

A DISPUTE ALONG THE ROAD

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Mark 9:33-34 says that on the road to Capernaum, Christ's disciples "had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest." They were obviously ashamed of what they had argued about, because "they held their peace" when Jesus asked them about it. Of course, the Lord knew what they had been disputing among themselves. In Mark 9:35-37, Christ gave them the teachings that they needed to understand greatness in God's kingdom: "And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me" (Mark 9:35-37).

Receiving God's children

In the account of the apostles' dispute in Luke 9:47, Jesus perceived "the thought of their heart," which certainly included pride. Jesus tried to correct the problem by teaching them humility. In the house there in Capernaum (Mark 9:33), Jesus taught, "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all" (Mark 9:35). Jesus then took a child in his arms and said, "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receives me: and whosoever shall receive me, receives not me, but him that sent me" (Mark 9:37). In this context, receiving the little children refers to the children of God. Humility involves service and we must serve our brothers and sisters in Christ to be great in the kingdom of God. Jesus said, "Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister, and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:42-45). We will be judged according to whether or not we have served the brethren (Matt 25:31-46). What we do in service to our brethren is service to Christ. In the parallel passage of Matthew 18:1-4, when Jesus set the child in the midst of the apostles, he said, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Jesus also said on a later occasion, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein" (Mark 10:14-15). Children are very humble and, in general, are very quick to believe what they are taught and to do as they are told. We must receive the kingdom as a little child and humble ourselves like a little child in order to be great in the kingdom of heaven. It is important for us to realize that Jesus did not tell the apostles that no one will be greatest in the kingdom of God. But he did correct their pride by teaching them to humbly believe,

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(continued)

obey, and serve.

Receiving Christ and the Father

Whatever Jesus did on earth was according to the commandments his Father gave him (John 14:31). Jesus' meat was "to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34). Jesus could of his own self do nothing, "because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30). Jesus said, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38). Jesus did nothing of himself, but only did what he saw the Father do (John 5:19-20). Again, Jesus did absolutely nothing of himself, but always those things that pleased the Father (John 8:28-29). On his last night on this earth, Jesus was able to say to his Father, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). Furthermore, Jesus did not just come to this earth on his own. Jesus was *sent* (Matt 15:24; 21:33-44; Mark 12:1-11; Luke 4:43; 20:9-18). And Jesus was not sent by just anyone. He was sent by the Father (Luke 4:18; 10:16; John 3:17,34; 4:34; 5:23-24,30,36-38; 6:29,38-40,44,57; 7:16,18,28-29,33; 8:16,18,26,29,42; 9:4; 10:36; 11:42; 12:44-45,49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:3,18,21,23,25; 20:21; Acts 3:26; Gal 4:4; 1 John 4:9-10,14). Jesus taught an important principle in John 13:16: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him." The sender is greater than the one he sends. Jesus applied this principle to his apostles, as he is certainly greater than the disciples whom he was sending out into the world. When Jesus sent forth the seventy to preach, he told them, "He that hears you hears me; and he that despises you despises me; and he that despises me despises him that sent me" (Luke 10:16). That is also why Jesus said in John 5:23 "that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honors not the Son honors not the Father which has sent him." Jesus said, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he has sent" (John 6:29). But to believe in the one sent is to believe in the sender since the sender is greater. That is why Jesus also said, "He that believes on me, believes not on me, but on him that sent me" (John 12:44), and, "If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me" (John 8:42). Since Jesus only did what the Father showed and told him to do, and since it was the Father who sent him, then what we do with Jesus is what we are doing with the Father, good or bad. And how we treat the Lord's children is how we are treating the Lord to whom they belong. In John 13:20, Christ said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receives whomsoever I send receives me; and he that receives me receives him that sent me." Therefore, to receive the Lord's children is to receive Christ which is also to receive the Father. That is why in Mark 9:37, Jesus said, "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receives me: and whosoever shall receive me, receives not me, but him that sent me" (see also Matt 10:40; Luke 9:48).