

## Jesus Predicts His Death and Resurrection Yet Again

Matthew 20:17-19

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Matthew 20:17-19 is the third time that Jesus told His disciples about His upcoming death and resurrection. The first time He told His disciples this was when they were in Caesarea Philippi in Matthew 16:21, *“From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.”*

This is more of a description of what Jesus told His disciples, rather than a direct quotation of His words.

The second time that Jesus told His disciples about His upcoming death and resurrection was after He returned from the mountain where He was transfigured and joined back with the twelve disciples in Matthew 17:22-23, *“And while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, ‘The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day.’”* Placing these three predictions side-by-side will help to identify what is repeated and what is new revelation:

| Matthew 16:21   | Matthew 17:22-23  | Matthew 20:17-19   |
|---|---|--|
| <i>From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must <b>go to Jerusalem</b>, and suffer many things from the elders and <b>chief priests and scribes</b>, and <b>be killed</b>, and <b>be raised up on the third day</b>.</i> | <i>And while they were gathering together in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “<b>The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men; and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day.</b>”</i> | <i>As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and on the way He said to them, “Behold, we are <b>going up to Jerusalem</b>; and <b>the Son of Man will be delivered</b> to the <b>chief priests and scribes</b>, and <b>they will condemn Him to death</b>, and <b>will hand Him over</b> to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and <b>on the third day He will be raised up.</b>”</i> |

As we compare Matthew 20:17-19, we can see that most of these words have been previously revealed by Jesus to His disciples and to only His disciples. Yet Matthew 20 includes additional information about the death of Jesus and is longer than what was revealed before. There continues to be a progression of revelation that Jesus gives to His disciples.

However, the context is different in this case. In each of the synoptic Gospels, this prediction immediately follows Jesus' words to Peter about the reward for those who have left everything and followed Him (cf. Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34). Therefore, we can see that the basis for the reward of the believers, including inheritance of eternal life in the age to come, is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day.

Jesus' third prediction of His death and resurrection is placed before the request of the mother of James and John for preference in the kingdom of God. This desire that the sons of Zebedee sit as Jesus' right and left in the kingdom is found immediately following the third prediction by Jesus in both Matthew and Mark. Luke omits both the request and the indignation of the remaining ten disciples, moving on to the healing of the blind and the triumphal entry.

It then becomes evident that even though the disciples had repeatedly been told by Jesus of His death and resurrection, they do not fully understand and revert back to their interest in their future reward. Although he omits the account of the disciples argument about their reward, Luke notes in stark terms just how lacking the disciples were about what Jesus told them, *"But the disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said"* (Luke 18:34).

### **The setting of Jesus' revelation (20:17)**

Before Matthew recorded the words of Jesus' third prediction, he oriented the reader regarding Jesus' final destination, Jerusalem. *"As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and on the way said to them."* All three synoptics record that the destination was Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was the most populated city and the center of the religious and social life of the Jews. It was *"up"* in the sense of elevation, being nearly 2,500 feet above sea level. As they had to cross the Jordan River to get there, this would have been an ascent of well over 3,000 feet to get to Jerusalem. Yet they had a long way to go since Matthew 20:29 records them leaving Jericho, roughly 900 feet below sea level.

Mark and Luke also note that the Lord “took the twelve aside” (Mark 10:32; Luke 18:31), but Matthew makes this a point of emphasis by adding that He took them aside “by themselves.” These words were for the twelve disciples alone. This should not be taken lightly, for a large crowd had been following Him from the time He left Galilee and entered Judea (Matthew 19:1-2).

Mark 10:32 gives more a description about the setting by writing “*They were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful. And again He took the twelve aside.*” This gives a fuller picture of the determination of Jesus to fulfill His mission. He would be the one crucified, and yet He was walking ahead of them all, with those following being fearful. This bold determination by Jesus was probably why the disciples were amazed, especially in light of the earlier times when He had told them about the destiny that would await Him in Jerusalem.

### **The statement of Jesus’ revelation (20:18-19)**

| Matthew 20:17-19  | Mark 10:32-34   | Luke 18:31-33  |
|---|---|--|
| As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and on the way He said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and will hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify Him, and on the third day He will be raised up.” | <i>They were on the road <b>going up to Jerusalem</b>, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful. And again <b>He took the twelve aside</b> and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him, saying, “<b>Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again.</b>”</i> | <i>Then <b>He took the twelve aside</b> and said to them, “<b>Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again.</b>”</i> |

As we can see with the comparison of Matthew 20:17-19 to what Mark and Luke record, each Gospel writer adds slightly more detail to inform us of what Jesus told His disciples. But they also overlap greatly in their report. They all describe Jesus as taking His disciples aside and telling them the following:

1. Where they are going: Up to Jerusalem
2. Who He was: The Son of Man
3. His arrest: He will be handed over
4. The antagonists: The Gentiles
5. The insults: The mocking
6. The suffering: The scourging/flogging
7. The resurrection: He will be raised up on the third day

Matthew and Mark note that Jesus said He will be handed over to both the Gentiles and to the chief priests and scribes. Only Luke omits the involvement of the Jews in the arrest of Jesus and only includes the Gentiles. This omission by Luke is likely due to the Gentile recipients of his Gospel.

Matthew and Mark also include the trial of Jesus by the Jews, “*they will condemn Him to death,*” before they hand Him over to the Gentiles. Luke passes over this prediction of the Jewish trials for his Gentile audience. The chief priests conducted the Jewish trial (Matthew 26:57-66) and the scribes were participants in the accusations against Christ (26:57).

Unlike Mark and Luke, Matthew’s Gospel includes that prediction of death by crucifixion. This is the first time that crucifixion is specifically mentioned in the Gospel accounts. Thus Jesus’ prediction separates the trial of Jesus by the Jews that will condemn Him to death from the act of execution that will be done by the Gentiles.

This mention of crucifixion explains in part the role of the Gentiles in the death of Jesus, since crucifixion was a Roman method of execution, not a Jewish one. In fact, the Romans prohibited the Jews from performing executions within their jurisdiction. Furthermore, as a form of torture, crucifixion was considered to be against the Jewish legal statutes. While the Jews instigated the death of Jesus, it was the Gentiles who had to be involved in order for Jesus to be put to death.

It is noteworthy that Jesus does not reveal how He will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes. The revelation of His betrayal that will be done by one of His disciples will occur during the last supper in the upper room (Matthew 26:21-25). No disciple would think this was possible at this point.

There is an emphasis by Jesus in this third prediction of His death on His suffering. In addition to the introduction of His crucifixion, which would result in grave suffering, Matthew includes *“mock and scourge.”* Furthermore, Mark and Luke’s Gospel accounts add that He would be spit upon while Luke’s includes the general summary of His mistreatment.

Jesus was both mocked and spat upon at the conclusion of His Jewish trial, *“Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him, and said, ‘Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?’”* (Matthew 26:67-68). However, this is not the mocking that Jesus predicted. The mocking referenced by Matthew 20:19 takes place after He is handed over to the Gentiles.

The primary fulfillment of this prediction is seen during the trial before Pilate, where Jesus was mocked at the conclusion, where Pilate, *“after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.”* (Matthew 27:26). He then was taken by the soldiers to be mocked. *“Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him. They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ They spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head. After they had mocked Him, they took the scarlet robe off Him and put His own garments back on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.”* (Matthew 27:27-31).

Jesus was also mocked while He was on the cross, but most of this mocking was not done by the Gentiles but by the Jews, *“In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, ‘He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him’”* (Matthew 27:41-42). There were people passing by who were likely Jewish who hurled insults at Jesus (Matthew 27:39) and the robbers (also likely Jewish) who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him (Matthew 27:44).

Yet Luke records that the Roman soldiers also participated in the mocking of Jesus, *“The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, and saying, ‘If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!’”* (Luke 23:36-37). This then would be a secondary fulfillment of the prediction of Jesus being mocked by the Gentiles. The reason it is the secondary fulfillment of the prediction by Jesus was because the Gospels only record Him being spit upon by the soldiers after the Jewish trial. All of the predictions of mocking, mistreatment, flogging, and being spat upon occurred by the soldiers after the Jewish trial.

As we consider the mistreatment of Jesus in the passion narratives, it is apparent that there is both a physical suffering and a relational/emotional suffering. The physical suffering can be seen in the scourging (flogging in the ESV) and in the crucifixion. But Jesus' suffering was in many other ways as well. Much of Christian teaching about the crucifixion centers around the degree of physical suffering that Christ endured. But the Gospels do not emphasize this, but rather simply state, "*And they crucified Him*" (Mark 15:24).

This is also true of the scourging of Jesus. The Gospels simply state this without development, "*after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified*" (Matthew 27:26). Josephus, in his work of the first century, *Jewish Wars*, informs us that scourging was a part of the typical crucifixion.

The reason that the emphasis of the Gospels is not the crucifixion itself is because crucifixion was not uncommon. The soldiers also "*crucified two robbers with Him*" (Mark 15:27). But only Jesus, the Son of Man, was mistreated in the other ways. No other person could have experienced the same mistreatment in the mocking because no one else was God's Son. This is why the Gospels devote much of the narrative to the mocking of Jesus.

Even the physical suffering of Jesus can be more clearly seen in the context of the massive disrespect that He endured. By writing "*At that time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left*" (Matthew 27:38), Matthew is recognizing that Jesus was "*was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors*" (Isaiah 53:12). Mark makes this exact connection in Mark 15:28, "*And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And He was numbered with transgressors.'*"

Treating Jesus as a criminal, when in reality He is the Son of the Living God, is the highest contempt possible. This corresponds to the detailed description of the mocking of Jesus that is found in every Gospel account. This is why the author of Hebrews described this suffering as shame, "*who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame*" (Hebrews 12:2).

Jesus was abandoned by His disciples (Matthew 26:56), put on trial based on false witnesses (Matthew 26:57-61), had His own people demand a notorious prisoner be released instead of Him (Matthew 27:15-26), was mocked by the soldiers (Matthew 27:27-31), scorned by those passing by the cross (Matthew 27:39), mocked by the chief priests, scribes and elders (Matthew 27:41-42), insulted by the robbers who were crucified with Him (Matthew 27:44), and was ultimately forsaken by the Father for becoming sin on our behalf (Matthew 27:46; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Therefore, the great travesty was not only what happened to Jesus, but who it was that had these things done to Him. But this was not the end of Jesus' prediction, for each of the three Gospel writers record that Jesus said *"on the third day He will be raised up."* The resurrection of Christ will become the central focus of the proclamation of the apostles upon the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The fact that Jesus rose on the third day became part of the proclamation of the gospel. Peter proclaimed, *"We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible"* (Acts 10:39-40). Also, Paul wrote, *"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures"* (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). It is also included in the earliest creeds of the church, such as the Apostles' Creed (120-250 AD) and the Creed of Nicaea (325 AD).

## **Conclusion**

The death of Christ for our sins, and being risen on the third day is central to the Christian faith. While the disciples would continue to gloss over the significance of Jesus' prediction of His death and resurrection, we must give this the emphasis the Scriptures demand. Without His sacrifice for our sin, and His conquering of death on our behalf, we would remain forever dead in our sin.

Jesus' ability to predict the details of His own death and resurrection serve to build the confidence that we have in all His words. Jesus' promise of future reward for those who have left everything to follow Him is just as reliable as His prediction of His death and resurrection. Our confidence to trust our Lord for His promises should be as great as our belief in the death and resurrection of Christ itself.