

22:24 And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest.

Verse 24 is a testimony to the depravity of man. "The Master was absorbed in the thought of His Cross, the servants were quarrelling about their places in His Kingdom" (MacLaren). Schreiner says,

The Pharisees and Scribes are criticized because although they acknowledge the worship of God with their lips, their hearts swerved in another direction (Matt. 15:8–9). The true and living God was distant from them, and their professed love lacked reality. Jesus catalogued their sins in Matthew 23. They failed to practice what they preached, teaching one thing and doing another. They engaged in religious observance so that others would notice them and be duly impressed by their behavior. They coveted places of honor at feasts and greetings in public because the praise of people was their god. They neglected what is weighty and clear in the law and became preoccupied with what is secondary. On the outside they appeared to be righteous and pure, but inside they were stained by deep corruption, so that they were comparable to whitewashed tombs. Their evil culminated in the execution of God's messengers, showing that they were not the seed of Abraham at all but were a "brood of vipers"—the seed of the serpent.

What is said about the leaders cannot be restricted to them. By nature the hearts of all people are dull and insensitive to the things of God, nor are people genuinely interested in hearing and seeing what God has to say to them (Matt. 13:15). Mark emphasizes that the same malady afflicts the disciples. They suffered from hard hearts that resisted the revelation of God in Jesus (Mk. 6:52; 8:17, 21). They failed to grasp the significance of Jesus' teaching, and their failure cannot be attributed merely to intellectual incapacity. At bottom they were also idolaters, and so they quarreled about which of them was the greatest and would receive the highest rewards in the kingdom (Mk. 9:33–37; 10:35–45; Lk. 9:46–48; 22:24–27). (Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 511-512).

The disciples were expecting the kingdom to be established on earth and the Messiah to reign over the whole world from Jerusalem in fulfillment of the promises given to Abraham, David, and through the prophets. This belief was not wrong, although the timing of it was beyond their ability to grasp.

Jesus had spoken of the coming kingdom (Lk. 22:16, 18), so the disciples may well have been pondering their roles in it. If so, this would explain why the topic of the kingdom comes up again in verses 29 and 30 as part of Jesus' response to them.

Contemplating who would be the greatest seems to have been a popular discussion among the disciples. In Mark 10:35-37 James and John came up to Jesus, saying, "Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your glory." In Matthew their mother asked the same question of Jesus. "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left" (Matt. 20:20-28). This is human depravity – the desire for personal glory above the interests of Christ.

22:25 And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.'

Instead of rebuking them, Jesus graciously addressed the issue by explaining the way His followers should view authority, power, and position. The kings of the gentiles lord their authority over their subjects; they rule with arrogant superiority. They demand respect, revel in their high visibility, and seek ever-increasing power and status. They love to impose their will on others yet at the same time, they want to be known as benefactors.

The word "called" can be either a middle voice or passive voice verb. If it is middle it means that they called themselves "Benefactors." If it is passive it is translated as, "they are called 'Benefactors.'" Either sense was true – they desired recognition and they were self-promoting.

"Benefactor" was a common title for high-ranking leaders in the ancient world. For example, Ptolemy III, the third ruler of Egypt's Ptolemaic Dynasty, was known as Ptolemy III Euergetes ("Benefactor"). The Greek word euergetes (εὐεργέτης) refers to someone who bestows favor on another. It was applied to kings as a compliment or flattery (Barnes). Gentile rulers tended to do whatever benefited themselves, but wanted to be perceived as gracious lords who sought the good of others. As Edwards points out, the word benefactor "fails to deliver the voltage to modern readers that it would have to Luke's first readers" (Edwards, 633). In ancient Greece it was written on coins and monuments, and was a term that identified "a widespread class of individuals of power, position, and means who celebrated themselves and were celebrated by others in public spaces" (Edwards, 633). The disciples were well aware of tyrants who held the title.

22:26 "But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant."

Verse 26 contrasts true greatness to the disciples' perception of greatness.

In Jesus' day children were viewed much differently than they are in modern American society. It was accepted that age gave privileges; the youngest person was the least privileged. Therefore, the young did not expect to be honored; they did not have titles or were given deference. They had no power or influence. They lived life without any pretense that they were important members of society. They were modest and meek. In short, their attitude and demeanor aligned with those that are great in the kingdom of God.

Equality in Christ affects one's perspective of how greatness is defined. A follower of Christ recognizes that God has given believers different roles, but all Christians are only servants doing what God has given them the capacity to do. Even someone who is placed in a highly visible position or given leadership by God is to recognize that it is not due to any innate ability or superior quality that earned him such rights; he is there by the grace of God. Therefore, to seek such a position for personal gain and privilege is to be no different than the unbelieving. Christ's disciples are to avoid the affection of dominion over others. Leadership should be viewed as a means to serve others. It seeks the good of others, not self. The leader who sacrifices all for another's benefit is the true benefactor.

The leader needs to become like the servant. Matthew 20:26-28 says, "whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." In Matthew 23:11-12 Jesus also says, "the greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted." As Danker says, "Jesus' willingness to accept the Father's assignment, at great cost to Himself, sets the pattern for their ministry" (Danker, 349). Paul points this out in Philippians 2. There he speaks of imitating Christ; he says, "have this attitude in yourselves which is also in Christ Jesus." He then uses Christ's coming to earth as an illustration of the attitude believers need to possess. Although Christ existed in the form of God, He humbled Himself, took the form of a bondservant, and became obedient to the point of death. Paul then says, "For this reason also, God highly exalted Him" (Phil. 2:5-9). As Jesus said, "Whoever humbles himself shall be exalted." In principle this is true of all who humble themselves before God. Peter says, "Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time" (1 Pet. 5:5, 6; Ja. 4:6, 10). The disciples were to go about their work without regard to status.

"The long history of search for office and attendant authoritarian control in the church is a testimony to Luke's profound grasp of the relation between gorged egos of pompous men and the crucifixion of Him who renounced all titles and kingdoms" (Danker, 348).

As of Luke 22 the disciples had not yet come to own what Jesus was saying, but in time they would. We can rejoice in the glorious change of heart that took place as is reflected in Peter's instruction to leaders in the church. In 1 Peter 5:2-4 Peter wrote, "shepherd the flock of God . . . not lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."

22:27 "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."

The topic of greatness is given further thought in verse 27. Jesus asks, "Who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves?" The word "greater" could also be translated as "a great one" (Edwards, 634): "Who is the great one, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves?" The answer is obvious; every culture accepts that the one who reclines at the table is greater than the one who serves. However, if the greatest was the one who was served, then what would that say about Jesus' lifestyle of serving others? The fact that He served "among them" was particularly relevant for the disciples – He didn't just bear the title "servant," He actually performed the duties of a servant among the Twelve themselves (Edwards, 634). In fact, earlier that night He had even washed their feet (see Jn. 13), an act normally done by the household servant or the hostess when the guests entered the home. The disciples would have never considered washing each other's feet since it was a task reserved for those of lowly positions and bestowed upon superiors. Jesus not only considered it; He did it. The disciples clearly understood that Jesus was the greatest among them, yet He served them.

Elsewhere Jesus had said, “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mk. 10:45). His remark in Luke 22:27 forces the disciples to decide who they will follow- the world or Jesus.¹

**22:28 "You are those who have stood by Me in My trials;
22:29 and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you
22:30 that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones
judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**

Judas had already left to betray Jesus so Jesus is only addressing the eleven. Verse 28 stresses *their* faithfulness to Him in the midst of the many trials He had experienced in His ministry. They had not shunned the lowly place. The seed sown in their hearts had not fallen on shallow soil.

Jesus had a special purpose for the apostles and they would be rewarded by Christ for their loyalty. Jesus' willingness to share His rule illustrates the true greatness in the kingdom that He had just spoken about. Jesus will rule, but He desires to share His rule by mediating it through the apostles.

The promise of sitting with Christ as He rules the kingdom looks forward to Jesus' second coming and His rule over the earth. Jesus had already been granted authority (“My Father *has granted* Me a kingdom” - Lk. 22:29) and Jesus would grant His authority to the Twelve (Matthias was chosen to replace Judas in Acts 1:21 ff.). Not only will the apostles become the foundation for the church, for when the kingdom is consummated they will rule as well. This proves the continuity in the structure of God's plan. Although Jesus will be rejected by the nation of Israel, the nation will continue to exist and still have a future. Some see these promises fulfilled in the church (they say that the church is Israel), but it seems that this is founded more upon prior theological convictions than actual biblical fact. The disciples would not have understood it in that way. Israel was a nation composed of people who had physically descended from Abraham. Jesus maintained Israel's distinctiveness among the nations. For example, He said, “many will come from east and west (the gentile nations), and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel) in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 8:11). If Israel is the church (consisting of both Jews and gentiles), distinctions between Jews and gentiles would be inappropriate. Furthermore, it is hard to imagine what Jesus would mean by telling the apostles that they will judge the twelve tribes of Israel if He was speaking of their rule in the church that isn't divided into tribes. Jesus' Jewish disciples only understood “Israel” in terms of its ethnic identity. There is no explanation in the text that should cause the reader to think any differently than that.

Verse 30 gives the result of the apostles' appointment by Jesus – they will eat with Jesus at His table in the kingdom. Table fellowship indicated acceptance and friendship. This is why in Luke 15:2 the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble against Jesus, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.” The accusation is that Jesus has accepted them and is having fellowship with them.

There are two significant truths that these verses reveal about our relationship to Christ:

1. First, notice that there is a relationship that exists between the Father and the Son that parallels the relationship that exists between the Son and His disciples. The Father granted rule of the kingdom to

Jesus. Jesus grants rule to His disciples. (Jesus was also given the authority to judge from the Father [Jn. 5:26-27], and He then grants that authority to the apostles as well.)

This Father-Son-disciple motif is found in a number of places in the NT. For example, in John 15:9-10 Jesus said, "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." Jesus' love for the Father is the divine paradigm for our love for Christ. Jesus was the recipient of the Father's love, so we are recipients of Jesus' love. Jesus' disciples simply need to remain in Jesus' love. The way they remain in Jesus' love mirrors the pattern set by Jesus; He remained in the Father's love through obedience to His word. He obeyed out of love, not out of obligation. In the same way, we remain in Christ's love as we keep *His* commandments.

In John 17:18 Jesus prayed to the Father, "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world" (also see Jn. 20:21). Once again, the Father-Son-disciple pattern is seen. As the Father *sent* the Son (Jn. 4:34; 5:19–20; 6:38; 8:29, 55; 10:17–18; 12:27–28; 14:31) so the Son *sends* His disciples. As the Father's work was done by Jesus *in the world*, so Jesus' work is done by His followers *in the world*.

Jesus continued in John 17:21-22, praying that all who believe in Him "may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one." The Father is one with Jesus in essence, but they are also one in purpose and mission. Jesus' disciples cannot be one with God in essence, so the latter idea must be intended. The Father-Son-disciple pattern makes it clear that if the disciple is one with Jesus, and Jesus is one with the Father, then the disciple is also one with the Father; so Jesus can pray, "that they also may be in *Us*." Simply stated, Jesus desired that His followers be unified just as He is unified with the Father. Furthermore, Jesus desired that the glory of God that He revealed through His message and works also be seen as His disciples reveal that glory to others.

In sum, the Father-Son-disciple relationship shows how and why we relate to Christ as we do.

2. Secondly, Jesus' use of the first-person pronoun (My) places us and Him in a different relationship to the Father. Jesus said that the disciples were with "*Me* in *My* trials." He grants rule in the kingdom to the disciples "as *My* Father has granted *Me*." Jesus said that His disciples would sit at "at *My* table in *My* kingdom." Jesus spoke of God as "*My* Father" and when He spoke to the disciples He called God "your Father," but He never referred to God as "our Father;" that is, He never equated His relationship to the Father as equal to our relationship to the Father. Edwards says,

The Synoptic Gospels preserve fifty-one instances of Jesus calling God "Father." In twenty-nine instances He speaks of God as "My Father," and in twenty-two He teaches the disciples about God as "your Father," but never does He include Himself with the disciples in addressing God as "our Father." This statistic, combined with the repeated first-person pronouns in vv. 29–30 [*My trials, My table, My kingdom, My Father*], attests to Jesus' unique messianic and filial consciousness. . [this demonstrates that] discipleship is always and only life *with* Jesus,

“continuing *with Me in My trials*” (v. 28). Disciples are heirs, participants, even partners with Jesus in *His* [emphasis mine] earthly and eschatological mission” (Edwards, 636).

22:31 "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat;

22:32 but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

22:33 But he said to Him, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!"

22:34 And He said, "I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me."

As the crucifixion approaches, Satan is particularly active among the apostles.

Although Jesus addressed Peter, Satan had requested permission to sift all the disciples like wheat (“you” is plural). Being in the proximity of Jesus did not assure immunity from Satan’s attacks. In fact, satanic attack is one of the costs of discipleship. “Those who receive the gospel solely for its benefits will abandon it for its costs” (Edwards, 635).

Jesus’ prayer for Peter is specifically mentioned. The repetition of the name “Simon” signifies deep feeling of either affection or sadness (Edwards, 637). Jesus said that He had prayed that Peter’s faith would not fail. Satan can provoke conflict and attempt to cause Jesus’ followers to abandon Him, but he cannot determine the outcome. Satan may have had success with Judas, but Jesus’ prayer prevented the same from happening to Peter. Note that Jesus did not pray that there would be no trial, but that Peter would recover from it. Also note that Jesus’ mention of praying for Peter does not imply that He did not pray for His other followers as well.

In verse 33 Peter asserts his loyalty stating that he would follow Jesus to prison and even death. “Boasts of great feats for Christ and His kingdom are perilous because they presume the strength for self that can only come from Christ” (Edwards, 638-639). Historically, we know that Peter denied Jesus but his denial was not a complete abandonment of the faith; after the denial he turned back to Christ. He was not ready for the trial that Satan brought his way, but in time he would be strengthened, would be imprisoned (Acts 12:3-5), and would even be martyred for his faith in Christ. Between the time of his repentance and death, the one who fell would become the one to encourage the others. Usefulness in the kingdom does not depend on perfection.

Jesus, however, knows the future. He even knows that Peter will deny Jesus three times before the rooster crows. Instead of rebuking Peter for his comments, Jesus mercifully allows the rooster’s crow to convict him.

“Today” fits with the Jewish reckoning of days – from sunset to sunset; in present-day timekeeping Peter would deny Jesus in the wee hours of Friday morning.