

*pleasures in order to be happy. The core of our sin is that we must have these pleasures or we will die.*

**15.** According to v. 25 why is it true that the only people who are truly Christ's followers are those who deny themselves and take up their cross and follow him? HINT: In the second half of the verse, why does a person lose his life?

*Jesus is simply stating a fact of life and applying it to himself. No one can enjoy the pleasures of two different things at the same time. You cannot enjoy the pleasure of watching the Olympics tonight and at the same time enjoy the pleasures of going out to dinner with your wife. The young man cannot enjoy the pleasures of being engaged to Sue while at the same time he enjoys the pleasures of being engaged to Cindy. Notice that the "losing of your life" is for the sake of Jesus. Just as an engaged person gladly "loses" the pleasures of dating other people because they are so taken up with the pleasures of being in the company of their beloved, so the follower of Jesus gladly gives up the lesser pleasures of sin and of this world for the joy of being in the company of Jesus. To be with Jesus is greater joy than the joy of what the world offers and so the Christian regularly loses his life here in order to get more of Jesus.*

**16.** According to v. 26, why is losing the pleasures of this world for the sake of Jesus better than pursuing your pleasure in this world?

*Verse 26 says it is because enjoying all the pleasures this world offers for 80 or 90 years is nothing compared to suffering forever in hell. Jesus is appealing to your love for yourself. He's like a good advertiser or a good financial adviser. He is laying out the cost/benefit analysis. He is seeking to awaken you to what is at stake. What will it be, 80 years of pleasure here and an eternity of torment when I die or dying to my demand to enjoy life here and an eternity of pleasure at God's right hand forever. Is a life of pursuing your happiness here, however you define it, worth the cost of your eternal life?*

**17.** According to v. 26, why should you take Jesus serious? What gives Jesus the right to make such absolute demands? Compare with 13:36-43 & 47-50.

*He is going to come again in the power and authority that belongs to him as the eternal Son of the Living God. He will send out his angels and they will gather up, out of his kingdom all who practice evil and who cause evil and he will cast them into the furnace of fire where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. In addition, he will reward all those who practice righteousness with the eternal pleasures that come from living with God forever.*

**18.** How can Jesus say that he will "reward each person according to what they have done" and Paul say, "For it is by grace that you have been saved through faith...not by works...?"

*Paul and Jesus are saying the same thing (This can be clearly seen if you read Eph. 2: 8-10). Faith is not simply assenting to the facts about Jesus. It is not simply saying I believe Jesus is the Son of God. I believe I am a sinner. I believe that Jesus died on the cross for sinners. Therefore, I believe I will be in heaven because Jesus died for my sins. Faith believes all these facts but also loves them. Faith believes that all that God promises to be for me in Jesus is better than all the pleasures of this world. You know that you believe this because you regularly deny yourself the pleasure of having your spouse apologize to you. You regularly kill your desire to be approved of by your peers by not joining in with their off colored jokes. You regularly lose your pleasure in owning new things by giving money away to the cause of Christ. We do this the same way we deny ourselves the pleasure of reading a book when we prefer the pleasure of watching the Olympics on TV. We do it because we believe it is more pleasurable to watch the Olympics. We deny ourselves, die to our desires, and lose our lives because we are so amazed at the love of God in Christ that died for our sins and rose to give us eternal life. We love Jesus and so love to do as Jesus commands.*

**19.** What are some ways you deny yourself and take up your cross in order to follow Jesus?

**True faith in the joyful, dying Christ always leads to a joyful, dying life what you love, trust and hope in, is revealed by the pleasure you pursue**

*In both cases Satan is trying to get Jesus to use his authority and power in ways not sanctioned by God. He is appealing to Jesus' knowledge that he is the Son of God and has a right to be worshipped and to rule, not to suffer. The Messiah should be obeyed. He should not die. He is tempting Jesus to assert God's rule over the world by coercive force rather than through suffering and death. "You're the Son of God. You shouldn't be treated like this. Assert yourself." In other words, Peter, by rebuking Jesus is seeking to cause Jesus to sin. He is an agent of temptation. Peter thinks he is defending God and promoting God's will but in fact he is urging Jesus to abandon the will of God and to pursue his own will, just like Satan in Matthew 4. Note that this is one of the "opportune times" mentioned in Matthew 4:11.*

**10.** What is going on in Peter? What does it mean for him to "set his mind on the things of man, not the things of God"? What things was his mind full of?

*The word that is translated "have in mind" is not merely intellectual understanding. Rather it refers to the things that a person values and thus thinks about. He loves the things of man and so this is what he thinks about and therefore this determines how he will behave. Peter was imagining how great it would be to live in a kingdom where he would never have to wonder about where the next meal was coming from. He imagined ordering Romans around. He imagined having the religious leaders bow when he entered a room. He was daydreaming about never having to return from a fishing trip empty-handed. He was thinking about how nice it would be to not have to be afraid of Roman soldiers entering your house in the middle of the night and carrying you or one of your children off to prison. He saw himself at the center of the coming kingdom, an indispensable member of Jesus' ruling council. Peter was thinking about God's kingdom in purely man-centered and earth bound ways.*

**11.** What was Peter' mind not full of?

*He was not thinking about what it meant that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God. If Peter really understood what he was confessing about Christ ought he not to have wondered at how marvelous it was that God became man? He wasn't filled with wonder and gratitude that he actually knew the Messiah and was one of his*

*companions. It seemed natural to him to be included among the companions of Jesus. It didn't shock him that Jesus, the Messiah, would choose to live with him. He didn't meditate on the ways of God in revealing the identity of Jesus to him. He thought of himself as better than others, not as God saw him, a sinner saved merely by God's grace. He wasn't thinking about building the church but about building his own portfolio. Rather than marveling at Jesus' description of what he "must" do, he was offended by his words and critical of Jesus for talking in this way. His heart should have been bursting with the joy of knowing Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the Living God.*

**12.** What is your mind full of? When your mind is in "neutral" what do you think about?

**True faith in the joyful, dying Christ always leads to a joyful, dying life because opposition to the dying Christ reveals a heart opposed to God.**

**13.** In v.24 what does Jesus say is true of every person who is his follower, i.e., every Christian?

*Every true Christian lives a life of denial and death as a result of following Jesus (or in order to follow Jesus).*

**14.** What must people deny or "die" to in order to be Christ's followers?

*First, we must deny ourselves the pleasure of boasting before God and man that we are, in ourselves acceptable to God. We must deny ourselves the pleasure of believing that we are good and God should be happy to accept us into heaven as we are. If you do not die to the pleasure of thinking of yourself as a valuable, good, important person, you do not belong to Christ.*

*But second, we must deny ourselves the pleasures that come from loving and being friends with this world. We must deny ourselves the pleasures of sin. What Peter shows by his rebuke of Jesus is that what he loves is the pleasures of fame and power and money. He does not love the pleasures of being with Jesus. What Jesus is saying is that the only way you can belong to him is to die to your need to have these*

4. Here's the million dollar question: How did Jesus endure this suffering and death? As a fully human person, how did he put up with all the injustices he suffered? How did he willingly "go to hell"?  
HINT: See Hebrews 12: 2.

*He did it by fixing his attention on the joy that was set before him. He did it because he wanted maximum, eternal joy, not the temporary joy of personal vengeance and vindication. He did it because he loved his Father and his people more than he loved the respect of his disciples and fair treatment by the authorities, more than he loved not being tortured. He wanted to enjoy the company and glory of his Father, not the satisfaction of being proven right before mere humans. Jesus suffered and died because he "believed" that all the good that would come from his suffering and death was infinitely more valuable than all the suffering he must endure to obtain it.*

**True faith in the joyful, dying Christ always leads to a joyful, dying life because Jesus suffered and died "for the joy set before him"**

5. How did Peter respond to Jesus' description of the suffering and death that awaited him in Jerusalem?

*After hearing Jesus talk about suffering and dying in Jerusalem, Peter, with the full agreement of the other disciples, takes him aside and rebukes him for talking like this.*

6. When do you "rebuke" people? What does this tell us about Peter (and the disciples)?

*We only rebuke people when what they have said is highly offensive or completely in error. We rebuke people for saying and acting in ways that either harm us, others or themselves. We rebuke people only when we are absolutely sure they are wrong and we are right. Peter is sure that Jesus is wrong and is sure that what he is saying will either bring harm to himself and others or is offensive to Peter and God.*

7. What things cause Peter to be so bold as to rebuke Jesus? Why does he do this? What gives him the certainty that he is right and Jesus is wrong?

*There are several motives at work here. First, Peter, rather than being humbled by Jesus' pronouncement that the Father revealed his identity to him is proud. He presumes that the Father revealed this truth because of something in him rather than because of the Father's own pleasure and will. He does not understand grace. He believes God does good to people who are good. So naturally, he presumes that whatever he thinks must be what God thinks.*

*Second, Peter and the disciples, due to a selective and willfully blind reading of the OT, are certain that the Messiah will bring in God's kingdom on earth by force. They have confessed that Jesus is the Messiah and Jesus has agreed with their confession. Therefore, Jesus must go to Jerusalem as the conquering king, using his miracle working power, with the Jewish masses following him to throw out the Roman oppressors and the corrupt Jewish leaders. The Messiah must conquer, not be conquered. Jesus clearly does not understand the OT or God's will. Peter is subtly accusing Jesus of sinning. Peter knows what God wants. Jesus does not.*

*Third, Peter and the disciples are offended by what Jesus is saying. There is no way they would allow their Messiah to be harmed. By saying he is going to suffer, Jesus is treating Peter, the disciples and the entire Jewish nation as a bunch of wicked cowards. Peter will never let anything like this happen (See Matthew 26: 31-35) and Peter will not let Jesus treat him like this.*

8. According to v. 23 what is really going on with Peter? Why does he rebuke Jesus?

*Peter is acting as an emissary of Satan. Peter's rebuke is in fact Satan speaking through him to Jesus. In speaking for Satan he is being a stumbling block to Jesus. He is Satan's willing ambassador because his mind is set on the things of man, not the things of God.*

9. Read Matthew 4: 1-11. How is what Satan does openly there similar to what he does through Peter here? How are these two different temptations the same?

# THE RULE OF GOD PRODUCES A DYING LIFE Matthew 16: 21-48

*Please review this weeks catechism question.*

## INTRODUCTION

How would describe or define “faith”?

The average Christian in the church in the U.S. has a very difficult time explaining the relationship between faith, obedience and salvation. We have a hard time putting together Romans 4:5, “However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies (declares not guilty but perfectly righteous) the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.” And 1 Cor. 6:9, “Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God?” Matthew 16: 21-28 joins together what we regularly tear apart. Nowhere is the gospel of Jesus Christ more clearly at odds with human nature and human religious systems than at this point. Nowhere is the paradox of Christ and his message more obvious. These verses are both a warning and incredibly good news. God wants every true Christian to live in the certainty and joy of his saving work. But God also wants to rescue those who are resting in a false security. Let’s begin by praying that these words will be both a scourge to arouse us out of any false security and a balm to assure us of our favored position.

## STUDY

1. What is the significance of “From that time on” (v. 21)? Why does Jesus begin to talk openly about his suffering, death and resurrection at this time? CLUE: What happened in vv. 13-20?

*Jesus begins to talk about his central purpose as the Messiah because his Father has revealed his identity as the Messiah to the disciples. He has just said that the disciples are going to be the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2: 19-21) and they will set forth the conditions for membership in Christ’s kingdom. Therefore, it is imperative that they understand his main objective, his chief work.*

2. Why does Jesus say he must go to Jerusalem to suffer, die and rise again? NOTE: This is the central question you must answer if you are going to understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. The NT is written to answer this question. Before we look at the main answer that Jesus stresses in this passage consider these other reasons given in the NT:

- Acts 4: 27-28 *It was God’s eternal plan and will that the Son should die in this way.*
- John 6:38 *Jesus came to do his Father’s will and this is his Father’s will.*
- Mark 10: 45 *This is the reason Jesus came to earth, to give his life in order to ransom his people.*
- Romans 3: 25-26 *God offers up Christ as the sacrifice that turns aside his wrath against sin so that he can justly forgive OT believers and justly forgive every believer since Christ’s death and resurrection. Without the death of Jesus God would be a crooked judge because he lets guilty sinners go free.*
- Romans 5: 9 *The death of Christ is what causes God to declare us (believing sinners) forgiven and righteous*
- Romans 5: 10 *The death of Christ is what causes God to be our friend and us to be God’s friend.*
- 1 Peter 2:24-25 *The death of Jesus is what causes us to stop sinning and live obedient lives.*
- 1 Peter 3:18 *The death of Jesus brings us to God.*

3. According to v. 27 what else does Jesus know will happen? What does this tell us about why he must suffer, die and rise again?

*Jesus knows that one day in the future he will return to earth in the fullness of his divine glory (fully revealed as the eternal Son of God) and commanding his angels in order to judge the world of human beings. He will be the one who will determine the eternal fate of every human being.*

*This tells us that Jesus knew that the only way he could enjoy the fullness of his Father’s glory, command angels and return as the judge of all mankind was to suffer, die and rise again. Before he could be the judge, he must be the sacrifice. Before he could enter into the full enjoyment of his Father’s glory he must endure the fullness of his Father’s wrath.*