



THE 'CUP' - AN INVESTIGATION

"Matthew 26:39"

**Lehman D. Bates, II
First Baptist Church of Marshall Heights
Washington, DC
1 April, 2004**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PASSAGE:	3
QUESTION:	3
VIEW #1	3
EXPLANATION:	3
IMPLICATION:	3
A LOOK AT SCRIPTURE:	5
WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT HIS DEATH:	6
WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT HIMSELF:	6
WHAT OTHERS SAID ABOUT JESUS:	8
EVALUATION:	8
VIEW #2	9
EXPLANATION:	9
IMPLICATION:	9
ADDITIONAL PASSAGES FOR SUPPORT	11
CONCLUSION:	12

THE 'CUP' - AN INVESTIGATION

PASSAGE:

*O my Father, if it be possible, **let this cup pass from me**: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. Matthew 26:39 [KJV]*

QUESTION:

What did the 'cup' represent? Did it represent the betrayal, suffering, and crucifixion of Christ on the cross, or did it represent something else?

VIEW #1

EXPLANATION:

The popular viewpoint is that the 'cup' represents the betrayal, suffering, and crucifixion of Christ, implying the act of a 'reluctant' savior. The general understanding is that this prayer illustrates the 'humanity' of Jesus in not desiring to endure such a persecution, yet willing nonetheless to submit to the will of His Father.

IMPLICATION:

If this view is correct, what could this suggest (or imply) about Jesus? The understanding of this passage is crucial to the life of the believer, for our 'worship' of Jesus is based largely on how we 'see' Him. Therefore, the more clearly we 'see' Him, the better we will 'worship' Him, and the more we will desire to "be like Him".

Webster's dictionary defines 'reluctance' as "*feeling or showing aversion, hesitation, or unwillingness: having or assuming a specified role unwillingly*". 'Aversion' is defined as "*the act of turning away; a feeling of repugnance toward something with a desire to avoid or turn from it; a settled dislike*". And to 'hesitate' is defined as "*to hold back in doubt or indecision*".

Although this perceived view of Jesus is certainly understandable given the awesome burden that awaited Him, we must challenge this view by asking if this disposition is truly representative of the Jesus that we learn of, sing about, pray to, trust, hope, and have faith in?

The nature of the 'flesh' is to embrace this perceived view of Jesus' 'reluctance' to avoid suffering. This 'reluctance' lies at the core of every human choice, word, or deed that seeks to preserve the 'fleshly nature' resident in all of us.

One danger in this view is the **human tendency to use Jesus' perceived 'reluctance' as a basis for justifying our 'reluctance' to do the Will of GOD.** How often is the famous reply "the LORD knows my heart" uttered when faced with, and avoiding undesirable choices. And life has taught us that '*reluctance*', over time, quickly matures into '*resistance*'. And '*resistance*' unchallenged, will inevitably lead to '*refusal*'. *This view tempts us to focus more on Jesus 'humanity',*

which 'molds' Him to be 'more like us', instead of challenging us to focus on His 'Deity', which exhorts us to be 'more like Him'.

Another danger in this view is that it tends to **make Jesus One who, for a moment, considered His own 'preservation' above those whom He was sent to 'save'**. From a 'human' standpoint, the magnitude and significance of what Jesus faced can never be fully comprehended. However, this view has contradictory overtones in that it fosters the capacity to 'weaken' the character of Jesus, whose 'words' continually exhorted us to "deny ourselves", "lose our life in order to find it", "endure to the end", and be "faithful unto death", *and yet whose 'act' implied 'fear', 'uncertainty', and suggested a perceived desire for 'self-preservation' in the face of impending adversity.*

Consider the following passages and their eternal impact if this view were considered

*If thou faint in the day of adversity, **thy strength is small.** Proverbs 24:10*

***But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay:** for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. Matthew 5:37*

*For which of you, intending to build a tower, **sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost,** whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, **This man began to build, and was not able to finish.** Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:28-33*

***And he that doubteth is damned** if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Romans 14:23*

*A double minded man is **unstable in all his ways.** James 1:8*

*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. **He that feareth is not made perfect in love.** 1 John 4:18*

A third danger in this view is that it tends to **weaken the overall concept of Jesus has being the greatest man that ever lived.** Many men (named and unnamed) are recorded not only in Scripture, but in human history as being men of 'valor', who willingly gave their lives for their country, family, or cause. Many throughout human history have demonstrated exceptional abilities, talents, or gifts. Soldiers, fireman, law enforcement officers, and rescue personnel give their lives daily in the performance of their duties. How could Jesus be ANY less in ANY aspect to ANY man past, present, or future? How can Jesus have a "name

that is above every name”, if there were those in human history who demonstrated more ability than Jesus? Can any man be (or have been) more determined, more courageous, more selfless, or more obedient than Jesus? *If so, can this call into question the idea of Jesus as being the ‘perfect man’, if a ‘sinful’ man was (or is) able to ‘outperform’ Jesus in any human trait, behavior, or gift?*

*The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, **a greater than Jonas is here.** The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, **a greater than Solomon is here.** Matthew 12:41-42*

*For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, **The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.** John 13:15-16*

A corresponding danger in this view is that, if Jesus is not the ‘perfect man’, then why worship Him? If I already possess what Jesus possesses, then why follow Him? If He is just a ‘savior’, and I am ‘saved’, then why continue ‘in Him’. This view subtly weakens the desire to wholly follow Jesus by seeking to achieve only those gifts and/or traits of Jesus that are ‘achievable’ to our unique personality, and justify our lack of desire to “seek those things that are above”, again ‘molding’ Him to be ‘more like us’, and not challenging us to be ‘more like Him’.

*Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. **For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.** John 13:13-15*

*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, **leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:** 1 Peter 2:21*

A LOOK AT SCRIPTURE:

WHAT THE PROPHETS SAID ABOUT JESUS

*Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, **that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.** Isaiah 7:14-15*

*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: **and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.** Isaiah 9:6*

WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT HIS DEATH:

*For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; **so shall***

the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. *Matthew 12:40*

*From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, **Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.** Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. **For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.** For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? *Matthew 16:21-26**

*And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, **The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again.** And they were exceeding sorry.* *Matthew 17:22-23*

*Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and **the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.*** *Matthew 20:18-19*

*Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and **the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.*** *Matthew 26:2*

*Jesus saith unto them, **My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.*** *John 4:34*

These passages leave irrefutable evidence that Jesus knew why He came, what His mission was, and how it would be carried out. *He even rebukes Satan when Peter declares that His suffering and death would not occur* (e.g. *Matthew 16:22-23*)

WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT HIMSELF:

*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: **I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.** For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, **till all be fulfilled.*** *Matthew 5:17-18*

*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but **my words shall not pass away.*** *Matthew 24:35*

*And Jesus said unto them, **I am the bread of life:*** *John 6:35*

For I came down from heaven, **not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.** John 6:38

I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and **the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.** John 6:51

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, **I am the light of the world:** John 8:12

Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that **I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.** John 8:28

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Before Abraham was, I am.** John 8:58

I am the door: John 10:9

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. John 10:11

Therefore doth my Father love me, because **I lay down my life**, that I might take it again. **No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself.** I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. **This commandment have I received of my Father.** John 10:17-18

I and my Father **are one.** John 10:30

Jesus said unto her, **I am the resurrection, and the life:** John 11:25-26

Jesus saith unto him, **I am the way, the truth, and the life:** John 14:6

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. John 15:1

Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: **the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?** John 18:11

These passages not only reaffirm Jesus mission on earth, but also portrays Him as a willing and obedient Son, who offers His life willingly, and desires only to do the Will of His Father, with no hesitation, and in total control of His actions.

WHAT OTHERS SAID ABOUT JESUS: the DEMONS said

- What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? - Matthew 8:29
- Thou art Christ the Son of God - Luke 4:41
- What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech

thee, torment me not. Luke 8:28

the PASSENGERS IN A SHIP said

Of a truth thou art the Son of God. Matthew 14:33

the ROMAN CENTURION said

Truly this was the Son of God. Matthew 27:54

the UNCLEAN SPIRITS said

Thou art the Son of God. Mark 3:11

the PEOPLE IN THE SYNAGOGUE said

What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out. Luke 4:36

NATHANIEL said

Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. John 1:49

the OFFICERS said

Never man spake like this man. John 7:46

MARY said

Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. John 11:27

These passages affirm that the Diety of Jesus was universally recognized during His life and ministry on earth, not only from family and friends, but even from ‘enemies’ and ‘demons’.

*But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, **that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.** Matthew 18:16*

EVALUATION:

Based on the above, we conclude that the interpretation of the ‘cup’ as representing the betrayal, suffering, and death of Christ on the cross is is NOT consistent, nor is in harmony with the life, ministry, character and sayings of Jesus, and provides sufficient evidence to consider another view.

Finally, we leave the following passage to erase any further doubt as to the clarity of Our Saviour’s Mission on earth

*And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. **Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.** Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.*

VIEW #2

EXPLANATION:

An alternative viewpoint is that the 'cup' represented **Satan's final attempt to kill Jesus** prior his betrayal, suffering, and crucifixion. The interpretation offered is that **Jesus' prayer was an appeal to His Father to deliver Him from Satan, whose act (the 'cup' of death) would kill his physical body, and prevent Jesus from reaching Calvary**, thereby nullifying his prediction, and the prophecies of old.

IMPLICATION:

If this view is correct, what could this suggest (or imply)? We find that the implications of this view are numerous and astounding, and serve to greatly transform our understanding of Jesus. For purposes of brevity, we will only present a few.

The first implication is that **Satan had the 'power' to destroy Jesus**. Scripture supports this view

*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he <Jesus> also himself likewise took part of the same; **that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil**; Hebrews 2:14*

We are also reminded that Satan, as the **"god of this world"** (2 Corinthians 4:4), many times attempted to kill Jesus through others (see Matthew 2:13; Matthew 12:14; Matthew 26:4; Matthew 27:20; Mark 3:6; Mark 11:18; Luke 13:31; Luke 19:47; Luke 22:2; John 5:18; John 7:1; John 7:19-20; John 7:25; John 8:37; John 8:40), and even tried to get Jesus to kill Himself

*And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, **cast thyself down**: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Matthew 4:6*

but was unsuccessful. All through the Old Testament, we witness Satan's attempts over the centuries to 'prevent' the 'promised seed' from ever reaching the earth.

We further note the scene on the mountain where Satan tempts Jesus, and how it is recorded that *"the Devil taketh him"* (Matthew 4:5), and *"again, the Devil taketh him"* (Matthew 4:8); another indicator of Satan's jurisdiction on earth at the time.

The second implication is that **if Satan had the power over death, then Jesus' prayer constituted an appeal to His Father 'take authority' over Satan's attempt, and stay the hand of Satan so that prophecy can be fulfilled**. While

it is not specifically stated in this passage that Satan was trying to kill Jesus, we do note the Jesus was in great agony of spirit

*And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, **My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.** Matthew 26:37-38*

*And **being in an agony** he prayed more earnestly: and **his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.** Luke 22:44*

We also note that this event included the appearance of an angel, to strengthen Him

*And there **appeared an angel unto him from heaven**, strengthening him. Luke 22:43*

which parallels Satan's tempting of Jesus whereby Jesus was also physically weakened

*And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, **he was afterward an hungred.** Matthew 4:2*

and also was visited by angels who ministered unto Him.

*Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, **angels came and ministered unto him.** Matthew 4:11*

Can a mere man (or group of men) cause this degree of agony in Jesus? While we know that Jesus was recorded as being 'grieved' at the 'hardness' of the people's hearts (i.e. Mark 3:5), nowhere is it recorded in Scripture where Jesus experienced such a level and degree of confessed suffering mentioned here. Even on the cross, of the seven (7) recorded sayings of Jesus, none were in response to the physical suffering and persecution he endured.

***He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.** Isaiah 53:7*

'Power' consists of two forms; ability to perform, and authority to perform. Satan, during this time, possessed the ability and authority to destroy the body of Jesus

*But we see Jesus, who was made a **little lower than the angels (i.e. Satan) for the suffering of death**, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. Hebrews 2:9*

Jesus, as the perfect man, could not usurp authority over Satan's 'power of death',

or He would be in rebellion against His Fathers Authority.

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? **do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:** Romans 13:1-3

He had to appeal to His Father to 'take authority' over Satan in 'staying the hand of death' over Him, and thereby providing the perfect example for all of us in that He too, was subject to Satan, and required intervention from One who was higher than Satan.

Furthermore, notice when in the garden, Jesus is recorded to have uttered the words "this cup", when praying to his father, yet was recorded to have spoken to Peter "the cup that the Father hath given me". Could this be one in the same cup, or could it represent two different cups, the cup given by Satan, and the cup assigned to Jesus by His Father?

ADDITIONAL PASSAGES FOR SUPPORT

*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; **and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:*** Romans 5:12

*Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; **death hath no more dominion over him.*** Romans 6:9

*So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, **Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?** The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Cor. 15:54-57*

*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, **he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*** Philip. 2:5-8

*Who in the days of his flesh, when he <Jesus> had offered up prayers and supplications **with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;*** Hebrews 5:7

*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, **being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:*** 1 Peter 3:18

CONCLUSION:

It is said that ‘you are what you worship, and you worship what you are’. It is also suggested that the things that you embrace in others are the things you embrace in yourself, the things you admire in others in the things lacking in yourself, and the things that you hate in others are the things you hate about yourself.

Whether this view is embraced or not, the prayer of this presenter is that the seeds of this presentation will fall on “good ground”, challenging all of us to view our Savior as the Exalted One

We believe the above evidence, with its associated parallels, lends strong support to the view that this ‘cup’ was in fact a Satanic attack upon Jesus, whose desire was to destroy His ‘Body’, thereby preventing Him from reaching Calvary. Satan knew that Jesus was the “Word that became flesh”, “the Word that was Truth”, and that Calvary meant Satan’s downfall.

Most importantly, this view affirms Christ not as One who was reluctant, weak, even ‘wimpish’ at the prospect of adversity. Christ, like Abraham, was “strong in faith, giving glory to GOD” (Romans 4:20). His Mission was clear, and His Desire was steadfast, and unwavering. This provides us with the example we need to

*Finally, my brethren, **be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.** Ephes. 6:10*

***Fight the good fight of faith,** lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. 1 Tim. 6:12*

*Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: **be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.** Rev. 2:10*