

Sunday, June 12, 2011

Setting out towards Jerusalem

There is a unique incident about the Lord Jesus in the Gospel of Saint Luke that was not mentioned by any of the other Evangelists. It is mentioned in the ninth chapter as follows:

“Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, ‘Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?’ But He turned and rebuked them, and said, ‘You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.’ And they went to another village.” (Luke 9:51-56)

This incident is full of deep mysteries and meanings. Being *“received up”* refers to being lift up on the cross for our salvation; it also refers to elevating our human nature to the heavenly glory through Ascension. And to *“steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem”* is a sign for His determination to offer Himself as a sacrifice for our salvation. **Rebuking John and James** essentially reveals the manner by which he served, which is the salvation of every soul no matter how stubborn, boasting, or lost in the deception of its desires, it also reveals His compassion and long suffering towards various types of people.

What I would like to focus on in this article is the rejection of the Samaritans to Him, because as the bible indicates, *He set His face to go to Jerusalem.*

How lovely is that the face of Christ to be set to go towards Jerusalem which refers to the city of God or the dwelling of God with His people, as it is mentioned in the book of revelation: *“Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.’”* (Revelation 21:2-3)

The Lord Jesus Christ has come into our world to bind us with His love, to recover us from death, and to let us follow Him in the victorious march towards Heavenly Jerusalem. **This magnificent journey began with a great love initiative on His part.** And he who tastes this kind of love, can do nothing except to completely submit himself to the Person that loved him, purchased him, and saved him from servitude, to enter into a new covenant with Him through baptism, and to follow Him in the march of triumph heading towards Heavenly Jerusalem.

The unusual thing here is that the village of the Samaritans **did not accept Christ** as his face was set for the journey towards Jerusalem. Perhaps they wanted Him to set out towards them, but the Lord loves them and wanted to first redeem them on the cross. Then He was going to set out towards them with His disciples and servants to draw them towards the road of eternal life. **This is indeed what happened through Philip, the deacon, in Acts 8**

In setting out towards Jerusalem, Jesus moves us with him towards Heavenly Jerusalem. Our goals and longings become always focused on Jerusalem, where no other interest preoccupies us; Moreover, they become **our only interest on Earth within our journey towards Jerusalem.**

Of course, some may not like that, and this may lead us to be rejected by some, as they did with the Lord Jesus. **The person who sets out towards Jerusalem will be firm in witnessing to the truth, being faithful in his words and conduct, and this will cause him to be rejected by some.** Also, he will continue abstaining from the desires of the world, his money, his outlook, and his honor, and this too will cause him to be **unwelcomed** by some. He will be steadfast in love, forgiveness, and tolerance towards the weaknesses of other, and this may sometime cause him to be **despised** by some.

A true Christian is always walking with Christ on his Journey towards Jerusalem, and is never inclined to change his direction regardless of the challenges and troubles, because in this path is his life and salvation.

Nonetheless, if man becomes careless and starts to neglect his spiritual life, he may deviate from his path towards Jerusalem. And perhaps a day will come, where he is completely heading to the opposite direction... What a dangerous thing!

Now, the question is: Are we truly walking with Christ, and heading towards Jerusalem with Him with all of our hearts?

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