

# The Cup Consumed for Us

By Steven Lee | Apr 07, 2014 10:30 am

Matthew shows us an odd exchange between Jesus and his disciples.

In Matthew 20:20–28, the mother of James and John, in typical motherly fashion, asks Jesus whether her nice, upstanding sons can sit beside Jesus in his kingdom. James and John, through their mother, are seeking prominence. They want to be great.

Jesus answers, in atypical fashion, with a question: “Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink” (Matthew 20:22)? This is not a rebuke as we might expect. It’s a simple question to which the brothers reply, “Yes, we are able drink the cup.”

They don’t understand what Jesus is saying. He then turns to his other disciples, who are angered by James’s and John’s request because they themselves desired the same prime placement at Jesus’s right hand. But Jesus sets them straight, and us. *Greatness in the kingdom of God is obtained along the path of love — the path of sacrifice, service, suffering.*

This is God’s economy, after all. Having more isn’t winning. Being served isn’t best. Being honored isn’t greatness. The people of Jesus are to follow in the footsteps of Jesus — who “came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).

## Can You Drink That Cup?

What do we make of Jesus’s unusual statement, “Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?”

Key passages in the Bible connect God’s wrath with the imagery of a cup. Jeremiah 25:15 tells us, “Thus the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: ‘Take from my hand this *cup* of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it.’” Then Isaiah 51:17 says, “O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the Lord the *cup* of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs the bowl, the cup of staggering.” In Revelation 14, an angel speaks, “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the *cup* of his anger” (verses 9–10).

Jesus confirms this connection in Gethsemane when he prayed, the cross looming just ahead, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will”(Matthew 26:39).

This is the same cup Jesus asks his disciples about in Matthew 20. It’s the cup of God’s wrath, a cup that has accumulated the fury of God against sins of all types. Heinous crimes, adultery, careless words, dishonoring thoughts, lies — all of it will be punished by God.

This is the cup Jesus drinks on the cross.

## **Come and Drink This Cup**

There, at Golgotha, our Savior drained God’s cup of burning anger down to the dregs. God poured out his wrath, full strength, undiluted, onto his Son. Paul summarizes the meaning of this great event, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Jesus drank the cup of God’s wrath for us so that he could extend the cup of God’s fellowship to us. We don’t get wrath anymore — now we get God. We get the sweet, satisfying reality of his eternal fellowship in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

This is the cup we drink now and forever. This is the cup that we offer to those who don’t know him yet, imploring them in God’s mercy, *Come, drink this cup with us because Jesus drank that cup for us.*