

When Jesus Asks A Question

These few questions from the Lord Jesus to His disciples and the group who followed Him are surely amongst the most important and significant questions ever posed to men and women. The Lord asks, “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” Again, He asks, “Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” What possible answer can we make?

What it means to lose our soul

Our soul is most precious. It is more precious than all the world because scripture tells us heaven and earth will pass away but our soul will not pass away. That is because souls are immortal and everlasting. To lose our soul is to be separated from God eternally, it is to be judged and damned to remain everlastingly in hell’s torments and misery. To lose our soul is to continually feel the biting worm of conscience that never dies, and the fierceness of the fire of God’s wrath, that never will be quenched. God save us from losing our soul!

A kingdom not of this world

In this passage our Lord is speaking to men and women who literally have followed Him from Galilee to the ‘the coasts of Caesarea Philippi’. But the Saviour knows He must begin to address their misconceptions concerning what it means to be a follower of Jesus. He directly confronts the wrong thinking of His disciples and others who harboured notions of the Messiah’s rule being a route to worldly gain. Yes, Jesus is the Christ, but His kingdom is not of this world, nor will His followers attain the fame, fortune and power of this world.

The Son of Man must suffer and be killed

Contrary to the disciples’ material thinking, to be a follower of the Lord Jesus involves denying oneself the world’s comforts. It is likened to taking up a cross, or suffering for one’s beliefs and convictions. Following the Lord Jesus is a spiritual experience not a political career or a lifestyle choice. The Lord was not marching at the head of an army to victory in Jerusalem but resolutely making His way to His own cross and the suffering and death of which He had just now spoken.

Ministers of the Gospel

Having taught the disciples who He was their lessons now turn to why He came and what it will mean for them and their lifelong work of apostolic service. Their role would be to spend their lives and give their lives, “for my sake and the gospel’s”. But in no way would they be losers. Whatever aspirations of worldly gain the disciples may have had, nothing in this world can compare with the glory of spiritual life. Eternal glory is a prize beyond price.

Ashamed of Jesus?

The Lord’s reference to being ashamed of Him and His words, or His gospel, shows it is the Lord Himself, His accomplishments, His message of faith in Him and salvation by Him that would distinguish the disciples’ ministry. The gospel is preaching “Jesus Christ, and him crucified”. It is glorying in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. What once was a symbol of shame and a curse would become the focus of hope with Christ Himself the object of faith for all those born again and heirs of eternal life.

For to me to live is Christ

Our Saviour described His age as “an adulterous and sinful generation”. Things have hardly improved since then. Yet the gospel of Jesus Christ remains the unique way of grace and peace for those who are called to trust and follow their Lord. All who truly follow Christ are content to leave their body, soul, and spirit together with their eternal wellbeing, in the safe-keeping of Him who rules His spiritual kingdom with righteousness and truth. And we will not swap Him for the world.

Amen