

Rules For The Rich Young Ruler

Rediscovering Jesus in the Jewish Gospels

Matthew 19:13 - 30 Lesson 37

Review

(19:13-15) These verses close the parenthetical section on the value of children and child-like faith to God. It is within this section that Jesus addresses frivolous divorce. This is within the broader context of the value of the God instituted family. In review of lesson 33 on Matthew chapter 18...

- Greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven “humble himself”
Ταπεινώ, *tap-i-no'-o* to *humiliate* (in condition or heart): - abase, bring low, humble (self) KJV – 14 x
- Reception of a child in Jesus’ name as Jesus just demonstrated, equals reception of Him. (18:5)
- Offence to a child is deserving of capital punishment by drowning.

Inevitable offenses are a plight of the human condition

- Jesus pronounces a “woe” to one intentionally causing offences especially to children (Luke 17:1)
- The woe is endangerment of “everlasting fire” (18:8,9)
- “Take heed...despise not” one of these little ones (18:10)
- God’s care of “one of these little ones” is compared to the priority of one lost sheep. (18:11-14)
The parable of the lost sheep is repeated in Luke 15:1-7
- “In Heaven” “their angels” “behold the face of my Father” “in Heaven”
 - ✓ Angels are guardians of little ones
 - ✓ Angels are both messengers of God and ministers to the saints.
Hebrews 1:14 “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”
- It is not God’s will that any including one of these little ones should perish. (18:14)

After this great emphasis on children, it is mind boggling that His disciples attempted to push the parents of these little ones away. Jesus rebuked, “Forbid them not.” He then “laid his hands on” ie: blessed these children.

Dr. Harold Wilmington numbers the sequence of these events in Matthew 19 as Step #48,ⁱ in his 72 Steps from Glory to Glory.

Rules For the Rich Young Ruler

(19:16, 22,23) A rich young man inquired of Jesus what he could do to receive or earn eternal life.

(19:16-21) Jesus responded to the young man’s greeting which was in no doubt intended as a respectful title and dissected it to reveal the young man’s understanding of “good.”

“master” – Bal, “good” – tov, similar to (*Bal shem tov*) – good master of (ha Shem) The Name - a title given to a chief righteous Rabbi. It’s like saying good master of God’s name. As we would say “he was laying it on thick.”

Jesus asked why he referred to Him as good.

1. The primary issue is Jesus' identity. Is He God in flesh or just a good master teacher? "Why callest thou me good?" (19:17) Jesus clarified that only God is good or righteous. "*there is none good but one, that is, God.*"
2. The secondary issue is righteousness, what is its source and how it is established humanly speaking.
3. The main issue for the young rich man and subject of his inquiry was how to obtain eternal life.

He assumed Jesus was just a good man and that he too was a good man and therefore worthy of eternal life.

Jesus answer has been and remains a controversial issue in opposing Christian theological systems today. It is a constant source of misunderstanding among the unregenerate as they are evangelized. Any Christian that has discussed salvation with a non believer has met with the objection of good works being sufficient to gain entrance into heaven. The observant Jewish person with some knowledge of Jesus' teaching may bring up this verse as an objection to the salvation by faith alone message. The objection is stated; "Jesus also taught that salvation came through obeying the Law." Opposing Christian views have declared a "gospel of grace" message as the invention of Paul and the other writers.

(19:17) Jesus said "if thou wilt obtain eternal life, keep the commandments." OK, if you think you can obtain it...

Jesus refers him to Exodus 20:12-16 listing the five of the ten commandments, dealing with man's relationship to man.

"Honor thy father and thy mother.

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."

The young ruler thought that not violating his fellow man, made him righteous.

"The same gospels that preserve teaching of Jesus that you have just quoted state categorically that He came to save us from our sins. (Matthew 1:21), that He gave his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45), that His blood was the blood of the new covenant, poured out for us (Luke 22:20), and that the message of repentance and forgiveness of sins had to be preached in His name (Luke 24: 46-47). This hardly fits the description of someone who taught that complete salvation came through obeying the Law! Rather, Jesus used the Torah as the standard of righteousness and a means of convicting us of our sins and exposing the lack of our obedience before ushering in the new covenant which granted us complete and total forgiveness through His death and through which we are called to a higher level of obedience than was possible through keeping the Law."ⁱⁱ

The answer to the objection that says, to get eternal life you must keep the Law, in addition to believing in Jesus to save you is found in Paul's epistle to Romans and the epistle to the Galatians. He clearly states that a man is justified before God by faith through grace and not by keeping the commandments (Ephesians 2:8,9; Galatians 3:10,11). But for those who would reject Paul's teaching as a perversion of the teaching by Jesus, they have to overlook Jesus' answer to Nicodemus in John 3.

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”(John 3:3,14-18)

They would have to ignore a plethora of verses in which Jesus said eternal life was obtained by faith in Him.

John 5:24 “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”

8:23,24 “ I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins.

7-10 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

10:27-30 “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand. I and *my* Father are one.”

14:6,7 “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

Mark 10:45 “For even the Son of man came ...to give his life a ransom for many.”

Mark 16:15,16 “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

Luke 24:46,47 “And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

Acts 4:12 “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

Salvation by faith alone without the keeping of the commandments was not a later invention of Paul but was the clear teaching of Jesus and his disciples before and after his death and resurrection.

The next objection follows from Jesus' very words on the importance of keeping the commandments.

“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. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Not every one that saith unto me,

Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matthew 5:17-21

Jesus said that doing the will of God is believing in him. "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is **the work of God, that ye believe** on him whom he hath sent." (John 6:28,29)

The young Jewish ruler boasted that he had kept these five commandments from his youth.

Jesus dealt with the root issue #2 What is righteousness and how does one obtain it? Jesus gave his confidence in good works a test. How good is good enough?

"If thou wilt be perfect." (19:21) Perfection is complete divine righteousness not degrees of human goodness.

If he truly loved God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself then he would be willing to do good to his neighbor to the point of impoverishing himself. Jesus pointed out that not only had he failed to keep the commandments, but that he failed to love God supremely. Then Jesus said to him in essence, If I am a good master, you should, with no hesitancy, forsake all and follow me. This was dealing with root issue # 1: Is Jesus just good or is He the Son of God?

Jesus was not teaching this rich young ruler that eternal life could be achieved through keeping the commandments else He would have said, "Good job! You'll make it to Heaven if you keep it up." He would have turned to His disciples like He did with the little child and presented the ruler as an example and said, "Unless you become like this man you cannot enter into heaven."

His response was telling of his heart and his sin. "But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions" (19:22).

The greater sin is to love things more than God rather than only loving God with all your heart soul and might (Exodus 20:3). Jesus was pointing to the greatest sin: not loving God with all of his heart – valuing things above God and not loving his neighbor as himself but loving himself above the needs of others. We either worship God, love people, and use things, or worship ourselves more than God, love things, and misuse people for financial advantage.

The young ruler went away disappointed refusing to admit, that only God is good and that he was not good.

Matthew 19:23-25 Reveals the disciples' misconception that rich men were rich at the blessing of God for their righteousness. Job's miserable friends pointed to some hidden sin as the cause of him losing his wealth. Job 8:20-22

(19:26-30) Jesus declares that salvation by human effort is impossible. Salvation is only possible with God. The disciples had forsaken all to follow him. They had already declared their faith in Him as the Savior. The old self-centered question of sinners "What's in it for us?" came up.

They were assured not only of blessings now in following Him but eternal life, not as a reward, but as he had just pointed out that they already were inheritors of eternal life through their faith as evidenced by their works.

A greatly misinterpreted verse regarding lawkeeping for believers is Matthew 5:17 "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." Jesus was making it clear that He was not coming to abolish the Law and the prophets but to fulfill them, indicating that through Him they found their ultimate expression. The antithesis of destroy/abolish is not to keep the Law but to fulfill it. It is a false interpretation that since Jesus kept the Law we should keep the Law or rather become "Torah observant." Check out this excellent magazine issue by Ariel Ministries on the falsehood of observing the Law as the goal of Christian sanctification.ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ Wilmington's Guide To The Bible, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Wheaton, Illinois, 1984, P 311-318

ⁱⁱ Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus Volume four, Michael L. Brown, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2007, P 177

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://magazine.ariel.org/winter-2016>