

# CHRISTIAN EYES — WEEK 4

## JESUS'S EYES



F. Michael Slay  
*A DEEP Study*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

## The cover image is **The Healing of a Blind Man by Duccio di Buoninsegna**

The point of this Christian Eyes series is that we were supposed to see everything in terms of the kingdom. Our first priority isn't ourselves or our safety; it's the kingdom. That's exactly what Jesus did. He never lost focus. His safety, even his life was subordinate to the kingdom.

He died for His kingdom.

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T. M. Moore, Principal  
[tmmoore@ailbe.org](mailto:tmmoore@ailbe.org)

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Christian Eyes, Week 4 — Jesus's Eyes  
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1 Matthew 20:17–21

*Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again.”*

*Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him.*

*And He said to her, “What do you wish?”*

*She said to Him, “Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.”*

This incident will take more than one day to unpack.

Jesus is, obviously, the ultimate example of Christian eyes. Yet sometimes it seems like his disciples are the ultimate example of non-Christian eyes.

Jesus's announcement of His coming betrayal, crucifixion, and resurrection should blow their minds, or at least be a good conversation starter.

They know He's the Messiah. They know His word is truth. He's just prophesied a chilling future. You'd think He'd have gotten their attention.

But no, in the craziest segue in scripture, *Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him.* It's like the old joke about a TV news break — “Asteroid to strike the earth. All life to end. Details at 11. Now back to your regularly scheduled programming.”

Imagine Jesus's internal sigh as he asks her, “*What do you wish?*”

And sure enough, her question has nothing to do with what He just announced. He could have responded with something like, “Don't worry; no one will be sitting anywhere after all these things come to pass.”

In fact, what He says next isn't too far from that.

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Jesus's incredible focus on His path to the cross is the central plot line of the gospels. He knows what's coming. He tells His disciples what's coming. What's coming is rough. Yet He never breaks stride.

He's modeling what the disciples (and all Christians) are to do—prioritize the kingdom over everything else, particularly personal health and safety.

He's even prioritizing the kingdom over its king (Himself).

2 Matthew 20:20–23

*Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him.*

*And He said to her, "What do you wish?"*

*She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom."*

*But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"*

*They said to Him, "We are able."*

*So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father."*

This is hilarious. Jesus gets them to agree to *drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with*, but says that He can't give them the seats they want anyway.

Gee, tough luck guys.

And the reason He gives is important. Those seats are preassigned by the Father. Jesus's role in the Godhead does not include seat assignment.

And it's not just who assigns them; it's how. They are for whom they are *prepared*. The Father has them all planned out in advance. The people aren't just assigned to the seats; the seats are assigned to them, even *prepared* for them.

This is a key principle in the doctrine of God's sovereignty. God doesn't just foreordain the big things; He foreordains all things. The details are part of the plan.

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This aspect of reformed doctrine (that God foreordains the fall of every sparrow, the vibration of every atom) connects two different views of reality—modern physics and the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Modern physics doesn't allow for a single rogue atom. Anything less than a completely specified system will degrade into a totally out of control system. If there are any unknowns, control can only be maintained through intervention. Such intervention would violate free will.

*God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, **nor is violence offered to the will** of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established. — Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 3, Paragraph 1 (emphasis mine)*

3 Matthew 20:23–28

*So He said to them, “You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father.”*

*And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him 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.”*

Scripture doesn't say exactly why the ten are upset with the two brothers. They're probably upset at their wanting to be at the top of the kingdom hierarchy. They should be upset at them for not having a clue.

Jesus responds by teaching everyone that they've got the concept of hierarchy all wrong. First, he explains how the secular world works and points out that they won't be using that system.

*“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you;”*

But, Jesus continues, the kingdom of heaven is just the opposite. It doesn't do the hierarchy thing. Rather, *“whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—”*

And if that isn't clear enough, He points out that this non-hierarchy is, *“just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*

This brings the conversation full circle, back to what He said at the beginning of this incident.

*“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again.”* — Matthew 20:17–19

Maybe they'll listen this time.

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Actually, they are listening. The problem isn't with their listening; it's with their understanding. The plan for Jesus to be the sacrificial lamb is too much for them to process.

Three huge plot twists scramble what the Jews expect. First, they expect the Messiah to deliver them from Rome, not from sin. Second, the whole incarnation thing is just too wild to comprehend quickly. Last, the Messiah is supposed to win. Winning by losing and then being resurrected is just too bizarre.

They won't buy that until it's all over.

4 Matthew 22:15–22

*Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk. And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, “Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men. Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?”*

*But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, “**Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the tax money.**”*

*So they brought Him a denarius.*

*And He said to them, “**Whose image and inscription is this?**”*

*They said to Him, “Caesar’s.”*

*And He said to them, “**Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.**” When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.*

People often interpret this passage as Jesus outwitting the Pharisees who were trying to *entangle Him*, but that misses the point. The Pharisees have the wrong concept of a Messiah, and Jesus is correcting them.

They expected a Messiah that would overthrow the Roman kingdom. That’s not who showed up though. Instead, Immanuel became literal and the kingdom of heaven arrived in a heavenly form. The kingdom of heaven gladly allows other kingdoms to exist.

Having Christian eyes means taking the right Messiah concept to heart. They see both kingdoms, but the kingdom of heaven is the important one. Other kingdoms shouldn’t be ignored, just seen in context.

Yes, the government makes money through taxation, even by just printing it—which is a whole lot easier than earning it. Yes, we should pay taxes.

Yes, the government uses force to make people obey its rules. Thus, their rules define right and wrong in society. Yes, sometimes the government’s concept of right and wrong conflicts with Scripture.

So, two kingdoms coexist in the same place at the same time. They have, at times, even disagreed.

But only one of those kingdoms is forever. Governments come and go.

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Governments are important. They provide the environment for all activity. Christians should almost never be revolutionary or subversive. That would be falling back into the wrong messiah concept.

*Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. — Romans 13:1–2*

5 Acts 9:1–5

*Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.*

*As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”*

*And he said, “Who are You, Lord?”*

*Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”*

This is the ultimate example of Christian eyes.

Jesus doesn't say that Saul is persecuting His people, or even His kingdom. Jesus says that Saul is, “persecuting Me.”

This takes the concept that we are His body literally. It's not just a metaphor. This illuminates other passages.

*For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. — Romans 12:4–5*

*For in fact the body is not one member but many.*

*If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be?*

*But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. — 1 Corinthians 12:14–22*

This takes the concept of Christian eyes beyond just seeing everything *else* in terms of the kingdom. Christian eyes see the kingdom differently.

We saw earlier that the kingdom doesn't function like a hierarchy where, “*the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them.*” (Matthew 20:25b)

Now we see that the kingdom functions like a body. Persecuting us is persecuting the king.

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We shouldn't just see people as created in the *image* of God. Christians are part of Him.

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. How can we lead a normal life and still prioritize the kingdom?
2. How should a Christian view scientific "truths"?
3. What's your favorite part of this grand plan?
4. Are people still looking for the wrong Messiah?
5. Can you be more than one body part?

*Items for prayer:*