

January 17, 2010

**CLINGING TO THAT WHICH KILLS
MATTHEW 19.16-30**

In order to inherit the future life in the kingdom of God, one must renounce all idols and be loyal to Jesus alone.

19.16–20.16 forms one big unit, the parable of the landowner and the workers being somewhat of an explanation of what goes on with the rich young man and Jesus' instruction of his disciples.

1. JESUS AND THE RICH YOUNG MAN: WHAT MUST I DO TO HAVE LIFE? (16-22)

Goodness, life, and keeping the commandments (16-19): Contrast between encounters: the Pharisees came *testing* Jesus and this young man seems to making a genuine inquiry (note his response of sadness as opposed to anger).

Pharisees represent unfaithful Israelites while this young man represents faithful Israel (though the encounter ends with the same tragic conclusion of rejection of Jesus).

Jesus' encounters are encounters w/ individuals that reflect conditions in Israel at the time.

"Goodness" - Jesus begins his answer by focusing on the young man's use of "good." God alone is ultimately good. This has direct relevance to the question of what must be done to obtain life.

1) Points to the fact that goodness has a standard in a Person—God himself—and cannot be a made up principle by a man or group of men.

2) Thus, we must be dependent upon God himself and what he has revealed to understand what is *good*. (cf. 15.1ff.; goodness cannot be defined by the doctrines and commandments of men that contradict God's *good* law.)

God has revealed himself and his will in his commandments so that we know what is *good* and what must be done. The good thing that must be done to inherit life must conform to the goodness of God, revealed in Scripture and in Jesus himself.

"Eternal life" = lit. "life of the age." Two ages: this present age and the age to come (i.e., the age of the Messiah, the kingdom of God, when God vindicates his people, declaring them to be his true people, and setting them up to rule the world).

Jesus has been proclaiming that this "age to come" is already breaking in when he announces that the "kingdom of heaven has drawn near."

Young man not asking about how to go to heaven when he died. He was concerned about being a part of the kingdom which would be est. over all the world and in which he would rule with the other people of God.

Is he asking the right question? Is his question misguided b/c he asks about what he must do? No. (cf. Ac 16.30-31)

Is Jesus giving him a false road to salvation by telling him to keep the commandments? Is seeking to condemn him through the use of the Law so that he might be prepared for grace? I don't think that fits the text well.

Throughout Scripture there are promises involved with covenant-keeping; which is synonymous with keeping God's commandments. Israel was promised, "If you keep my covenant you will live. If you don't keep my covenant you will die." (cf. Dt 30.19; promises also attached to keeping commandments and inheriting the land: Dt 28; Lev 26; 5th Commandment).

Note: Jesus is not preaching a "you can merit your salvation by keeping the Law" gospel. There is no salvation apart from faith ever. Cf. Heb 11.6

Jesus is affirming God's promises connected with those commandments. They are true b/c God is good and is faithful to his word. Cf. Mt 5.17ff.

A new commandment (20-22): Is this man self-deceived believing he has kept the commandments? Possibly. But it is also likely that he has been a faithful Israelite. Cp. Lk 1.6 where Zach and Elizabeth walk in *all* the commandments and are *blameless*.

Note that the Law itself provides for atonement for sin. So, when you come to confess and offering sacrifice for sin, you are

obeying the Law. That is a righteous act.

The young man realizes that he still lacks something. The Law (reflected in these commandments) cannot bring in the life of the age to come. It is good for its time, but its time is passing (cp. Rom 7.12; 8.3).

The Law provides the place and means to deal with sin. When sin is dealt with in death (i.e. sin's consequences), then life/resurrection can be realized.

“Perfect” - to be complete; to come into this mature state of affairs which is the age to come revealed in Jesus.

Why sell all that he has? Specific historical situation. His possessions were invested in the old world; specifically in Israel. That world is passing away and he must be willing to give it up to follow Jesus.

What happens when a person refuses to move forward and leave those things behind? That which was good for that time becomes an idol that must be destroyed. This is precisely the story of Israel that is being embodied in this young man.

If he clings to the land/possessions of the old world, he violates the first of the 10 Commandments. Interestingly, now loyalty to YHWH means loyalty to Jesus and his agenda.

2. JESUS AND THE DISCIPLES: THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE RICH INHERITING LIFE (23-26)

Squeezing a camel through a needle's eye (23-24): Wealth in all of its various forms provides a sense of security. The wealthy have a more difficult time letting go of that illusion of security and finding security in the Word of God.

“camel through the eye of a needle” - speaking about a large animal and a sewing needle. The point: this is impossible.

Who then can be saved? (25-26): Disciples' astonishment seems to come from the fact that the rich are blessed by God. It is a sign of favor from God. Cf. covenant blessings in Dt 28 & Lev 26.

If these highly favored people can't be saved, who can? Jesus' answer: God can fit a camel through the eye of a needle!

3. JESUS AND PETER: THE REWARDS FOR FORSAKING ALL AND FOLLOWING JESUS (27-30)

What's in it for us? (27): Peter's question is based upon the promises of God, esp now revealed in what Jesus commanded the young man to do. Remember, early on in the Gospel when Jesus called Peter and Andrew, they immediately left their nets and followed him (4.18-20). They responded in obedience to the command of Jesus unlike the young man.

God promised certain things. When should we expect these things to be given to us? That is what Peter is asking.

The rewards for loyalty to Jesus (28-30): “Amen” (trans “verily,” “truly,” or “assuredly”). Jesus is giving them a certain word.

“The regeneration” = “the age to come,” the world comes out from under death and enters into life.

This is the time when the whole creation which was brought under the curse through Adam's sin is delivered. This is the time when God's Son(s) are set up as the new Adam and rule the world as God intended from the beginning.

Note Jesus' words about being set up to rule. Taken from Dan 7: the Son of Man (the Son + his people) ascend and are given the everlasting kingdom.

The Son of Man will be enthroned and then the 12 will be given 12 thrones to judge the 12 tribes of Israel; i.e. they will inherit all of the promises given to Israel and will indeed judge Israel. After Jesus ascends to his throne and is granted all authority, he gives them authority. Through their ministry in union with Christ, they judge Israel.

Those who forsake fortunes or family from Jesus' sake right now will be rewarded 100-fold.

1. *We must not allow the good blessings of God to become idols in our lives that keep us from being loyal to Jesus.*