

A Rich Young Man Rejects Jesus Matthew 19:16-30

by David Servant

Jesus teaches that eternal life is not earned by good behavior, but by believing in and following Him, and that wealth can be a major obstacle to entering the Kingdom of God.

Scripture: Matthew 19:16-17, Matthew 19:24, Mark 10:17, 1 Timothy 6:17

Topics: "Wealth And Faith", "Repentance And Salvation"

Description

David Servant preaches about the encounter between Jesus and the rich young man, highlighting the man's assumption that eternal life could be earned through good deeds and Jesus' response that only God is good. Jesus emphasized the need for repentance, belief in Him, and following His commandments for salvation, revealing the man's struggle with unbelief and attachment to wealth. Despite the man's reluctance to give up his possessions, Jesus teaches the importance of surrendering everything to follow Him and warns about the challenges of wealth hindering one's entrance into the Kingdom of God.

Transcript

The first question that the rich young man asked Jesus was, "What good things must I do to have eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16). His question contained his assumption that a person could receive eternal life by doing certain good things. He assumed eternal life was something to be earned by good behavior.

Immediately recognizing the error in the man's thinking, Jesus tried to help him realize that he was a sinner who fell short of God's standards of holiness by saying, "Why ask me about what is good? Only God is good" (Matthew 19:17). If only God is good, then everyone else is bad, including the rich young man, and Jesus wanted him to know it.

Jesus also wanted the man to know that, even though he was a sinner, he could be saved if he repented, which is why He told him he could receive eternal life by keeping God's commandments. He then immediately asked Jesus which of the commandments he needed to keep.

Jesus listed six of the Ten Commandments that dealt with how we treat other people. The rich young man claimed to have kept them all, which was very doubtful. He then asked if there was anything else that he must do to have eternal life. And there was. He needed to become a believer in and a follower of Jesus, the only Savior and Lord. That is God's requirement for anyone to be saved.

There were, however, two things standing in the man's way, and Jesus knew it. First, the man didn't believe that Jesus was the Son of God; he only believed that Jesus was a good teacher. That's how he addressed Jesus at first (see Mark 10:17). In order for a person to have eternal life, he must believe in Jesus, and if he believes in Jesus, he will follow and obey Him.

Second, money was the rich man's god. As Jesus once said, it's impossible to serve God and money. If Jesus had been the rich man's God, he would have obeyed Jesus and given his money away to the poor as Jesus commanded him. But the man didn't believe in Jesus, so he didn't obey Jesus. Even though he walked away saddened by what he'd heard, he wouldn't give up any of his many possessions.

As He watched the rich young man walk away, Jesus commented to His disciples, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!" (Matthew 19:24). The reason is because so many rich people are just like the rich young ruler. They love money and are unwilling to submit to Jesus, making Him their Lord and the Lord of their money. Jesus expects everyone who follows Him to be generous and share what God gives to them.

Q. Wasn't Jesus asking the rich man to give up an awful lot in order to follow Him?

A. Actually, it could be said that Jesus wasn't asking him to give up anything, because He promised the rich man that if he gave his money away to the poor, he would have treasure in heaven. If the rich man was giving up anything, it was only temporarily. And what he gave up he would have had to give up anyway when he died, whereas what he gained in heaven would be his for eternity. As martyred missionary Jim Elliot once said, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

Q. In heaven, will anyone regret any earthly sacrifice he made for Christ's cause?

A. No, most will probably wish they had made greater sacrifices and given more when they were on the earth.

Application: Praise God that not all wealthy people are like the rich young man we read about today. Paul wrote to Timothy, concerning wealthy Christians, "Tell those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which will soon be gone. But their trust should be in the living God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and should give generously to those in need, always being ready to share with others whatever God has given them. By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may take hold of real life" (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

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