

THE RICH YOUNG RULER

BIBLE TEXT : Mark 10:17-31

LESSON 182 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" (Mark 10:24).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Mark 10:17-31

¹⁷ And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

¹⁸ And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is* none good but one, *that is*, God.

¹⁹ Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

²⁰ And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

²¹ Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

²² And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

²³ And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

²⁴ And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!

²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

²⁶ And they were astonished out of

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Christ's Message

Many people listened to Jesus preach and teach when He was on earth. Some of them were sick, and wanted Jesus to heal them. He did. Others were poor, and wanted Him to give them something to eat. And sometimes He did that, too. But Jesus had a greater message to teach than just about the care of our bodies here. He wanted to show them how important it was to be ready to go to Heaven.

Some people are so busy making a good home for themselves and their families, and earning money for fine clothes and to pay for a good education, that they do not have time to prepare for the hereafter or to think about Jesus. They may have everything they want now, and have a good time, but one day they are going to be old and their life will be over. What then? They have spent all their time in trying to make things pleasant for themselves here, and they are not ready to meet Jesus. Or perhaps they died younger than they had thought they would, and they had no time to prepare for death.

Life as a Vapor

Our life here is very short compared with eternity. "It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14). You have watched steam come from a teakettle, white and fluffy — but almost right away it is gone. You cannot see where it went or what became of it. That is how long our life looks to God, compared with eternity. One instant we are here, and the next we have gone to face God. If we have prepared for Heaven, we shall enjoy it forever and ever; but if we have been too busy here to give attention to eternal things, Jesus will have to turn us out into everlasting punishment.

The Ruler's Question

Among the people who had heard Jesus preach was a rich young ruler. He must have heard Jesus tell about the beauties of Heaven, and the happiness God's people would enjoy throughout eternal life. He thought he would like to go there, too, so one day he came running to Jesus, and he knelt down before Him, saying: "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered him, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God." We know that Jesus was the Son of God, and was good, too; but Jesus knew that the young man thought of Him only as a teacher, or prophet, and not as the Son of God. He really wanted to know about eternal life, for he came running. And he believed that Jesus could tell him what he needed to know, for he called Him Master, and he also knelt at His feet. Jesus saw that he was a good man, and He loved him.

A Lack

The rich young ruler was a religious man and knew the Ten Commandments. He perhaps did the things the Pharisee whom we read about in our last lesson did: paid tithes, fasted, made long prayers. But he must have felt that there was something lacking, that there was something more he should do if he wanted to enter into the Kingdom which Jesus told about.

Jesus reminded the young man of the Ten Commandments. Did he keep them? Why, of course! He had always tried to be a

measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?

²⁷ And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men *it is* impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

²⁸ Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.

²⁹ And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

³⁰ But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

³¹ But many *that are* first shall be last; and the last first.

good boy, and he had honored his parents. He had never taken anything that did not belong to him, nor did he tell lies. Was not that being as good as Jesus could ask for?

The commandments that Jesus asked about had to do with works, things that could be done without being saved. But in order to be ready for Heaven, one must have the Blood of Jesus wash away his sins. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified" (Romans 3:20). A person cannot earn his way into Heaven by doing good works.

The First Commandment

Jesus did not ask the young ruler about the first commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). If he had, the young man would undoubtedly have answered with just as much certainty that he had kept that commandment, too. He had never worshiped false gods, he knew. But Jesus saw that he loved his wealth, and was making a god of it, so He said: "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me."

The rich young ruler did not expect such an answer. He thought that Jesus would surely compliment him for his good behavior. What a strange request, to ask him to *sell* all that he had and give to the poor. He perhaps had worked hard and earned it honestly; why should he give it away?

This young man should have heard Christ's teaching: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal" (Matthew 6:19). Now he had all his wealth, much of which might have been houses. What if they had burned down? Then he would not have had anything. Or he might have had precious jewels. What if a thief had sneaked in some dark night and taken them all away so he could never get them back? Or what if he had become ill, and his wealth could not bring healing to his body? He might as well have had nothing.

After Death

Or let us even consider that he was a very fortunate young man. None of his houses ever burned down, nor were destroyed by vandals; no one ever took any of his jewels or gold; he enjoyed good health until he was a very old man. But he still had to die. Then what about his wealth? He would stand before God without a penny; and he would have nothing with which he could cover his sins. All he would receive from God would be eternal judgment. "The increase of his house shall depart, and his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath. This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God" (Job 20:28, 29).

You may say: "But this young man was not wicked." Jesus said: "One thing thou lackest"; and in James 2:10, we read: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." So in spite of all his good works, when he turned sorrowfully away from Jesus he showed that he loved his money more than he loved Jesus, and he was guilty of breaking the first commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). God's Word commands: "Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold" (Proverbs 8:10).

No Love for the World

Through John the Beloved, we are told: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.... And the world passeth away, ... but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (I John 2:15, 17).

Jesus did not mean that no one could be a Christian who was rich. King David prayed to God: "Both riches and honour come of thee" (I Chronicles 29:12); and God gives them to His people,

too. But David also said: "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them" (Psalm 62:10). Jesus spoke of riches as being deceitful, and that there was danger that they might choke out the Word of God.

When Jesus said to His disciples: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" they were astonished; so He added: "How hard is it for them that trust in riches." Almost all people believe that money will buy them anything they want, will open any door to them. But Heaven's door will never open through the persuasion of money. The prophet cried out: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat" (Isaiah 55:1).

The Needle's Eye

When Jesus said: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." they were "astonished out of measure." Some people think that the needle's eye Jesus referred to was a small gate in the city wall of Jerusalem through which the camel must kneel, and his load be removed, in order to pass. But it was possible for camels to pass through this gate; and it would not have astonished the disciples "out of measure." Jesus said it was impossible with man, but "with God all things are possible."

Perhaps we see a man who is very much occupied with his business. He has much money with which to buy anything he wants — and which also takes all his time to care for. We may think that that man will never take time to think about Jesus. But Jesus said it was possible for such a person to be saved. The money the rich man has will not help him get to Heaven. He will have to come just as any poor sinner, and cry: "God be merciful to me a sinner!" When he lets God show him that all his money will never buy peace for him, and he feels himself lost, he will call upon God for mercy, and the shed Blood of Jesus will make it possible for him to be saved.

The Disciples' Answer to the Call

The Apostle Peter had listened to what Jesus told the rich man, and he began to think about his nearness to the Lord. What if he had turned and gone away sorrowful when Jesus had called him? Think of what he would have missed!

Peter, James, and John had been fishing all night without catching anything. They were tired and discouraged as they washed their nets. Jesus had passed by and had asked them to go fishing again. They obeyed, and that time they caught so many fishes that their nets broke. But that day Jesus had said: "From henceforth thou shalt catch men." When they had come to land, they had left their ships and nets and, had followed Jesus (**Luke 5:10-11** ¹⁰ And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. ¹¹ And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.). Peter, James, and John had left all to follow Jesus. How happy they must have been now, when they saw the rich young ruler go away, that they had chosen the better part. Jesus encouraged Peter by saying: "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, . . . and in the world to come eternal life."

If we obey what Jesus calls us to do, He will take good care of us. Jesus said: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." "For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"

(Matthew 6:25, 32, 33). The promise is ours. If we live to please Him, we can pray with confidence that He will supply all our needs.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What did the rich young ruler want to know?
- 2 What did he already know about the Bible?
- 3 How had he lived?
- 4 Why was Jesus not satisfied with the rich ruler's life?
- 5 Why did Jesus ask him to sell what he had and give to the poor?
- 6 What did Jesus promise him if he did sell all?
- 7 What did the rich young ruler do when Jesus asked him to sell all?
- 8 What did Jesus say about rich men going to Heaven?
- 9 What must a rich man do to be ready for Heaven?
- 10 What did Jesus tell His disciples to seek first?