of royalty and the denigratory of cast-out refuse is infinitely less than that between Christ and the cross. What brings them together in this passage? The Golden Text gives the key to the answer.

It speaks of those who should "come after" and "follow" "the Christ." But how was this to be? The holy One of God had nothing in common with sinful men. The cross, with its suffering and its shame, was the way he took to reach them. If he had not on the cross "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9, 26), there must have remained an impassable gulf between. It was love toward sinners that brought Christ to the cross. And by the way he took to reach them, by that same way must they come "after" him. It must be by way of the cross. First, there must be the hearty acceptance of his atoning sacrifice as the only way of reconciliation with God (2 Cor. 5, 19). And secondly, the old self, with its thoughts and conceits and desires, must be given up (Gal. 5, 24), the old man reckoned as crucified with Christ (Rom. 6, 6), or there can be no true following of him. He that shall thus "lose his life, the same shall save it."

Where the cross of Christ is thus accepted and taken up, there the "kingdom of God" is indeed "come with power" (Mark 9, 1), and of him who shall thus "follow" Christ, he will not be ashamed when he comes "in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (8, 38).

### The Lesson Council.

**Question 1.** *Why did Jesus forbid the disciples to tell others that he was the Christ?*

Because it was of the utmost importance that the disciples, who shared the popular notion that Messiah would be a great earthly Deliverer, should be restrained from exciting the mistaken zeal and national feelings of their countrymen, and thus precipitating the catastrophe for which in the thirty first and following verses Christ prepares his followers by unfolding to them the great truth foretold in Psa. 22; Isa. 53, etc., that he was to suffer, die, and rise again, and that his victory and that of his people would be the victory of the vanquished.—*Rev. J. E. Hanauer, Jerusalem, Syria.*

Jesus would attract men to his doctrines and not to his person. He presented truths, the fundamental principles of the divine government; first, he would not have these truths obscured by the admiration of friends, nor the prejudice of enemies. His immediate followers were to be taught these principles so fully that they should neither doubt nor forget them. To secure this end he must have their undivided attention. See Mat. 17, 9. "Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead." Also Mark 9, 9, 10.—*Rev. James Marvin, D.D., Lawrence, Kansas.*

The time for the teaching of this truth had not yet arrived. The disciples must themselves be first prepared for the manner of the divine manifestation. They looked for a political demonstration, not for the cross. Their hopes being set on Psa. 72, they forgot Isa. 53. Therefore, until their own faith should be fixed, and they by a quickened spiritual insight should behold the Son of God in the crucified Jesus, in the risen Lord, and in the baptism of Pentecost, they were not qualified to declare to men the truth of Peter's confession.—*Rev. Morris D. Church, Boonton, N. J.*

Christ was in humiliation, and his death and resurrection must be accomplished as foundation facts, before the glory of his divine nature could either be understood or wisely proclaimed. The disciples had too obscure knowledge of Christ and were too weak in faith to openly declare and defend his true nature and character. Only when they had received the baptism of Pentecost were they prepared for this work.—*Rev. S. N. Fellows, D.D., Manchester, Iowa.*

1. To protect the truth of his Messiahship against the Jewish notion of a worldly millennium. The Jews could not be persuaded to surrender this carnal notion. The Christian acknowledgment of Messiah's kingdom must be kept unmixed from Jewish expectations. 2. To protect himself against the ill-judging multitude. Such an unreserved avowal of his Messianic life would have been premature and given the scribes and priests an occasion against Jesus. The unvarying rule of our Lord in respect to the relation of his disciples to the world, as stewards of the mysteries of God, was that they must not expose God's truths indiscriminately before ungodly men.—*Rev. J. L. Soy, Camden, N. J.*