

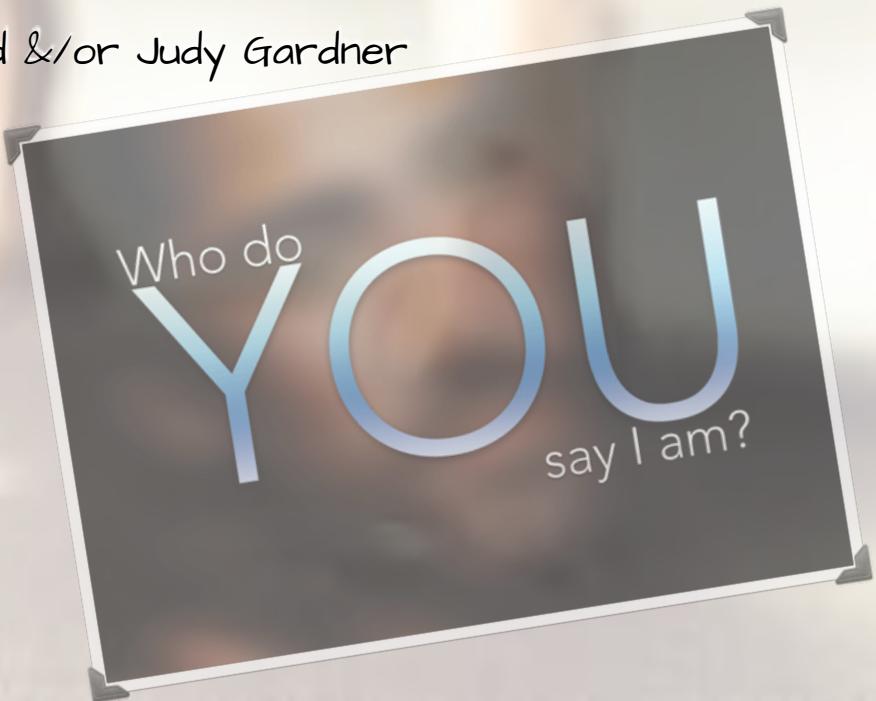
July 22-26, 2024 Edition

# Following The Year(s) Of ^Jesus Part 134

## Who Do You Say I AM?

By: Ed &/or Judy Gardner

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When you read the Bible ask yourself if there's anything you're reading where God is speaking to you personally... anything that you need to start applying in your own life. Then try to reflect on what you read... what you heard from God throughout the day and we know you'll be blessed.

\*\*\* These are EXTREMELY rough drafts so if you see typos... well you knew the rest ;0) These are essentially the ramblings of thoughts running through Ed or Judy's mind the week before Ed teaches a lesson on these concepts. They are pretty much how Ed gets ready for the weekends. They are not necessarily coherent so if they don't make much sense... sorry about that.

\*\*\*\* Also these devotionals are the product of both Judy & Ed's experiences and education. Figuring out which are from Judy and which are from Ed (sometimes both are contained in a single day) is half the fun.

You can also get these devotionals on Riverside's Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/EagleRiverside](http://www.facebook.com/EagleRiverside)). You don't have to have a FB account to read them but if you do have an account if you "like" the Riverside page and click the box to get updates the devos will show up on your wall every weekday (along with other news and event updates).

**Monday Reflection:** This week we are going to spend some time looking at the turning point in Jesus' ministry. It occurs in exactly the halfway point of the book of Mark. The gospel of Mark is 16 chapters long and the first half (chapters 1-8 for those of us who aren't interested in doing math homework while reading a reflection) is all about Jesus showing His disciples- and the world- exactly who He is. But at the end of chapter 8 Jesus takes His disciples on a field trip way up north to the city of Caesarea Philippi for some time alone together before His inevitable march to cross begins in earnest.

Jesus and his disciples left Galilee and went up to the villages near Caesarea Philippi.  
Mark 8:27 (NLT)

Up until this time nobody has breathed a word of Jesus being the Messiah/Christ. And this is probably as good a time as any to talk about those words, Messiah and Christ. What do those words mean? Well, they both mean the same thing- the Anointed One- but Messiah was the Hebrew word for it and Christ was the Greek word for it. So whenever we see the word "Messiah" or "Christ" in the Bible they are talking about the same thing/person.

But what did the word mean to the Jews? We know they've been awaiting a Rescuer for thousands of years (800 if we just think about how long they've been under foreign rule as a nation) but what was the Messiah/Christ supposed to do? Well, we know that whenever a new king came to the throne in Israel he was always "anointed" as the new king. But the Messiah/Christ would be much more than a common king- He would be the king to end all kings. The Lord to end all Lords. He would be THE KING. There have been several throughout history who claimed this title for themselves but they have all been lost in the fog of the past. When you use the word Messiah or Christ it is Jesus and Jesus alone that we remember. Isn't that strange? I mean there were some very powerful men who claimed to be the "Christ" but can you name any of them? It's one of the most interesting in history to me that when Jesus walked the earth He was a penniless rabbi from a no-nothing village in a no-nothing country who never wrote a book or started a movement that He Himself would lead in bodily form on this earth.

And His disciples were also no-nothing people with no money, influence or power. In fact after Jesus' death, burial, resurrection and (40 days later) ascension to His throne in Heaven there were only 120 people huddled in the same upper room where Jesus and His disciples celebrated the Last Supper. They were afraid and unsure of what was coming. If you were taking bets on whether they would change the world their odds against would have been astronomical. If there had been aliens watching from space and you asked them if it would be the 120 disciples of Jesus who would change the world forever or the powerful Roman Empire they would have certainly picked the Romans. And yet here we are 2,000 years later- people are naming their kids John & James & Peter & Mary & Martha and we're naming our pets Brutus and Nero and Caesar. How did that happen?

Well, it happened because these 120 peasants gave themselves fully to the Christ. They let Him transform them by changing how they looked at the world, God and the people that He loved so much that He sent His only Son to die for us. And they were transformed. It was a shocking transformation- for those being transformed and for those opposing them. How did this fledgling movement survive? Well the only explanation that makes sense to

me is that they had help. A lot of help. A lot of divine help from the Christ who at that point was sitting on His throne in Heaven as the King of kings and the Lord of lords. We'll look at the throne of Jesus and His fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in coming days but for today maybe spend some time reflecting on how it was that Jesus was able to completely alter the unfolding of human History with the ragtag mob of misfits He chose for the job and how now He has left that job to a new ragtag mob of misfits- me and you.

**Tuesday Reflection:** So yesterday we began looking at the turning point in Jesus' ministry- when He takes His disciples north 25 miles from Capernaum to the city of Caesarea Philippi and asks them the question that has been building throughout the first 8 chapters of the gospel of Mark. You probably don't remember (because it's been 134 weeks or so since we began this chronological story of Jesus) how the book of Mark begins to let's refresh our memories:

*This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. Mark 1:1 (NLT)*

Mark begins by telling us what this whole thing is really about- how to recognize the Messiah/Christ, the Son of God. The first 8 chapters focus on Jesus trying to get His disciples to see Him for who He truly is. The primary theme of the first 8 chapters is authority. The miracles, the teaching and the way He treats other humans all were pointing to one thing- Jesus is more than just a human being. He's more than a great teacher or a wonder worker. If you were with us at church the weekend we talked about Jesus healing the blind guy then maybe you remember that the process of healing the spiritual blindness of the disciples was an ongoing process. After Jesus healed the blind man in stages (for our benefit- not because He needed to do it in stages) we talked very briefly about how Jesus took His disciples up north and asked them the most important question that any of us will ever answer:

*He asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" Matthew 16:13 (NLT)*

I wonder if He held His breath wondering how they'd reply. Up until now Jesus had amazed the disciples with so many examples of His authority. He calmed a storm (something the first century Jews believed only God Himself could do), He raised the dead, He fed multitudes with only a couple of fish and few loaves- twice! They were always amazed and they ever worshiped Him after the calming of the storm but the word Christ/Messiah had never been whispered. And when He asks them what "people" are saying about Him they give Him the laundry list of what people are saying about Him:

*"Well," they replied, "some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets." Matthew 16:13-14 (NLT)*

There was a lot of speculation about Jesus. Probably because He was so cryptic and didn't make a lot of outrageous claims about His identity- at least not yet but that's coming in the second half of the chronological story of His life. But He's really not that concerned about what the "people" are saying about Him- He has a much more important question:

*Then he asked them, "But who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Matthew 16:15-16 (NLT)*

Who do YOU say that I AM? It's the most important question you will ever answer. Your answer will impact every aspect of your life profoundly- no matter what your answer is. After teaching on the story of Jesus healing the blind man through a process I hope you saw that just as the blind man's eyes were opened gradually, the disciples spiritual blindness was also being healed in what had to feel like a brutally slow process. But on this day when Jesus asks His disciples who they say He is Peter finally and for the first time sees Jesus clearly. He is not just a prophet, not just a great teacher and He's not just the most famous wandering rabbi in Israel's history. Peter finally sees that Jesus is "the Christ", The Son of the living God. His process of healing would continue to be an ongoing project for Jesus but for the first time in the gospels somebody spoke the words out loud.

For the rest of this week we're going to move on from the question of who do WE think Jesus is to who Jesus tells us He is (which He does right after this interaction with Peter and- spoiler alert- Peter is not happy to have his eyes opened up to what the Christ/ Messiah had really come to do) but for today spend some time reflecting on Jesus' question- who do YOU say that He is?

**Wednesday Reflection:** (long post warning- today's reflection on the son of man title is probably twice as long as a typical reflection so you may want to break it up so that you can get through it all- you've been warned ;o) Today we're going to look at Jesus' favorite description of Himself- Son Of Man. If you take everything that is said about Jesus in the entire New Testament then Christ/Messiah is by far the most often used title for Jesus. But ironically, He almost never uses those titles Himself. When He refers to Himself by a title it's almost always the Son Of Man. So what does that title even mean? What did it mean to the people of first century Israel (because the title brought vivid imagery to the mind of the people of ancient Israel)? Well to understand that we have to go back to the Old Testament and a prophetic vision that a man named Daniel had.

Daniel was part of the first generation of Israelites who were carried away into captivity by the Babylonian Empire after they destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple of Yahweh located there. Daniel and his friends, Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego) are enslaved and taken to Babylon where they will be put to work in the priesthood of Babylon. One night Daniel has a dream/vision where He sees 4 "beasts", each more terrifying than the last. The first beast was like a lion with eagles wings. The second was like a bear with ribs caught between its teeth (I wonder how it got ribs stuck between its teeth and hasn't it ever heard of tooth floss?). The third beast was like a leopard with 4 birds wings on its back and 4 heads. But the fourth beast was the most terrifying of all- in fact Daniel had no animal-like reference to describe this beast. He just gives us a description that sounds absolutely terrifying. But at that point God makes His entrance:

I watched as thrones were put in place and the Ancient One sat down to judge.  
Daniel 7:9 (NLT)

The Ancient One is a reference to Yahweh Himself. Daniel is given a view right into the throne room of God but Daniel notices there is more than one throne there. What is that other throne for? Well to answer that question we need to go back to the very beginning when God created this planet. At the end of His work on Creation God unveils His crowning achievement- us:

Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and rule over it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the beasts that scurry along the ground." Genesis 1:27-28 (NLT)

God tells the first humans- who are very similar to the beasts of the earth- that we have been given a unique job. We are to "rule" and "reign" with Him over this beautiful Creation that God has just finished speaking into existence. But you know what happens, right? We abdicate our responsibility and the metaphorical throne that comes with it. How does that happen? Well, a serpent (one of the beasts we were tasked with "ruling" and "reigning" over) tempts Adam & Eve and convinces them to abandon the throne they were invited to occupy and to instead attempt to seize the throne of God Himself. The serpent's/beast's claim is that by eating the forbidden fruit Adam & Eve would become "like God" and that sounds pretty good to the first humans so they abdicate the throne offered to them in favor of God's throne. But the humans learn that they can't seize the throne of Yahweh and instead of living up to the sacred responsibility they were created to enjoy they lost both thrones and were expelled from Eden. But before they leave God promises to send a Rescuer (later referred to as Christ/Messiah) who would pay their debt by living the life that Adam & Eve rejected:

And I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel. Genesis 3:15 (NLT)

Basically God prophesies that He would send a descendant of the woman who would finally step into the sacred role that God has planned for humanity. He would be the first of Adam & Eve's descendants to resist the temptation that the serpent/beast used so effectively against the first humans. And for the rest of the Biblical story we're waiting with expectancy for that Rescuer to appear. But instead we see story after story where the descendants of Adam & Eve carry on the family tradition of rejecting God's way in favor of their own (obviously superior) goals and aspirations. Adam & Eve have a son named Cain who gets jealous of his brother and is tempted to harm him. What is going on? Cain is hearing the whisper of the serpent/beast tempting him to stop listening to God and do what feels right to Cain. God sees what's happening and He warns Cain:

"Why are you so angry?" the Lord asked Cain. "Why do you look so dejected? You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master." Genesis 4:6-7 (NLT)

What's God saying to Cain? Basically He's warning Cain that he's facing a beastly urge called "sin"- a dark and mysterious kind of evil that consumes humans if we're not careful. God tells Cain that can "rule" over this beast and become its master if he chooses to do so. What will Cain do? Have the children learned from the mistakes of their parents? Turns out, no. He likes the urges this beast called "sin" inspires in him and he kills his brother. Over the next several chapters of Genesis this beast runs rampant among Cain's descendants and eventually they found a city that will be called, Babylon- the very city that Daniel has been carried off to (albeit Daniel comes into the story centuries later).

So let's fast forward to the sixth century BC and revisit Daniel's dream. You remember right (I know it probably seems like an eternity since you read about that dream but the payoff is coming I promise)? The vision with the 4 beasts each one more terrifying than the last. This particular reflection isn't really about what the beasts stand for but it's important to know the basics- each beast represents a different empire (each successive empire more evil and terrible than the one before). These empires represent the worst of the spirit of Cain and show us that when we fail to live up to our divinely inspired destiny the evil within us does indeed master us and grow in scope. Humanity is obviously capable of tremendous evil when we ignore who we were created to be. But all hope is not lost! If you remember Daniel sees God Himself come into His throne room and take his place to judge the beasts. But do you remember that there was more than one throne?

I watched as thrones were put in place and the Ancient One sat down to judge.

Daniel 7:9 (NLT)

What's that other throne doing there? Turns out that other throne is the one Adam & Eve abdicated. It has been empty for all these centuries awaiting a descendant of Adam & Eve who would finally overcome the beastly urges that the serpent wants to awaken in all of us. And guess what? Daniel witnesses that happening in his vision:

As my vision continued that night, I saw someone like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence. He was given authority, honor, and sovereignty over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would worship him. His rule is eternal- it will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed. Daniel 7:13-14 (NLT)

Daniel sees someone "like a son of man" who is given all the things that Adam & Eve rejected. And while this mysterious figure is "like" a son of man He isn't exactly the same as you and me. How do I know that? Look at what Daniel says happens with this one like a son of man- the nations worship Him. In the Bible there is only one who is worthy of worship and that's God. There's a place in the book of Revelation where John sees an angel and his first reaction is to bow in worship which really freaks the angel out. "Don't do that!" the angel says. "I'm only an angel- a created being sort of like you, John. Only God Himself is worthy of our worship." (I paraphrased that a bit but not much). But here in Daniel's vision the people are worshipping the one like a son of man and nobody says boo. This one "like a son of man" comes with the clouds of heaven to sit on the throne abdicated by Adam & Eve.

So now let's fast forward to Jesus again and His favorite title for Himself- the Son of Man. How does Jesus demonstrate that He is that Son of Man and Rescuer we read about in the Old Testament? By overcoming the same temptations that His distant relatives- Adam & Eve, Cain and ultimately every human who would ever live including me and you- did not overcome. At the beginning of His ministry Jesus is tempted by the devil (the serpent/beast that tempted Adam & Eve in Eden). One of the temptations was to abdicate the throne God had reserved for Adam & Eve and to instead seize the other throne in God's throne room but Jesus sees the lie and doesn't take the bait:

Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. "I will give it all to you," he said, "if you will kneel down and worship me." "Get behind me, Satan," Jesus told him. "For the Scriptures say, 'You must worship the Lord your God and serve only him.' Matthew 4:8-10 (NLT)

It wasn't the only temptation Jesus faced but with each and every one Jesus overcomes them. He comes to live the life we should've (but none of us have) and to die the death we would have died had someone not stepped in to pay our debt. And on the cross Jesus finally and completely destroys the power of Satan, hell and death and becomes the first human (although not exactly human right? He was one "like a son of man" but He wasn't exactly a son of man the way you and I are) to overcome and master the beast of sin-something none of His ancestors could ever accomplish. The people of Israel were awaiting this son of man and had lots of ideas about who He would be and what He would do and as Jesus tries to explain to them what that will look like Peter is not pleased and tries to correct Jesus- which never goes over well but this time there's a **HUGE** temptation in Peter's rebuke of Jesus that I imagine made Jesus' response so fierce. We'll start looking tomorrow at who Jesus says this Son of Man really is and what His ultimate mission will lead to but for today let's spend some time reflecting on this mysterious title that Jesus loved to refer to Himself as.

**Thursday Reflection:** So this week we're looking at the turning point in Jesus' ministry when He finally lets the cat out of the bag and admits to His apostles that He is indeed the Christ/Messiah. He most often referred to Himself as the Son Of Man but He hadn't connected the dots for the apostles up to this point so they could understand what that meant. Up until this point in His ministry He's been demonstrating His power and His authority but from this point forward His focus will shift to two things- getting ready for His death in Jerusalem and helping His disciples to understand exactly what it means that He is the Son of Man.

You might remember from earlier in the week that He asks the disciples the question, "who do people say the Son Of Man is?" He's talking about Himself. He's asking them what people are saying about Him. After He asks them the truly important question, "what do YOU say that I AM" Peter finally sees Him for who He is and declares that Jesus is the Christ- the Son of the living God. Jesus applauds Peter for finally seeing clearly:

Jesus replied, "You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being. Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it. Matthew 16:17-18 (NLT)

Peter must have been absolutely glowing. I mean can you imagine Jesus saying something like that to you? But it doesn't take long before Peter regresses- big time. Because as Jesus begins to shift from demonstrating His power and authority (which is what the first half of His ministry was about) to explaining clearly what the Son Of Man has come to do Peter (and I imagine he wasn't alone in this but he was the only one who spoke up) can't believe it and he kind of loses his ever-loving mind:

But Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him for saying such things. "Heaven forbid, Lord," he said. "This will never happen to you!" Matthew 16:22-23 (NLT)

Why does Peter respond so violently? And it was a violent reaction- the word used here for "rebuke" is the same word that is used when we are told that Jesus "rebuked" demons. Why is Peter so bothered? Because from the time he was a little boy on his papa's knee he was given the party line in Israel about who the Son Of Man/Christ/Messiah would be. He would be a powerful king who would destroy Israel's enemies and usher in the kingdom of God. He would establish the throne of that kingdom in Jerusalem where this Son Of Man would reign and rule for all eternity. Now Jesus is painting a very different picture for Peter and the apostles. And Peter doesn't like it one bit. He was envisioning being the right hand man for the powerful king. He was not envisioning that his king would suffer and be killed. If that was the future of Jesus what did that say about Peter's future? So yes, Peter rebukes Jesus. It is a powerful word and Jesus' response is equally "powerful":

Jesus turned around and looked at his disciples, then rebuked Peter. "Get away from me, Satan!" he said. "You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's." Mark 8:33 (NLT)

Why is Jesus' response so strong? I mean Peter has gotten lots of stuff wrong up until now and Jesus is always patient with him. Why does Jesus choose this moment to rebuke Peter? Well, this is a powerful temptation. We know from the night before Jesus dies that while He prayed in Gethsemane He is so stressed out by what He knows is coming that He sweats drops like blood and prays to God three times asking to find another way of saving humanity. Now with Peter's promise that he will never let that happen to Jesus there's probably a big part of Jesus (the human part) that is thinking that sounds pretty good. But Jesus has dealt with this temptation before when the devil makes a very similar offer:

Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. "I will give it all to you," he said, "if you will kneel down and worship me." "Get behind me, Satan," Jesus told him. "For the Scriptures say, 'You must worship the Lord your God and serve only him.' Matthew 4:8-10 (NLT)

I always wondered why Jesus refers to Peter as "Satan" after Peter's declaration. Seemed a bit harsh to me and if I'm being honest, a tad out of character for Jesus. And how do you think Peter feels. Jesus says, "get away from me, Satan. You are seeing things merely from a human point of view and not God's". This just after Peter's declaration that Jesus was the Christ- and do you remember what Jesus said to him then? Basically Jesus tells Peter that He didn't get that info from a human source but straight from Heaven. What whiplash Peter must have felt. But Satan? Did Peter really deserve that? Well I'm not about to start saying Jesus did anything "wrong" but I imagine that His response to Peter was so harsh because it brought up an old temptation- a temptation that goes even further back then Jesus' time of temptation at the beginning of His ministry. If you remember that's basically the same temptation that Adam & Eve fell for- abandon God's plan for your life and seize your own destiny. It's what got this whole ball of wax that we call the gospel rolling. Now Peter brings it back out to play and Jesus is adamant that He's still not falling for the temptation of the serpent/beast.

The only way Jesus can save humanity is by going to the cross for us. It's the only way He can defeat the forces that enslave us and give us the hope of a future with Him. Yes, He is the King but He's a much different king than anyone ever imagined. He's not going to be a king on a throne- at least not yet. First He has to be the King on a cross. Turns out He won't defeat the evil that enslaves us through what looks like power and strength to us- He'll defeat evil through what looks like weakness. But in that apparent weakness is the greatest power that has ever been witnessed on this planet. What looked like the greatest defeat in the history of this world instead unleashed a power that changed the world. And so when Peter reacts by rebuking Jesus, Jesus returns the favor and rebukes Peter right back. I guess we learn here that you don't rebuke the King without expecting a rebuke in return. But what's amazing to me is that Jesus still doesn't give up on Peter.

So we saw today that Jesus is a different kind of king- a king on a cross. Tomorrow we'll look at what that means for us but for today maybe spend some time reflecting on why Jesus had to die in order to rescue us from the clutches of the beast called sin that if we're not careful will enslave us and become our master.

**Friday Reflection:** This week we're looking at how Peter and the rest of the apostles answered Jesus' question, "who do YOU say that I AM?" After Peter answered that question in a miraculous way Jesus began explaining to them what it would mean. That He wasn't a typical king. He would be a king on a cross before He would ever be a king on a throne. And that set Peter off. "No way, Lord! I will NEVER let that happen to you!!!!" (the caps and exclamation marks are mine but it's the way I see all this playing out). Jesus' response is equally ferocious- "get away from me, Satan!" We discussed yesterday why Jesus' response was so fiery but for today I want to move on from what this means for Jesus to what it means for us that He is not a typical king on a throne but a king on a cross. Because that's the next thing Jesus does in this chronological story of His life- explain to us what all of this means for us:

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul? For the Son of Man will come with his angels in the glory of his Father and will judge all people according to their deeds. And I tell you the truth, some standing here right now will not die before they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom." Matthew 16:24-28 (NLT)

Ok what's He saying here? He's telling us that the road to success and power and influence is not what we always thought it was. We always thought the path to power was through wielding military power and might. Destroying our enemies with the same weapons they wield against us. But we were wrong. That way of life has led to nothing but darkness and misery. It sounds so compelling and so right but Jesus tells us that's because we've been deceived. What sounds so right to us is one of the devil's oldest and most powerful lies. A tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye sounds right and fair to us (unless we're the one who accidentally knocked someone's tooth or eye out and then

mercy sounds pretty good to us, doesn't it?). But Jesus comes to this earth and instead of raising a typical army He rejects violence as the path to victory in this world. He would be a king on a throne eventually but first He had to be the King on a cross.

Now He's telling us that if we want to see success over the enemies of darkness and evil in our own lives we need to be people of the cross. There was an 80s Christian rock group called DeGarmo & Key that I used to listen to a lot. They had a song called Destined To Win and there's a line in it that always struck me:

We all get discouraged ~ When the pressures in life start weighing us down ~ But we've learned that in His footsteps the crosses in life must precede the crowns.

That's what Jesus is saying to us in this passage. Before He could ascend to His throne as the King of kings and the Lord of lords He would first have to go through the suffering of the cross. And now He's telling us that if what we want is victory in our own lives then we've got to walk a similar path. Somehow God's definition of success and victory is completely different than our own and we don't have to look any further than the devil to recognize why. From the beginning the devil has been deceiving us into believing the illusion that exercising our physical power was the only way to victory. It was the only way to keep yourself from being taken advantage of and losing out. And at this point that lie is at least partially true because we've bought into it wholesale.

Try living the way Jesus invites His followers to live and what will the rest of the world say to you? They'll say, you can't live like that. Everyone will take advantage of you. They will use you and take everything you have and leave you with nothing. You need to meet violence with violence. That's the only way to survive in this world. Do you know what I try to remember to say to the devil when I hear that very alluring and logical temptation? I try to remember to use the same words Jesus used, "Get away from me, Satan! You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's."

I know that it's a complicated thing. I know that it's more subtle than I'm making it out to be. I know that sometimes even Jesus resorted to flipping over tables and driving out the priests with a whip that He made out of cords. But never forget- Jesus did that twice in His lifetime that we know of. In every other circumstance Jesus opted for a different reaction. Loving His enemies and going to the cross for them.

And now we have to decide what our response will be to these words of Jesus. What will it look like for your life to be one where you take up your cross and follow Jesus? How will you accomplish it? As we go through the rest of the chronological story of Jesus' life we'll be taught alongside the apostles how to make this a reality in our lives. And if we eventually get to the end of this series on the life of Jesus we'll watch as we see the apostles living out that kind of lifestyle in the book of Acts. But for today maybe you and I should spend some time reflecting on what it means to be people of the cross rather than people of the throne. Eventually we'll get our crowns back (although I think from my reading of the book of Revelation that when that happens we'll just toss those crowns at the feet of Jesus in awe and worship but I guess you and I will have to wait until that day comes to know for sure) but as DeGarmo & Key said, "we know that in His footsteps, the crosses in life must precede the crowns".