

Matthew 10:24-25

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/matt/matt-10/matthew-1024-25/>

Jesus informs His disciples that they will not be greater than Him, but they can be like Him. This likeness (and their greatness) will come through sharing with Him in the suffering. Jesus forecasts that they will be mistreated for following Him, even as He has been mistreated.

The parallel gospel accounts of this teaching are found in Luke 6:40 and John 13:16.

Jesus tells His disciples through two simple examples that they are *not* (and will never be) greater than Him. The first example is *a disciple is not above his teacher*. The second example follows the same pattern as the first: *nor a slave above his master*. In both analogies, Jesus is the superior, the *teacher* and the *master*, and His disciples are in the subordinate position of a *disciple* (learner) and a *slave*.

When Jesus teaches this to His disciples, He says that they will *not be above* Him. The preposition, *above*, refers to greatness, power, authority, glory, honor, fame, etc. *A slave* or servant *is not* as highly regarded or well treated as *his master*. Likewise, *a disciple is not above his teacher* in respect to authority or honor. The *master is above* (greater than) *his slave*. The *teacher is above* (greater than) *his disciple*.

The disciples want to be great (Matthew 18:1, Mark 9:33-36, Luke 9:46-48, 22:24-30). Jesus wants them to be great. The disciples are willing to do whatever it takes (including die) to become great. And their zealous ambition to be great is likely one of the main reasons Jesus chose these twelve men to be His disciples. But Jesus *is* and always will be *above* His disciples in greatness. These passages make clear that Jesus is above all that is and will be, in heaven and on earth.

“For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9-11)

“And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying,

‘To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.’”

(Revelation 5:13)

Jesus *is* and forever will be *above* His disciples in rank. But they too can share in His greatness and participate in His glory. *It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master.* Jesus is telling the twelve that they have a real opportunity to become great *like their teacher and master.* But this opportunity will come with a price. Biblical greatness is always achieved by one of two ways (and often both at once).

The two paths to greatness are serving as Jesus served (Matthew 20:26-28) and suffering with the Lord, as the Lord suffered (Romans 8:17b).

Jesus teaches, “But the greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matthew 23:11). Greatness in God’s kingdom is not achieved through power grabs or exalting oneself. It is achieved through sacrificially using one’s talents and resources to meet the needs of others. It is achieved through an attitude and actions of love. It is setting aside one’s own wants and desires for the good of others: “Whoever humbles himself as a servant will be exalted” (Matthew 23:12).

The path to greatness through serving is opposite from the world’s way. The world seeks to exalt itself and exert its authority on others. It demands rather than serves. It takes rather than gives. It is selfish rather than loving. It is proud rather than humble. But no matter how much worldly greatness one manages to attain, it will all disappear: “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled” (Matthew 23:12).

Jesus also teaches that greatness comes through suffering with Him.

“The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.” (Romans 8:16-18)

Note in this passage from Romans that being a child of God, and having God as our heir is an unconditional reality. This is because being born again is a free gift of God for all who believe (John 3:14-16; Romans 5:15-16). However, being a fellow heir with Christ, receiving the reward of being exalted to reign over the earth with Him, is conditioned on suffering the same sufferings as Jesus. Jesus explicitly exhorts His servants to overcome the temptations of the world’s way, even as He overcame, and promises that He will reward those who suffer as He suffered by sharing the throne with which He was rewarded for His faithful obedience (Revelation 3:21).

Jesus was a suffering servant, as Isaiah prophesied

“He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;

Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.

But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.

All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.”

(Isaiah 53:3-6)

He laid down His life. He obeyed God to the point of death, even death on a cross. It is worth pointing out that the glory Christ received in both of the Philippians and Revelation passages quoted above come after He first endured suffering. They are Christ’s reward for obedient sufferings (Philippians 2:5-11; Revelation 5:12-13). God exalts and honors those who stand with Him as they suffer for His sake (Acts 7:55-60). As Jesus is about to tell His disciples, if we confess Him (through the testimony of our serving and suffering with Him) then He will confess us (Matthew 10:32-33). Paul writes that we will share in Christ’s glory “if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him” (Romans 8:17).

Just as the world and its kingdoms say the opposite about glory when it comes to serving and being served, so too it does in regard to suffering. The world seeks to avoid pain, especially the pain that comes from shame or rejection.

Both the suffering and serving paths to greatness require faith (Hebrews 11:6). Jesus affirmed both paths when He spoke to the disciples after washing their feet in the upper room.

“For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

You are those who have stood by Me in My trials; and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Luke 22:27-30)

We see Jesus by example and words demonstrate that serving leads to greatness. And we also hear him say to His disciples because they have stood by Him in His trials, they will be granted access and authority (greatness) in His kingdom.

Notice how Jesus uses a similar analogy in Luke 22:27-30. The one who reclines at the table is greater than the one who serves, just as *a disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master.*

Christ communicates that His disciples have the opportunity to share in His greatness through His statement: *It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master.* He is highlighting the path of suffering they will take.

As the Son of Man will receive little honor and much hatred, shame and rejection from the men of earth, so will the Son of Man's disciples. *If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!* *Beelzebul* is a name for the devil. It is derived from the Hebrew word "Baal-zebub" which means "lord of the flies." The Pharisees have already begun to claim that Jesus is performing His miracles through the power of Satan: "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons" (Matthew 9:34). In Mark's gospel account, the Pharisees first began to use the term *Beelzebul* to misbrand Jesus soon after He selected the twelve (Mark 3:22). Christ's enemies will continue to do so (Matthew 11:24; Luke 11:15) Jesus promises the disciples that they will say the same of them as they identify with Christ.

He will remind them of this truth again on the night He is betrayed.

"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 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, because of this the world hates you. 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; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also."
(John 15:18-20)

But He also promises that we are never alone and that if we suffer and serve with Him we will be exalted with Him in His kingdom.

The scripture makes clear that Jesus' suffering was real. At Gethsemane, His agony caused Him to sweat large drops of sweat, like drops of blood. He was pictured as an olive being crushed in an olive press; Gethsemane is Hebrew for "olive press" (Luke 22:39-44). It also makes clear that He felt the shame and rejection. However, Hebrews 12 also makes clear that Jesus chose to give the rejection no value, to ignore it, because there was no comparison of the pain that comes from rejection of the world when compared with the glory of being rewarded with all authority over heaven and earth due to faithfully serving the Father. Hebrews says His glorious reward is sitting down at the right hand of His Father not only as God, but also as a human (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Biblical Text

A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!