

Drowned In the Depth of the Sea

Matthew 18: 1 – 35

=====

~ The first lesson in this section of Scripture and from this report from our Spiritual Safari is an objective lesson Jesus gave when He placed a child in the middle of His sermon. The first parable is of the Kingdom of Heaven today. We will also see a lost sheep in this chapter which provides a new pattern of conduct in our churches. Then, Jesus will proclaim a new proviso for forgiveness in the second parable. We haven't been moving much – so it seems – in our movement through Matthew – towards Jerusalem – with Jesus – so the religious rulers can crucify Him. In fact, it seems as if we're going nowhere right now. I think we should be thankful for that. You are going to discover these parables are the only light you'll have in some of the darkest days in our Bible journey; specifically regarding the digression of rejection of the King! You'll want to pay close attention.

Matthew chapter thirteen gave us an outline of the Kingdom of Heaven in this modern age. That was the Mystery Parable discourse. If you have not read our reports from that chapter then I can only suggest you go back and do so now. I do not know about you, but I still have plenty of questions. We certainly have not worked out all the mysteries in the so-called Mystery Parables. I cannot address everyone in every single aspect of every detail as we go along; or we would become bogged down and risk slipping beneath some spiritual quicksand. I can only try to bring out the bottom line of Scripture as it is revealed to me by the Spirit of God. Further, the Bible has all the answers and, friends – we have a LONG way to go in this so-called safari! The new birth – being born again – is essential if we are to enter the Kingdom. So, let's begin this leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God with that thought renewing our mind....

1 At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

~ Every time Jesus attempts to teach them about going to Jerusalem to die, they always ask this question. I detect just a trace of personal ambition in

the disciples at this time. They ALL wanted to know the answer to this question, to be sure! Of course, it could just be my critical and convicted mind, too, right? - Maybe don't answer that question. You won't need to because I see it there. I feel these men had been talking it over and certain ones had come to the conclusion that THEY might reasonably be the ones to be considered the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven....

2 So, Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

~ This tells us that a little child came to Jesus without hesitation. The little ones wanted to come to Jesus; and He had to tell His disciples, "suffer the little ones to come unto me and forbid them not." The problem is never getting children to come to Jesus; the problem is ALWAYS stopping the older crowd from hindering the children from getting to Him! This is a beautiful picture we have in this parable; one that we just had to stop and look at....

3 And Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

~ This poor verse may well be the most abused and misunderstood that we will come across. Most misapplications turn this into reversion and not conversion. They think this means we are to revert back to our childhood in some unusual and unhealthy fashion. I'm afraid these people who think that are always very juvenile in their actions. Many of the saints today act just like spoiled children. No, friends. This does not speak of going back to a former childhood. This happens to speak of moving forward and onward to a new life. The Lord Jesus here gives logic to the apostles thinking as He diverts their attention from holding an exalted place in the Kingdom to the matter of primary importance, which is: being able to even get into the Kingdom in the first place. Oh, yes, this is radical alright; it's also the same thing the Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus that night. Jesus said, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; but that which is born of the Spirit is of the Spirit." Friends, if we aren't born again we won't be in the Kingdom of Heaven. The important thing here is that we must be born again; and when we are born again, we start out as a spiritual baby.

Too many Christians today like to be active in the church - and they like to get out and do things. That would be okay, except they almost never ask the Holy Spirit to guide them in their endeavor – so, it fails. Many of them like to give their testimony – but it never seems to be about Christ. It’s always about them. Well, a self-testimony is worthless, my beloved. This is about Him – not you. It honestly shocks me to see the number of people compelled to give their self-testimony. The apostles are asking who the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven is going to be – and I’m sure they could have all told Jesus why they should be the first. Everyone wants to be prominent in the Kingdom of Heaven. This age we live in is a completely lopsided curriculum of church activity, getting people involved in this and that – and there is nothing wrong with any of those things – as long as we know the Bible properly, completely and correctly FIRST! When we know the Bible that way we’ll discover that the so called Christian life is about servitude – not being a religious superstar. If it is otherwise in your life, then it is merely a racket or a self-deception.

Today, there is no time – NONE – taken for a competent, educated, sincere, systematic, daily, Spirit-filled and Spirit-led Bible study in the life of the average believer. Modern technology is simultaneously destroying the attention span. Most people today cannot really grasp more than about three sentences at a time. As a result, new converts rush out willy-nilly and absolutely wreck the faith of just about everyone they come in contact with; and then they find theirs wrecked, too. They do this while thinking they are saving people by “....just saying what’s on their mind;” and that they’re “....not afraid to speak” for Jesus. Well, I wish a few more WOULD be afraid of saying the wrong thing....

4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

~ That's strong language from the Lord Jesus. He makes the evangelization of children a divine imperative! This type of ministry Jesus is talking about receives top priority in blessing, too, by the way. This safari certainly applauds all who work to bring children to the Lord today. There is nothing more important. Dwight L Moody went Home one night and was asked, "...how many converts did you have tonight?" DL Moody said, "I had two and a half converts." They asked, "...oh, two adults and a child?" and Moody said, "...oh, no, I had two children and one adult. The old man didn't even really have half his life to give anyways!" Adults are only a half a convert – the little ones are one hundred-fold.

See, the entrance gate to the Kingdom is infinitely more important than our position of prominence within the Kingdom; but when we place the proper emphasis on the entrance to the Kingdom – which is being born again – then you will discover that THAT son is the greatest in the Kingdom. That should be a truly amazing statement to you. I don't know why the children just aren't emphasized anymore at all. Maybe they never really were? A pastor said many, many years ago as he was turning in his resignation to his church; he said to the elders who asked why, "...I have only had one convert this year and that was little Bobby." Well, little Bobby Moffat was the one that opened Africa to missionary work. That one convert was the most important one in the entire career of that discouraged pastor. Everything we are examining now came from one little question the apostles asked....

7 Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

8 Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.

9 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

10 Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

~ I just can't think of anything more frightening than what Jesus said at verse eight; but verse ten, strangely, is the primary verse where most people get their beliefs in a "guardian angel." Now, we MAY have a guardian angel – don't misunderstand me – I don't know whether we do or not – because the Bible doesn't tell us; but, if I have one, he can't keep up with me. In fact, I likely ditched him a long time ago. So, actually – I doubt it. Either way, I am sure this passage doesn't have anything to do with a guardian angel! The word for angel here is "spirit" in the Greek.

Jesus is saying that in Heaven there are spirits that do always behold the face of the Father. This is a warning not to offend any little ones. If you have lost a little child to death then the spirit of that little child went immediately to be with God in Heaven. Now, they are still little sinners, but Jesus is saying, "I died for them." If you get in the way of a child coming to God you will experience the worst torment that Satan has in His torture chamber, friend. Still unsure? King David was sure about his dead little child. David didn't see the use in mourning because that child wasn't coming back. David knew that one day he was going to that little child, though! That baby was the product of his sin. This is such a precious truth and if you know anyone who has lost a child – this is the greatest comfort you can possibly know to give them....

11 For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

12 How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?

13 And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

14 Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

~ This is an interesting parable; and it's different from a similar parable in Luke. Here the meaning is about saving the lost – in Luke the meaning is about finding the lost. This is a new pattern of parable as it implies that Jesus will take care of them until the age of accountability; but, parents – it's also your responsibility until then to see to it they are taught the Word of God. Our school system is making Guinea Pigs of our children these days; and kids pay an awful price in the educational system at the hands of absolutely crack-pot godless men and woman. This world has a tremendous responsibility to both God and children set forth in this section of Scripture....

15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

~ This is the simplest form of church government in verse twenty. It has to start there – or it doesn't start. On the Day of Pentecost they broke bread and fellowshiped in His Name. If you gather and ask in His name – there He shall be in the midst of you! We also have a tremendous lesson and principle in forgiveness. Old Simon Peter thought he was really being magnanimous offering to forgive seven times, believe me! Two or three times is the maximum according to the Rabbi's. Peter was willing to go more than double the Rabbi's. Peter's generosity was parsimonious in comparison to the estimation Jesus sets forth. Jesus says to forgive four hundred and ninety times. Well, I think Jesus is saying that things would be all worked out after that much forgiveness....

23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

29 And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

31 So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?

34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

~ Ten thousand talents would have been somewhere around fifty million dollars. It could never be repaid. That's a lot of money to forgive, friends – and I believe the Lord is purposely using a ridiculous illustration here. The hundred pence would be less than a hundred dollars. So, we're talking about a hundred bucks up against a family fortune. That brings another new principle for the church today; but this is not necessarily the basis of forgiveness for an individual believer. We are told to be kind and tender-hearted one towards another. We are to forgive each other even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us. If God forgave on the principles that most of us forgive on – well – none of us would ever be forgiven of anything. So, let's think about that as we leave off here and move into chapter nineteen in our next report ~

=====