

## **“Christ in the Midst”**

*“Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them.” Matthew 18:20*

Rare it is to look at a group photo and not look to see ourselves. Even more, it seems most people have an innate desire to be “front and center”. For more nobler reasons and to our benefit, the Lord wants to be front and center in our lives in everything we do.

Before Israel entered Canaan, God promised them a future leader when he said: *“The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto Me; unto Him ye shall hearken...”* (Deut. 18:15). From then on, Israel looked for this great Prophet that would eventually come – the Messiah – Someone like Moses raised up to deliver the nation. Details of this Person were specific: 1) God would raise Him up; 2) His ministry would be like that of Moses as a Deliverer, and 3) He would come from *“from the midst”* of Israel. They were assured of this because His ministry would be conspicuous and central to the nation. So imbedded was this in the national mindset, that centuries later when people witnessed the ministry of John the Baptist, they asked him directly *“Are you the Prophet?”* (John 1:21). The Lord Jesus was indeed that Prophet who ministered in their midst so there would be no mistake as to who He was.

### **To Israel**

The first instance of Jesus' ministry "in the midst" of Israel can be found in Luke 2. In verses 41-52, we read about the Lord traveling to Jerusalem with His parents at twelve years of age to participate in the feast of the Passover. After the feast days were completed, the large caravan of family and acquaintances began the journey back to Nazareth. But after a day of travel, it was discovered by His parents that He was not in the crowd, so they immediately returned to locate Him. After an extensive search, the anxious couple found Him in the Temple *“sitting in the midst”* of the teachers both listening to them and asking them questions" (v. 46). The Lord's question to Mary and Joseph *“Why did you seek Me?”* was not one of insolence, but a mild rebuke to those who should have known better than to spend the better portion of the day searching for Him in places other than the Temple. His comment, *“Know ye not that I must be about my Father's business?”* (v. 49), revealed His mission even as a youth. The Lord sitting in the midst of this erudite company, portrays Him as central to their conversation. He was indeed “front and center.” This is exactly how God wanted it then and how He wants it today, the center of everyone's conversation - especially ours!

In Acts 2, we see an instance of the Lord *working* "in the midst". One of the key components of Peter's address to Israel on the day of Pentecost was the indisputable evidence of Christ's works done in their presence. *“...a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:”* (Acts 2:22). Everything He did validated His credentials as Messiah with power and glory and there was no excuse for anyone not to believe on Him. He is also at work today - all around us - and that work should be clearly acknowledged.

### **To the World**

He is also at work “in the midst” of an unbelieving world. In John 19, the scene at Calvary is vividly described in verses 17 and 18: *“And He bearing His cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: Where they crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.”* What a scene! The Lord, the Son of God, the Creator of the Universe lifted between two thieves! On one side was an unrepentant, unregenerate criminal, being executed for His crimes. On the other, was someone with a completely different destiny because he was reconciled to God. This thief admitted his sin, acknowledged the sinless character of Christ, and demonstrated saving faith as he called upon the Lord. As it was then so it is today that the Savior divides mankind into two camps - the saved and the lost. There is no middle ground in salvation. If anything, He is the “middle ground,” and people are either on one side of Him or the other. ‘What shall you do with this the Christ? This thief's salvation is proof that there is no one beyond the scope of His forgiveness (Isa. 59:1) and that it is never too late to trust in Him.

### **To the Church**

Christ is also at work in the midst of His Church – to help, strengthen, guide, and chasten. After the Lord's resurrection, when the disciples were huddled behind closed doors for fear of the Jews, He *“stood in the midst”* bringing words of peace in the midst of fear (John 20:19), peace in the midst of service (John 19:21), and with Thomas peace in the midst of doubt (John 19:26). This example of the shepherd work of the Lord Jesus can be a great help and encouragement to His people – especially in times of crisis and confusion. When we are going

through similar situations, do not forget that He is there...*standing* in the midst! Do not forget also that He is in the midst as we work through our difficulties and differences (Matt. 18:20); in the midst as He draws out our hearts in worship to Him (Heb. 2:12); and *walking* in the midst among the lampstands in Rev. 1, evaluating every local assembly's testimony in the light of His Person and Work. The Lord has been in the midst, is in the midst and always shall be *reigning* in the midst, as depicted in Rev. 5. Let us keep these things in mind, that He is always "in the midst," and adjust our conduct in the light of this great truth.

**Mark Kolchin – May 28, 2021**