

# First Among Servants

Compiled by Paul R. Blake from Bible Matters Sources

## Introduction:

- A. A paradox is a statement that on the surface may seem absurd or contrary to conventional wisdom, but is actually a profound expression of truth.
  - 1. John Clark - "A paradox is truth standing on its head to get attention."
  - 2. Matt. 20:20-28 is a paradox
  - 3. Read and exegete

## I. "Whoever Desires To Become Great Among You, Let Him Be Your Servant"

- A. Matt. 20:25-26 - Conventional wisdom
  - 1. The great ought to be those with the best pedigree, education, capabilities, etc.
  - 2. The servant appears to lack these qualities
  - 3. In worldly terms, one would not want a servant ruling - Prov. 30:21-22
- B. In the spiritual realm, the servant has the essential qualities of leadership
  - 1. Every Christian is subject to the Lord; therefore, even if they reach the peak of authority, they still are servants
  - 2. Concern for pleasing the master is characteristic of the servant that makes him the best kind of leader
- C. Qualities of the servant
  - 1. Matt. 24:45-51 - the contrast between the wise and foolish servants
  - 2. Matt. 25:14-30 - servants and talents; the good servants take the Master's goods and increase them; the unprofitable servant does nothing with the Master's goods
  - 3. Luke 17:7-10 - Servants do not think that they deserve the good life for doing their job; they consider themselves unworthy, doing only that which was their duty
- D. The greatest in the kingdom
  - 1. Is always attentive to his Master's will even when He is not around
  - 2. Is always working for the Master's benefit
  - 3. Does not consider himself to be anything

## II. "Whoever Would Be First Among You Must Be His Slave"

- A. Matt. 20:27 - Stronger language
  - 1. Servant is diakonos, one who serves another by choice
  - 2. Slave is doulos, one who is lowest on the social scale of humans
  - 3. A servant had the freedom to choose to serve a certain person; a slave did not have that freedom, and his life was at the mercy of the master
- B. The idea that one would willingly become a slave is incomprehensible in worldly terms, but in spiritual terms it is necessary
  - 1. Phil. 2:3-4 - We choose to serve others at our own expense
  - 2. Rom. 6:16-23 - We choose to serve the Lord and righteousness
  - 3. 1Cor. 7:22-23, 6:19-20

### III. "Even As The Son Of Man Came Not To Be Served But To Serve"

- A. Matt. 20:28 - A fitting paradoxical statement
  - 1. 1Cor. 11:1 - We are to imitate Christ, as He is the ultimate servant
  - 2. Phil. 2:5-11 - Jesus' great humiliation led to His great exaltation
  - 3. John 13:3-16 - Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, work reserved for the most menial of slaves
- B. Contrast this with what the Jews expected of the Messiah - Matt. 20:25-26
  - 1. 1Sam. 8:5
  - 2. The Messiah was to overthrow any power oppressing Israel and would rule the world from Jerusalem and would be the ultimate king
  - 3. Ancient kings did not act as servant to anyone, and did not even serve themselves
  - 4. Everything was done for them
- C. Humility, meekness, compassion -- often run contrary to the exercise of authority
  - 1. Whether at the individual or national level, any sign of humility, apology, or meekness would be understood as weakness and vulnerability
- D. Jesus came to rule over a spiritual kingdom - John 6:15, 18:36
  - 1. Jesus did overthrow the spiritual powers of darkness
  - 2. He is the ultimate king, and He became so by serving others to death

#### Conclusion:

- A. Matt. 11:28-30
- B. The greatest rulers of men depend on power to rule ineffectively, which ironically makes them arrogant
- C. The greatest in the kingdom of heaven depend upon service to lead extraordinarily, which paradoxically makes them humble