

"18 And it happened that while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, "Who do the people say that I am?" 19 They answered and said, "John the Baptist, and others say Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again." 20 And He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God."" Luke 9:18-20, NAS95.

The call to discipleship is a call to follow Jesus. We read that in the last two words of verse 23 where Jesus says, "Follow Me." The good news is that, if you follow Jesus you will never walk alone. The fact that you are following Him indicates that He is with you and is leading the way. He is no armchair general. He never called men to go where He did not first go Himself.

This call is to death. When Jesus calls a man, He calls for him to come and to die. His words concerning a cross had no implications of salvation to the ears of the disciples that day. To them, a cross was simply the instrument of execution. It was like saying, "He who wishes to follow Me must bring his own hangman's noose."

The only way to save your life is to lose it for the sake of Jesus and for the sake of His message. Does this mean that only martyrs are saved? In a sense, it does. It does not mean that you must be nailed to a literal cross. But it DOES mean that you must be willing to renounce all that was your former life to become all that God has called you to be. You recognize the truth of your fallen condition in your sinful depravity and you are not ashamed of the Gospel that has brought you to that place.

This is not talking about a moral conversion and now living by restrictions that will make you a better person in God's eyes. That is a man made salvation of works.

"8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." Ephesians 2:8-10, NAS95.

There is a corollary here that deals with physical death. I haven't died yet, so I can't speak from experience, but I think that there is a truth here. The level of difficulty in dying is inversely proportional to how much you have already died.

Are you still trying to hold on to your life? There is a natural human tendency to do so. True disciples are called to give it up. And gives us HIS life in return.

The disciple's cross is directly related to the cross of Christ. The rejection and suffering of Christ's followers is the consequence of their following Him. It is for choosing to follow Christ that His followers will have a cross to bear.

Jesus said to His disciples, "They hated Me; they will also hate you. They crucified Me; they will also seek to crucify you."

"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:18-20a).

There is a direct correlation between the reception that one accords to Jesus with the reception that one accords His people. If you love Jesus, then you will of necessity also love His people.

It is for this reason that Jesus tells us that the final judgment will be based upon how one treated the people of God.

But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; 36 naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me." Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You drink? 38 And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 39 And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?" And the King will answer and say to them, "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me." (Matthew 25:31-40).

When you first read this, it sounds as though Jesus is saying that salvation is obtained on the basis of your works. But that isn't the case. It isn't that you are saved by doing good works, but it is that the sign of your salvation will be seen in your

attitude toward God's people because of the truth that people who love Jesus also love people who love Jesus.

The disciple's cross entails more than just external persecution, and occasionally martyrdom — it entails death to self-will, self-interest, and self-seeking. In the words of Jesus, it involves denying self (Luke 9:23). The "way of the cross" is the way of death to our own interests. As Jesus set aside His glory and the prerogatives of deity in order to come to earth and "bear His cross," so the disciple of Christ are called to do likewise (Philippians 2:1-8).

The disciple's cross is taken up daily — it involves a way of looking at life and of living the life of Christ.

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20).

And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Galatians 5:24).

Notice the past and the present of this crucifixion. The two tenses are seen in these two verses:

Galatians 2:20 Galatians 5:24

We have been crucified with Christ - Our freedom from condemnation of the law

We crucify our old nature - Our freedom from the power of the flesh

One is Passive. One is Active

The one is based on the other. Our attitude toward our life today is based upon how we have seen our death in Christ in the past. Don't miss this! The "juice" to live the Christian life is not based upon what you feel that you ought to do. It is not based upon your sense of obligation or even solely upon your love. It is based upon your IDENTITY

in Christ and what comes from that by the transforming work of the holy Spirit and by identifying with what is being done as we see it revealed in the Word of God. It is based upon the cross and what was accomplished and applied and fulfilled there and in the fulfilling work that is still going on in our lives during the transforming process that ends in the consummation.

What did His contemporaries say?

In Jn.6:42- Jesus is called the Son of Mary & Joseph, but let's look at the context.

It is a fact, no one denies it but saying this regarding Jesus is meant to be an insult, to demean him because of what he has said in this passage:

"41 Therefore the Jews were grumbling about Him, because He said, 'I am the bread that came down out of heaven.' 42 They were saying, 'Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, 'I have come down out of heaven?'" 43 Jesus answered and said to them, "Do not grumble among yourselves." John 6:41-43, NAS95.

Discussions about the bread of life.

The people were baffled how Jesus had reached the other side of the lake (25), and their question shows the purely human level on which they were thinking. Jesus' answer to their question goes deeper. He pointed out their failure to realize the significance of the signs; they saw only food, not the real meaning of Jesus' act. They were convinced of their ability to meet what was required, but Jesus had to remind them that eternal life is a gift. The seal is God's mark of authentication. Whoever holds the seal acts on God's behalf. Hence the importance of Jesus as God's agent, who is here called the Son of Man, a title which draws attention to his humanity. The statement in v 27 must have seemed strange, for the people were seeking to avoid labor, but in these words Jesus was graciously declining their quest for merely physical food. Clearly v 28 implies that they thought in terms of working to earn merit, but Jesus at once reminded them of the need for faith, not works.

The question in v 30 reveals the shallowness of their thought, for what further

sign did they expect than the feeding of a multitude from negligible supplies? The reference to the manna in the desert (31) provides the clue to the working of their minds. They were probably thinking this provision was superior to that which Jesus had provided because of the sheer quantity of it. Their concept of sign seems to have been limited to a reproduction of the desert experience of the Israelites. This was tantamount to expecting that the Messiah must out do Moses to impress them. The reference to bread from heaven is most likely a quote from Ps. 78:24, although there are other parallels. Jesus took up the theme (32), first denying that Moses provided the heavenly bread and then identifying the bread with himself. As compared with the manna, which was limited to the Israelites and for a prescribed time, Jesus as the bread continually gives life to the world (33). But v 34 shows that the hearers could not rise above the level of material provision. In the next section Jesus affirmed his claim to be the true bread.

V 35 records the first of the great 'I am' sayings of Jesus, and the following verses (35-51) are an expanded commentary on it. It is a direct response to the people's demand for bread, for it was necessary for them to understand that Jesus was speaking of spiritual not physical food. The meaning of the phrase bread of life is bread which gives life, but such bread is available only to those who believe in Jesus, a condition which the hearers had not fulfilled (36). If Jesus' mission depended on the faith of the people, does this suggest a failure? V 37 gives the answer. The final result is in the Father's hands. Whoever comes shows an emphasis on the individual response. The emphatic negative statement I will never drive away is to be understood as an assurance that Jesus will preserve them. There is no possibility of any disagreement between the Father and the Son, as vs 38-39 show. What the Father gives the Son will receive—I shall lose none. Note that the all in v 39 is neuter (as in v 37) and sums up everything given by the Father to the Son. The two references to the last day (40) show that Jesus was thinking ahead to the end of the age, when all will be consummated.

At this point in the discussion Jewish objections came to the fore. The sticking point was the bread that came down from heaven (41). They could not reconcile this with their knowledge of Jesus' humble origins (42). Jesus rebuked their grumbling rather than answered their objection (43), although when he pointed out the necessity for the Father to take the initiative, he was virtually telling them that they were out of step with the Father (44). They needed a spiritual revelation to understand Jesus' words. This was further underlined by an appeal to the prophets (45). The passage quoted is Is. 54:13, which describes the triumph of the Servant in his kingdom. It endorses the view that the initiative is with God. Yet God's revelation comes only through Jesus, since he alone has seen God (46). The need for faith is again stressed. V 47 echoes the language of 3:15. "15 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life." John 3:15, NAS95.

Jesus contrasts the new and old manna in good midrashic style, like a good Jewish expositor.

1. it is exegesis
2. it starts with Scripture
3. it ends in community.

The next Jesus passage concerning who men say I am that we will consider is Luke 4:22 where Jesus is called Joseph's son -who speaks truth (yet they wanted to kill Him)

"15 And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all. 16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. 17 And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, 18 "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, 19 TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD." 20 And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. 21 And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." 22 And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this

not Joseph's son?" 23 And He said to them, "No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.'" 24 And He said, "Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown. 25 "But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; 26 and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 "And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." 28 And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; 29 and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. 30 But passing through their midst, He went His way." Luke 4:15-30, NAS95.

Initial amazement turned to hostility, as the audience took exception to one of their own number (known locally as Joseph's son; but see Mk. 6:3) making such impressive claims for himself. They wanted some visible proof of the validity of his claims before their own eyes, like the mighty works which he was rumored to have done at Capernaum. In any event, they failed to recognize Jesus as a prophet, and he could only tell them that when the prophets of Israel had been faced with similar disbelief they had performed their mighty works outside Israel (1 Ki. 17:8-16; 2 Ki. 5:1-14).

"8 Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 9 "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there; behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you." 10 So he arose and went to Zarephath, and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks; and he called to her and said, "Please get me a little water in a jar, that I may drink." 11 As she was going to get *it*, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand." 12 But she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar; and behold, I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son, that we may eat it and die." 13 Then Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go, do as you have said, but make me a little bread cake from it first and bring *it* out to me, and afterward you may make *one* for yourself and for your son. 14 "For thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar of oil be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain on the face of the earth.'" 15 So she went and did according to the word of Elijah, and she and he and her household ate for *many* days. 16 The bowl of flour was not exhausted nor did the jar of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke through Elijah." 1 Kings 17:8-16, NAS95.

"1 Now Naaman, captain of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man with his master, and highly respected, because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram. The man was also a valiant warrior, *but he was* a leper. 2 Now the Arameans had gone out in bands and had taken captive a little girl from the land of Israel; and she waited on

Naaman's wife. 3 She said to her mistress, "I wish that my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! Then he would cure him of his leprosy." 4 Naaman went in and told his master, saying, "Thus and thus spoke the girl who is from the land of Israel." 5 Then the king of Aram said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." He departed and took with him ten talents of silver and six thousand *shekels* of gold and ten changes of clothes. 6 He brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, "And now as this letter comes to you, behold, I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may cure him of his leprosy." 7 When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man is sending *word* to me to cure a man of his leprosy? But consider now, and see how he is seeking a quarrel against me." 8 It happened when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent *word* to the king, saying, "Why have you torn your clothes? Now let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." 9 So Naaman came with his horses and his chariots and stood at the doorway of the house of Elisha. 10 Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you and *you will* be clean." 11 But Naaman was furious and went away and said, "Behold, I thought, 'He will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper.' 12 'Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?'" So he turned and went away in a rage. 13 Then his servants came near and spoke to him and said, "My father, had the prophet told you *to do some* great thing, would you not have done *it*? How much more *then*, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean?'" 14 So he went down and dipped *himself* seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was clean." 2 Kings 5:1-14, NAS95.

So it was a word of judgment that Jesus in effect spoke against them. There was also the suggestion that the gospel would ultimately go to the Gentiles (although Jesus himself continued to work among the Jews). In their anger the people tried to lynch him.