

FACT QUESTIONS

1. Explain what the parents desired for their children when they brought them to Jesus. That is, what does it mean to them for Him to "lay His hands on them and pray"?
2. What was the attitude of the Apostles toward the children and those who brought them?
3. What was the attitude of Jesus toward the children and those who brought them?
4. Explain: "To such belongs the Kingdom of God."
 - a. What phase, or expression, of the Kingdom of God belongs to them?
 - b. In what sense does it "belong to such"?
 - c. Who are the people intended by the expression "to such"?
5. What additional teaching do Mark and Luke include that further clarifies Jesus' meaning? Where in Matthew have we already encountered this?
6. What is the total impact of this vignette in the life of our Lord? There may be several points to notice.
7. List the texts in Matthew 18 that find practical application in this section.

Section 49

JESUS TESTS RICH YOUNG RULER
AND ENCOURAGES DISCIPLES

(Parallels: Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30)

TEXT: 19:16-30

A. The Demands of Discipleship

16 And behold, one came to him and said, Teacher, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? 17 And he said unto him, Why askest thou me concerning that which is good? One there is who is good: but if thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments. 18 He saith unto Him, Which? And Jesus said, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, 19 Honor thy father and thy

mother; and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. 20 The young man saith unto him, All these things have I observed: what lack I yet? 21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell that which thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. 22 But when the young man heard the saying, he went away sorrowful; for he was one that had great possessions.

B. The Dangers of Possessions

23 And Jesus said unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. 24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. 25 And when the disciples heard it, they were astonished exceedingly, saying, Who then can be saved? 26 And Jesus looking upon *them* said to them, With men this is impossible: but with God all things are possible.

C. The Dividends of Faithfulness

27 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee; what shall we have? 28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And every one that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life. 30 But many shall be last **that are** first; and first **that are** last.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. What do you think is the motive(s) behind the rich young ruler's request?
- b. Why did this Jew make this particular request, i.e. what point of view is back of the wording of his question?
- c. Why did Jesus hold him off at arm's length at first, quibbling over the word "good," or would you consider this a quibble? If

not, what is the point of Jesus' shifting the emphasis from the "deed" to do, to the "good" that would qualify such a deed to inherit eternal life?

- d. Do you think Jesus meant to deny His own essential goodness by asking: "Why do you ask me about what is good? One there is who is good," i.e. God?
- e. Since Mark and Luke both report Jesus as saying: "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone," do you think Jesus meant to deny or affirm anything about His own essential deity and goodness? What would be the point of making these remarks before getting down to the young man's initial question?
- f. If selling all that the young man possessed was the one thing he lacked to inherit eternal life, as Jesus later shows, what could have prompted Jesus to cite the commandments first? Was this a mere diversion, or an essential part of the total answer? If you think it was essential, explain why you think so.
- g. Do you think the young man was sincere when he affirmed: "All these I have observed from my youth"? What makes you think this?
- h. How would the sale of his possessions, alms and discipleship to Jesus make the young man perfect? What does this teach us about our own road to perfection?
- i. Jesus said, "If you would be perfect . . ." in answer to the young man's assertion, "All these (commandments) I have observed; what do I still lack?" Do you feel a touch of irony in His words? Why?
- j. As the price of our eternal life must we sell all we possess in order to have treasure in heaven? Is there no lesson or principle in this incident for us? If so, what? If not, why not?
- k. The young man "went away sorrowful," but not angry. Why?
- l. What kind of discipleship do you think Jesus was offering him? Was it eventual apostleship or some other function? On what basis would you decide this?
- m. While the Scripture says he went away sorrowful "for he had great possessions," is it not also correct to say that he went away sorrowful "for great possessions had him"? Of what fundamental sin is he guilty?
- n. Why do you suppose it is so difficult for a rich man to enter the Kingdom? To what phase or expression of the Kingdom is Jesus referring here? How does one's understanding of the Kingdom help to see why wealth makes entrance hard?
- o. What picturesque figure of speech did Jesus use to illustrate the

- rich man's difficulty of entering the Kingdom? Did Jesus mean "difficulty" or "impossibility"? How do you know?
- p. Why were the disciples so stunned to hear Jesus' pronouncements about the hindrances blocking the entrance of wealthy people into the Kingdom? Name some wealthy AND godly people whom the disciples could have cited as certainly in the Kingdom. What is the point of view behind their astonishment?
 - q. What motivation prompted Peter's reaction to Jesus' surprising pronouncements on wealth, "Lo, we have left everything and followed you. What then shall we have?"? Is it selfish calculation? Genuine curiosity motivated by interest in spiritual rewards? Are there any clues in the text that would help you decide whether his is a wrong-headed question or else perfectly proper?
 - r. Some teachers of ethics and moral philosophers insist that good deeds based upon hope of reward are thereby vitiated. To what extent does Jesus' answer prove that rewards for Christian service are not ethically wrong?
 - s. How could the future, glorious, messianic age be referred to as "the regeneration"? Do you think Jesus means the Christian age on earth, or the post-judgment new world of eternity? On what basis do you decide this?
 - t. Does not Jesus' promise of "a hundredfold" actually promote the kind of materialistic calculation for selfish ends, that He had so obviously denounced in affirming the impossibility of rich men to enter the Kingdom? In what sense, then, does He promise "a hundredfold" what had been surrendered for His sake?
 - u. Why did Jesus sound the warning that "many that are first will be last, and the last first"? Why is this aphorism appropriate at precisely this point?
 - v. How does the section on the rich young ruler speak to the larger human problem of the relations between rich and poor, or does it? If so, what is the message?
 - w. What else did Jesus teach about money, the desire for it and the use of it? What did He say about *how* to have treasure in heaven, and about *why* we should have it there?
 - x. Have you noticed the connections between the latter part of this section (vv. 27-30) and the parable which immediately follows in chapter 20:1-16? What are the points of connection which illuminate Jesus' thinking even in our present section? How would this present section tend to mold our conclusions as we proceed to interpret the next?

- y. Of what principles in Jesus' Sermon on Personal Relationships in Matthew 18 is this section an illustration?

PARAPHRASE AND HARMONY

Jesus was resuming His journey when something remarkable happened: a certain ruler came running up to Him and, kneeling before Him, requested: "Good Teacher, what good deed should I do to guarantee myself eternal life?"

Jesus pulled him up short, "Do you realize what you are saying when you refer to me as 'good'? Why ask me about what is absolutely good? After all, nobody is perfectly good, but God alone . . . You already know the commandments, so if you really desire to enter life, keep them!"

"Which?" he asked, "What kind of commandments do you mean?"

"These:" Jesus replied, "You must not kill. You must not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not cheat, Honor your parents, and, You must love your neighbor as you would yourself."

The young man objected, "But, Teacher, I have kept all these rules ever since I was a boy! What do I still need?"

As Jesus looked at him, He loved him. Hearing his reaction, He told him, "There is just one thing you still need. If you really want to go all the way to perfection, go sell everything you own and distribute the proceeds among the needy, thus transforming your earthly wealth into spiritual riches. Then come back and follow me."

But when the young man heard that, he was appalled. Visibly shaken, he went away grieved, because he was very wealthy, since he owned a great deal of property. When the Lord saw the man's reaction, He looked around at His disciples, and commented, "Believe me, it will be extremely difficult for men of wealth to enter God's Kingdom!"

The disciples were amazed to hear this. Nevertheless Jesus insisted: "Boys, how tough it is for ANYONE to get into the Kingdom of God! I repeat: a camel could more easily squeeze through a needle's eye than a monied man make it into God's Kingdom!"

When the disciples heard this, they were even more dumbfounded, and exclaimed to each other, "In that case, who can possibly be saved, if a wealthy man cannot?"

But Jesus looked them in the face when He declared, "Men just

cannot save themselves, but God can save them. This is because anything is a possibility for God."

Relieved, Peter began to say in reply to this, "Look, Lord, we, in contrast to the rich, have left everything we could call our own, to follow you . . . Uh, what are we going to get out of it?"

Jesus answered them, "Truthfully I can guarantee you that in the Kingdom of God when all is made new, during the glorious reign of the Messiah, you Twelve Apostles who have been my followers will also rule with me over the true Israel of God. Further, ANYONE who has given up house, or wife, or brothers or sisters or parents, children or farms on my account, for the gospel and the Kingdom of God will be repaid a hundred times whatever he gave up. He will receive it even now in this present time: houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and lands,—though not without persecutions—and in the coming age, eternal life will be his inheritance too! Many people who are so important here and now will be put in last place. Others who count for nothing here and now will be considered great then and there.

SUMMARY

A ruler requested of Jesus the one magic deed that would guarantee him eternal life. Jesus turned him toward God and His Word, but the young man considered that all a past accomplishment and demanded more. Jesus demanded that he dismantle his central idol, wealth, distribute his wealth and disciple his heart, but he balked and left in disappointment.

The Lord commented that earthly wealth makes salvation difficult. The disciples, aware of everyone's desire for possessions, wonder who can be saved. Self-earned salvation is impossible for men, but God makes things possible.

Peter asked what the disciples' sacrifices for Christ deserved in payment. Jesus announced high, glorious rewards for everyone, especially the Twelve, but earthly value systems will be overturned.

NOTES

III. THE LORDSHIP OF GOD IN RICH-POOR
RELATIONSHIPS (19:16-30)A. SITUATION: RICH MAN ASKS ABOUT THE ONE GOOD
DEED ALL-ESSENTIAL TO BUY ETERNAL LIFE. (19:16)

Note the theological connections that link the instruction about children (19:13-15) with the teaching regarding wealth (19:16—20:16):

1. Each supplements the other. Like the tax collector confessing his sins to God (Lk. 18:13f), the children were closer to the Kingdom than each could have dared dream himself to be. But the rich young ruler, like the Pharisees congratulating God on His good fortune to have such a worthy citizen as he, was miles farther from entering it than he imagined. When Jesus preferred the children, He honored those who could not be ruined by such glory. When he humbled the rich man, He abased one who should have been helped by his humiliation.
2. Each contrasts with the other. Jesus had insisted that God's Kingdom must be received humbly as an unpurchased, unearned gift of God. (Mt. 10:15 = Lk. 18:17) The Kingdom belongs to children only on this basis. But the rich man showed by his question how little he understood the essential basis on which eternal life in the Kingdom is to be enjoyed, since he thought the blessings of grace could be bought and sold for one nobly heroic deed unthinkable for little children.
3. Whatever the rich young ruler thought he wanted, his question carries forward another theme seen in Jesus' comments on the children's possession of the Kingdom of God: *eternal life*. The Kingdom and eternal life are coextensive. (Cf. Mt.18:8, 9 with Mk. 9:42, 47, as well as the basic presupposition underlying the Mt. 18 discourse.) In fact, Jesus' final answer on inheriting eternal life or being perfect requires total surrender to the will of God, and this is the Kingdom. (19:16, 21) And when the young ruler turned it down, he turned down the Kingdom. (19:23)

19:16 **And behold one came to him.** Mark (10:17) and Luke (18:18) fill in graphic details of his approach:

1. "As He was setting out on his journey"—is this the departure for Jerusalem? (See on 20:17.) Not too many more events are going to occur before Jesus arrives in Jericho for the final ascent to the bittersweet Last Week. (Mt. 19, 20; Mk. 10; Lk. 18, 19)
2. The man, whom Luke identifies as a ruler; ran up and respectfully knelt before the Lord. These are not merely signs of youthful vigor (Mt. 19:20), but especially of earnestness: did he sense that with Jesus' departure he was about to lose the invaluable opportunity to learn the secret of life? No Nicodemus this man, heedless of others' bad opinion of him, he publicly appealed to Jesus for answers in the daylight.
3. His wealth, surprisingly mentioned last by all three Evangelists even though it is really the turning point of the story, may well explain his position as ruler at his unusually early age. (See on 19:20.)

Teacher, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

On the form of his question, see 19:17. What, exactly, is this person really seeking?

1. Is he offering himself for discipleship? By seeking this kind of information from Him whom he designates "Teacher," it would certainly lead to virtual discipleship, if he accepted even the answer he expected. If so, what kind of discipleship would he have expected? (Study Jesus' treatment of another, a rabbi. Mt. 8:19f notes.) Is this his way of offering himself and his power and influence to enhance the public image of Jesus' cause? Does he suppose that the intrinsic worth of Jesus' program surpasses the superficial impression one might get of it by estimating it on the basis of His ragged, rough-hewn followers? Does he conclude that the cause needs more substantial "window-dressing" such as he has to offer? If so, he may be hoping to keep his wealth and power and have the Kingdom too.
2. This rich man, who had grown accustomed to use his wealth to secure and guarantee himself everything, perhaps very sincerely believed that even the inheritance of eternal life could be assured only by means of the scrupulous fulfilment of certain special rules or the mathematical result of doing certain, unusually pious deeds, in short, paying the price. At any rate, the outcome was always in his own hands, something he could control, something over which he would always be master, never servant, never dependent, never needy. But the Kingdom belongs to God who is a King who

- royally dispenses His gracious favors, not a merchant haggling over prices with those who think they can buy His priceless wares!
3. Did he recognize that the standard righteousness of rabbinism (19:20) and his own unusual wealth were inadequate to satisfy life's deepest longings? Had this person who enjoyed the energy and enthusiasm of youth, a lovable personality, wealth and social status and an exemplary life, felt dissatisfaction in it all? Had he been superficially satisfied with life in general until he came into contact with the personality and teaching of the Master? Did that message give him self-knowledge that spurred him to higher things—yes, even the enthusiasm to attempt something really worthwhile, even heroic, for God? If so, his insight into the insufficiency of those mainstays of Jewish society should warn Jesus' disciples against any ideological dependence upon earthly power (wealth or any other) or upon any human, self-authenticating aristocracy (religious or philosophical or other).
 4. Does his question request some special, meritorious deed that would guarantee him what he presumptuously supposes cannot be had in normal obedience to God in all that He requires? If so, his supercilious attitude toward common faith and obedience to the revelations of God applicable to his life must be called to his attention. (19:17) It is important to notice, however, that Jesus assigns him something to DO which, of course, will help him to BE what he must BECOME. (Cf. Jesus' approach in Lk. 10:25, 28, 37) This is not merely a Jewish approach to his goal that equates righteousness with deeds rather than character, since what Jesus requires would be no merely mechanical, esoteric, meritorious deed whereby he could earn the Kingdom, but a practical act of faith that left the outcome entirely in God's hands. (See on 19:21.)

B. JESUS' RESPONSE (19:17-19)

1. Jesus challenges his understanding of Jesus' position and his own comprehension of what is really good: "On what basis do you call me what is absolutely true only of God, and desire to know from me what only God can know?"

19:17 **Why askest thou me concerning that which is good?** As reproduced in the Paraphrase and Harmony, the rich man's question

may have actually used "good" twice, once to distinguish Jesus as "Good Master" (according to Mark and Luke), and once to ask what "good deed" must be done (according to Matthew). Then, in Jesus' reaction there were two rapid questions, not just one: "Why do you call me good? Why do you ask me about what is good?" This is the simplest, least problematic harmonization of the seemingly contradictory, even confusing, wording which scribes and scholars of Matthew's Gospel have attempted to eliminate by assimilating Matthew's original text to that of Mark and Luke. The scholars who see the Synoptics' reporting as bristling with difficulties need to see that Jesus' two questions are both valid and important.

1. "Why do you call me good?" (Mk. 10:17, 18; Lk. 18:19)

- a. That the title "good teacher" was utterly unknown to the Jews, as some affirm because it does not occur even once in the Talmud, proves nothing about what this young man could have thought, because the so-called "un-Jewishness" of such a title is but a generalization about what Jews generally think and do, not an inflexible, intellectual straitjacket that invariably governed their every thought. In fact, Jesus' answer does not condemn the un-Jewishness of his flattering title, but the thoughtlessness of it.
- b. Some take the skeptical view of these words that Jesus, embarrassed by the ruler's overcomplimentary title which appropriately referred only to God, intended to deny any pretense of absolute goodness. This view is so far out of harmony with Jesus' own self-understanding (Jn. 8:46) and other Scriptural declarations (e.g. 1 Jn. 3:5; 1 Pt. 1:19; 2:22f; 3:18; 2 Co. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26-28; 9:14), that it cannot be taken seriously. Although it is true that Jesus is not affirming anything about His own character or identity and is merely reproving the ruler's flattery that could not seriously intend what is implied by his terms, the following syllogisms illustrate how Jesus could not be rejecting His own goodness:

EITHER: There is none absolutely good but what shares in deity.

Jesus Christ is absolutely good.

Therefore, Jesus Christ shares in deity.

OR: There is none absolutely good but God.

Jesus Christ is not divine.

Therefore, Jesus Christ is not absolutely good.

But can we so lightly reject the absolute sinlessness of our Lord, without, at the same time, jeopardizing our own salvation that depends upon what, in such a case, would be His no longer perfect sacrifice?

c. Jesus' challenge has been expressed syllogistically like this:

EITHER: God alone is good.	OR: God alone is good.
You do not believe me	You call me good.
to be God	So, call me God, and be
So, do not call me good.	prepared to take the
	consequences.

d. Jesus' method of dealing with the young man is immediately to draw his attention to his own superficial use of words: "On what basis do you call me what upon reflection you would admit is true absolutely only of God. You throw that word 'good' around so loosely, that you need to examine your idea of goodness. Do you really care about goodness? If there is none good but God, to apply that term to me with this understanding is to affirm that I am God—but do you believe this?" The objection of some that the ruler could not have understood this kind of reasoning fails to nullify Jesus' right to argue this way and lead the man to think along lines he had never before considered. It is not unlikely that the self-righteous ruler considered Jesus to have arrived at His goodness in the same way he had merited HIS. Thus, he is complimenting himself in conceiving of the Son of God as a man very much like himself, even if possessed of a far higher degree of the same kind of goodness. Jesus could no more tolerate the title "good" in this sense, than He could permit others to call Him "Christ," when intended in a mistaken sense. He refused to be accepted on the level of a merely "good teacher." In fact, since He was not just a "good teacher," but the Word of God incarnate, for anyone to refer to Him as an especially holy sage and then to seek from such a man only God could be trusted to know for certain, is all a terrible error. In this sense, the rich young ruler is turning aside from the true, divine foundation of Moses and the prophets to what he supposes, without any reasoned basis, is but an admirable, quite human rabbi renowned for his unusual wisdom. AND NO MAN, ANCIENT OR MODERN, CAN HAVE JESUS OF NAZARETH ON THESE TERMS! So, while Jesus' instant rebuttal points the rich man to God alone who is good, this is His deliberate thrust to prod this ruler's conscience to reflect upon what basis he

addresses Him with a title that unquestionably belongs to God. He is scolding His careless use of titles.

2. **Why do you ask me about what is good?** (Mt. 19:17)

- a. Since the ruler thinks of Jesus as only a man, he is asking Jesus to play God for him. This, because his inconsiderate question demands that Jesus be wiser than God by proposing a step the merit of which would surpass all preceding divine revelations. Now, whatever else may be said about the specific wording of the Evangelists' reports, if Jesus goes along with the game and furnishes ANY answer in harmony with this kind of request, He automatically exposes Himself to the accusation of having given information on a problem that only God could be competent to decide. But this is precisely what He did! (See on 19:21.) Thus, even if Jesus' deity and goodness are not clearly expressed, but rather seemed to be denied in His opening words, they are definitely not absent from the ultimatum He handed the young man, since He acts like God by requiring of him what only God could require.
- b. The point is: would the man really depend upon God to furnish him the true answer to his question? If so, why come to Jesus? By coming to Him, does he hope to circumvent the undoubted revelations of God or obviate obedience to them? If so, the only possible answer of a prophet faithful to God is: Go back to what God has already said in the commandments. (Cf. Isa. 8:20 ASV)

Thus, on the ruler's assumption that Jesus is a mere human, Jesus must refuse both to be called "good teacher" and hand out private nostrums supposedly leading to eternal life. The only right answer to Jesus' question is: "I call you 'Good Teacher' and ask you about the good, because I know you are a teacher come from God, since no man can do these miracles you do, unless God be with him." But the ruler gave no such answer at this point in our text. The dull silence of the young man serves to underline his shallowness. Jesus had proven that his complimentary title "good teacher" was mere flattery and his interest in "the good" an attempted side-stepping of God's will.

Whether you are asking for the source of human goodness or for the one good thing essential to have eternal life, **One there is who is good.** Will you trust him to tell you? Observe how carefully, almost meticulously Jesus worked with him. He is in no hurry to make a glib

convert who can repeat all the correct phrases but with no real understanding of what is involved in his statements. Although this meditation is the slower route, nevertheless to arrive at correct concepts of what is involved in goodness, eternal life, God and commandments is the essential task of true discipleship.

But if you would enter life, keep the commandments. To the modern Christian accustomed to the NT doctrine of the inadequacy and imperfections of the Mosaic Law with its inability to give life or make anyone perfect, this command of Jesus must sound little short of unbelievable. In fact, how can ANYONE **enter into life** by **keeping the commandments** He means? (Gal. 3:21; 5:4; Heb. 7:18f; 10:1) Yet, when the young man asked for illustrations, Jesus cited some typical, Mosaic legislation. Good stuff, of course, but why that?!

1. Because this demand is the all-essential first step to the conversion of anyone. Everyone must come face to face with the divine standard to see his sinfulness and be led by this realization to confess his need of divine grace. **Keep the commandments** demands perfection, not just relative goodness, because any admission of failure is enough to damn the person who depends upon perfect performance of law for salvation. (Ro. 2:13; Jas. 1:22-25; 2:8-11) **Keep the commandments** means: "Do not just listen to them or play at observing them!" This should drive the man to his knees before God in the painful awareness of his own sins, in desperate need of a Savior. In fact, had the young man been more severely honest with himself, he need not have gone any further than this answer, because it was God's answer for him. Sincerity would have compelled him to cry out with Peter, concerning Moses' law, "Neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear it." (Ac. 15:10) His answer should have been, "NONE of these things have I kept from my youth up: God, be merciful to me a sinner!" The critical importance of this part of Jesus' strategy will be vindicated later. Since the ruler so easily breezed past the Law with its stern demand of perfection, his failure to admit his need for a Redeemer may well explain his failure to accept Christ's invitation. Not having really faced the Law, he was not really ready for the Gospel.
2. Another reason why Jesus referred him to **the commandments** might be that these commands find their origin in a divine initiative. They are no merely human codification. Jesus turns his attention to the **One there is who is good** who is, at the same time, Author of **the commandments**, hence Author of that which "by

doing a man shall live" (Lev. 18:5). Since the young man had asked for something based on deeds that would lead to life, Jesus is perfectly in order to point him to God and His Law. (Cf. Gal. 3:11, 12) But even this points him to Him who alone is Judge and Standard and who alone can enable him to live by such a standard. But to admit this turns one's attention beyond mere deeds of law to see Him who alone can make him good enough **to inherit eternal life**. In fact, by saying that **only God is good**, He warns that no man can observe the Law absolutely perfectly, because to be good one must be perfect. If the young man were really thinking now, he must see that his own imperfection damns him and he must cry out for grace. If he is to have this kind of goodness, he must receive it from God as a gift of grace.

3. Another reason Jesus can safely point this Jew to **the commandments** is that the overconfident young man might manage to claim perfect observance of some of the Decalogue, but would eventually hang himself on "Thou shalt not covet!" And, worse, he would prove that he really knew nothing about the First Commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me!"

So this is the only route, **if you would enter life**. Nor is this somehow a different route than that which leads to perfection, indicated later. (See 19:21.) On the assumption that *life* and *perfection* represent the same thing in Jesus' mind, we may safely conclude that *the commandments* (v. 17) and the demand of absolute consecration (v. 21) are closely related too. Otherwise, we would have the false dichotomy that common, ordinary people can squeeze into **life** by keeping ordinary commandments, whereas special **perfection** is only available for informed insiders who can make extravagant sacrifices in response to personally tailored asceticism. Jesus' preliminary answer, then, means that the way to eternal life is not based on the extraordinary or something not already widely known, but rather on the obedience to well-established commands of God.

Whereas Jesus is dealing with one man's personal problem, He nevertheless furnishes him the proper sort of credentials proper for a true prophet. He urges obedience to other well-authenticated revelations, **the commandments**. This very step is essential for Jesus as much as for the man himself. (Study "How to Avoid Becoming a Pharisee" after 15:20, where prophetic credentials are discussed more fully.) From this standpoint, Jesus' appeal to the Law as a true beginning point was but one more evidence to the ruler why He

should be believed. The Nazarene had not laid another foundation, had not pointed him to other gods or other laws, but significantly directed him to the undoubted Word of God.

2. Jesus furnished him commandments God had already revealed.
(19:18, 19)

19:18 **He saith unto him, Which?** Because the man asked, "**What kind of (*poías*) commandments?**," it may be that he anticipated some mysterious precept with such an esoteric excellence that it differed radically in kind from the usual sort of thing ordinary people could learn in the Law. **And Jesus said, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, 19 Honor thy father and thy mother; and Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.** The Evangelists' listings furnish no secure basis for critical conclusions about liturgical order of the commandments in the early Church. The order of the commandments here is probably unimportant to Jesus, since He is only furnishing the rich young ruler a handful of typical commandments of God's, extraneous to the Ten Commandments. Attempts to see special significance in the choice of the commandments cited note the following points:

1. Placing the Fifth Commandment to **honor thy father and thy mother** after VI-IX does call some attention to it, especially where the Jewish mind would have expected Him to cite the Tenth. Was there some shortcoming in the young man's life with respect to his parents that Jesus could see? Had he dedicated his goods to the temple by the diabolical "Corban" formula? (See on 15:3-6.)
2. **Do not defraud** (Mk. 10:19) This is found in Lev. 19:13, although the Greek wording is not that of the LXX for this Hebrew text, but of two manuscripts of the LXX of Dt. 24:14, followed by Sirach 4:1: *mè aposteréses*. Defrauding would be the standard businessman's temptation to shrewdness in his transactions, hence quite appropriate to cite for the rich young ruler. However, some see this commandment as a summary reminiscence of Ex. 20:17, the Tenth Commandment, since defrauding presupposes a covetous desire that would do anything to gain what belongs to another.
3. **You shall love your neighbor as yourself.** (Lev. 19:18) Plummer

(*Matthew*, 266) decides that Jesus could not have cited Lev. 19:18 on this occasion, because, had He done so, the rich man could not so easily have affirmed, "All these have I observed." But this fails to grasp just how shallow the human heart can be, especially if its attention is fixed on some supremely excellent deed and the person's mind is already impatient with familiar precepts like Lev. 19:18! In fact, it is easy to affirm that we have always done this from childhood, until we crash head-on into some unpleasant, uncomfortable or unwanted duty, as this young ruler so abruptly discovered. In fact, it was precisely this commandment that Jesus later chose to test the sincerity of his affirmed desire to be perfect. (19:21) Despite all the poverty and suffering all around him, he could still justify piling up wealth. He apparently loved his poor neighbor in the abstract, but not in the concrete, because, when faced with the practical opportunity to meet the immediate needs of some poor people and enlist himself in the service of Christ, which often involves going out of one's way to be of service to others, he balked.

Just because Jesus did not refer here to any particular command related to his relationship to God, we may not assume that Jesus considered the man to have properly ordered his religious life. In fact, by emphasizing his duty in the field of human relations where only truth in the heart can satisfy the conscience, He would show that he was not really in harmony with God either, because failure in human relations deeply affects one's relation to God. (1 Jn. 3:14-18; 4:20f) The Lord did not cite anything from the law of worship or ceremonies, because He knew how relatively easy it is to absolve oneself on the basis of perfect performance of rituals, justifying oneself by saying, "If God be appeased by the religious ritual, it does not matter greatly about my personal relationships. After all, my fellows are not going to be my final judge." Rather, with Lenski (*Matthew*, 750), we may think that Jesus cited these commandments, because they would be the ones of which the rich man might feel surest of his own perfect compliance. Ironically for this way of thinking, God judges us not so much on how orthodox is our ritual ("The right mode of baptism is immersion, the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day, and nothing but Welch's grape juice and Mandelbaum's matzos on the communion table, please!"), as on how truly seriously we take our relationship to other people. This is the old problem of "not just right ritual, but right relations too!" (See notes on 9:13 and 12:7.) Unconfused

by his assertions of his own goodness, Jesus will place before him a simple order that will unmask the legalism of all his previous care for others. And because he will turn down that requirement, this orthodox Jew will prove once more just how difficult it is for Jesus to do anything with "the righteous." In fact, Jesus came to call sinners to repentance, not the self-satisfied, self-justifying "righteous."

C. THE YOUNG MAN INSISTS ON PERFECTION (19:20)

19:20 **The young man** (*neaniskos*) was not necessarily a mere boy, since a person was considered a youth from about the 24th to the 40th year. (Arndt-Gingrich, 536; cf. *neanlou* of Ac. 7:58) **All these things have I observed.** Attitudes of commentators tend to range themselves into two positions regarding this young businessman's assertions: charity and realism.

1. With charity we might say that he had observed the Mosaic Law to the extent that he understood its meaning and to the extent he had fathomed himself. As Staton (*Servant's Call*, 9f) points out, so many religious homes are without real love for God and one's fellows, where its members live by regulations and judge their happiness by their ability to follow certain rules, without ever bothering to wonder to what purpose the rules were given in the first place. So they tell themselves and others that they have performed God's will merely because they have punctiliously kept a set of memorized rules.

The tragic reality represented by this young man is his unfeigned sincerity in affirming his faithful observance of the Law. His is a position actually possible for the person who accepts the pre-supposition upon which his statement is based, i.e. eternal life and righteousness can actually be attained by perfect observance of divine law. (Study Paul's own position as a Pharisee: "as to righteousness under the law—blameless!" Phil. 3:6) It just never occurred to such people that the revelation of God to Moses at Sinai depended entirely upon the gracious discretion and enterprise of God, not upon man. And if the Law itself did not depend upon human legislation, neither did the life it offered to those subject to it. Everything depended upon God from start to finish. (Isa. 26:12; 1 Chron. 29:10-16) And it is still that way. (Heb. 13:21; Phil. 2:13; 1:6; 1 Th. 2:13; Jn. 15:4f; Ro. 7:18; 2 Pt. 1:3-11)

- Charitably, we may see his declaration, not so much conceited as disappointed that Jesus had nothing more stimulating to tell him than what he had heard all his life. He had expected to be shown something heroic and inspiring and is reminded of mundane responsibilities on which he had been busy since he was a boy.
2. More realistically we may note that he had punctiliously performed all those commandments in harmony with the way they had been understood in Pharisean circles. His answer smacks of Little Jack Horner's attitude: "What a good boy am I!" How could anyone, who knows the holy God of heaven, have the gall to assert, as this man does in all seriousness, "I have put into practice everything that Moses required, and am now ready to move on to bigger things!"?! This young chap actually took the "Love your neighbor as yourself" in stride! His is the pride of accomplishment; the certainty that absolutely everything in his past is pleasing to God: there have been no mistakes, no slipups, no blunders, no bungling of any human relation.

Whichever view is taken of his first statement, by his own self-evaluation he should not have made the second one. That is, if God's will had been faithfully and perfectly observed, as he affirmed, how could such a good man say: **What lack I yet?**

1. Did this young fellow really desire an answer to his question? Does not his question sound like the game played by the thousands? These wring their hands in false despair, precisely because they are perfectly sure that they have lived up to the standard, they have always paid their bills, and yet, despite all their rule-keeping, their conscience does not let them rest. Nervously they ask, "What's wrong with me? What have I not done?" They expect no real answer from the person asked. They expect rather the soothing confirmation of their own goodness. Should the other person fail to play the game, and, instead of saying, "What more do you want? You are already the finest person we know!," he tells them the unwelcome news that they are imperfect in a deliberately ignored area, they are shattered. His statement about his faithful observance of the law exhibits great ignorance of its duties and of himself, but it is sincere. However, is his question as equally sincere?
2. He is really one step better than the Pharisee praying in the temple (Lk. 18:9-12) who is absolutely certain he had no need for improvement, whereas this young man at least admits the possibility that

he lacks something. Hendriksen (*Matthew*, 726) solves it best:

Here superficial smugness is struggling with deep discontent. This young man tries to make himself believe that 'all is well'; yet on the inside he is pathetically perturbed . . . though he tried hard to believe in his own virtue and respectability, he was actually feeling ill at ease.

Mark (10:21) registers here one beautifully tender reaction of the Master: "And Jesus looking upon him loved him." Why? Because He could look beyond his shallow self-complacency to see that this promising young person had been victimized by the formalism and legalism so characteristic of a religion of superficial observance of law. He could love him for the lost sheep that he was. (18:11-13; 9:36)

D. JESUS OFFERS PERFECTION THROUGH ABSOLUTE CONSECRATION (19:21)

19:21 **If you would be perfect** means "One thing you still lack." (Mk. 10:21; Lk. 18:22) It is not unlikely that, by divine insight, the Lord could have furnished him a rather substantial list of his shortcomings. Such humiliating perhaps would not have accomplished as much as the generous condescension He actually showed. With His usual tenderness He answered the ruler's question exactly as asked, "You ask, 'What do I still lack?' Just one thing, which, if you desire to be perfect, will make all the difference in the world." (1 Jn. 2:15-17; see notes on 13:7, 22.) It is the step whereby he would really come to know the true God and eternal life. (Jn. 17:3; 1 Jn. 5:20f) This would be no mere perfection in keeping the commandments as such, but perfection in arriving at the heart of ethical conduct and a right understanding of his relation to God and to the neighbor he had claimed to love as himself, which is the basis of all commandments. (See notes on 5:48.)

If you would be perfect has a touch of irony in it for the man who had just claimed to have kept the commandments, especially the "love your neighbor as yourself," a command that perfectly summarizes all that is really involved in moral perfection. But the young man hardly understood all this. There is special irony in Jesus' sending him back to this very commandment he had so flippantly claimed to have already kept as much as necessary. Despite the irony, Jesus'

demand is seriously meant, because He is really testing him on these main points: love and trust in God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength; love and service to his neighbor as himself; and his willingness to follow Jesus' leadership. (Mt. 22:36-40 = Mk. 12:28-34; Mt. 16:24ff)

I. LOVE FOR GOD ABOVE ALL: Sell all you have . . . and you will have treasure in heaven.

A. Furnishing this formula to the ruler, Jesus is not thereby subscribing to a doctrine of good works, as if giving away so much wealth could guarantee him so much eternal life. Rather He exacts of him an act of faith in the grace of God and a self-surrender so complete that, without faith, he could never make the leap. So far from depending upon works and leaving out faith, there is almost **NOTHING BUT FAITH** here. (Col. 3:1-5) In fact, the promise of **treasure in heaven** guaranteed by God as a result of this major sacrifice is realistic only for the person who believes Him. (Heb. 13:5f; see notes on Mt. 6:19-34) So far from being a superhuman, esoteric act which would merit eternal life, Jesus' command was the simplest, most practical, most immediately verifiable way for him to take hold of God's grace by faith. But, as proven by the outcome, he did not believe, did not obey Jesus and so could not be saved. Thus, Jesus actually explores his real reverence for God, and so pushes him back to the First, Great Commandment of the Law, summary of the first table of the Decalogue. (Mt. 22:37f; Ex. 20:1-8; Dt. 6:5; cf. Prov. 19:17; 14:31; 28:27; Dt. 15:7-11) The Lord aims at breaking his dependence upon his wealth, so he could learn that he could not do without God. So long as he was well supplied with this world's goods, he could buy his way out of trouble without God's help, and even arrive at the point where he had eliminated all need for the constant, daily provision of the Heavenly Father.

B. **Sell all you have and give it away** is an incredibly radical demand for the person who believes wealth to be essential to expansion and influence of the Messianic Kingdom. Jesus therefore asking him completely to disavow an essential article in his credo: no wonder he stumbles at it! But how many thousands of relatively rich Christians over the centuries have hallowed that article in their practice and thinking?

With half-hearted confidence in *spiritual* power, they substitute a show of wealth in great, barn-like edifices "to the glory of God and so that the world will sit up and take notice!" They form denominations and interdenominational power structures to ram "needed" legislation through Congress and lobby at the U.N. and smuggle military weapons to people's movements struggling for their share in the control of the world. Power in this world is based on wealth, but Jesus shocks everyone by saying to His most promising contact in the wealthy community, "Get rid of it!" Unbelievable doctrine, but solidly based on God's usual way of doing things. (Cf. Jer. 9:23, 24; 1 Co. 1:26 in its context of 1:18—2:18) Everyone needs to understand that God does not need our wealth and influence, our importance and social position to make His Kingdom function or succeed!

- C. The rich young ruler's biographical by-line, "he had great possessions," means that he had exceptional means at his disposal, and, whether he was a wise investor or the heir of a billionaire, his millions were locked safely away from the disturbing problems of needy people, as if the care and maintaining of possessions were the destined end-all of God's intended blessing. As it was, he was but the slave of as many masters as he had possessions, furnishing janitorial service to polish sources of pleasure he rarely if ever used or enjoyed. This is because *the more things one possesses, the more he is obligated to protect, maintain and increase them, leaving him less and less time for the simple enjoyment of any one of them.* Worse, because he must realize a wealth-oriented dream in his mind, the mammon-worshipper must turn down what comes to him unmanipulated in life. If God brings him something in life that does not fit his own preordered plans, he must ruthlessly thrust it aside, if his own scheme is to be realized. And yet, this young man had asked Jesus for something that did not fit preordered schemes! From this standpoint, his original question was destined to bring him to choose whether he would leave his own wealth-oriented dreams in order to accept the unforeseen in God's will that risked his wealth, or hold tenaciously to his dreams and risk losing God too. So, he cannot really enjoy reality as it is, even if God Himself made it that way. Instead, he tries to force reality to conform to his limited preconceptions and

dreams born of what money can buy. Thus, he misses all the interesting, richly exciting, genuinely satisfying experiences of adjusting himself to new, spiritual realities that could bless his life beyond his happiest imagining.

II. LOVE AND SERVICE FOR HIS NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF:

Give it to the poor. How could he so carelessly pretend to love his neighbor as himself (19:19b), when he hoarded, despite the poor all around him? (19:22; cf. Jas. 1:27; 2:14-16; 5:1-6; 1 Jn. 3:15-18) Wealth tends to develop in the possessor the impulse to cling to possessions in order to retain them. Thus, selfishness develops, growing out of the struggle to hold what is in constant danger of slipping away through one's own neglect or through the greed of others. So Jesus strikes at the heart of his problem—selfishness, not merely the abundant possessions he had. Note that not even here do we find asceticism or self-privation ordered as an end in itself. This is not poverty for poverty's sake, but the ideal of brotherhood and sharing. It is rather the intelligent distribution of his goods made available to the poor, his brethren. (Cf. Luke's word, *diados*, "distribute," Lk. 18:22. See also Ac. 2:44f; 4:34f.) Genuine love must be the motive. (1 Co. 13:3)

III. WILLINGNESS TO FOLLOW JESUS' LEADERSHIP: **and come, follow me.**

- A. The severity of Jesus' demand is softened into a sincere, affectionate invitation. Jesus actually wanted him in His service, because He could envision what this young man could become under his tutelage.
- B. The remedy for addiction to possessions does not lie in the communistic equalization of wealth or in divorcing our day-to-day existence from dependence upon some form of economic system. God knows that no man can live in a utopia where the necessities of life should not have to be paid for, because man is a sinner who has already destroyed the one utopia for which he was created, and he will not have another until he faces squarely the problem of His own sinfulness. (Study Gen. 3:16-19; 2 Th. 3:6-13; 1 Th. 2:9; 4:11f; Eph. 4:28.) Rather, the cure for wealth addiction (= covetousness = idolatry, Col. 3:5) is to be found in discipleship to Jesus. Only He can restore us to sanity by helping us to see the true value

of what He calls **treasure in heaven** and by devaluating all our temporal value systems, all our earthly treasures. Because our treasure takes our heart with it (Mt. 6:21), earthly riches tend to shackle our hearts, our interests, efforts and hopes to this earth, causing us to lose sight of, and finally interest in, the things of God and eternity. This is worldliness. (1 Jn. 2:15ff) His discipleship, then, is not an extra without which we could get along quite satisfactorily, because if we did not take His word for the reality of our true **treasures in heaven**, we would not take the steps He indicates to make it ours! Unless we follow Him, finding our true security in our trust in His leadership, our dependence upon His evaluations and His advice for our investments, we are at the mercy of every other temptation floating through our consciousness.

- C. If we interpret Jesus' demands as terms on which the ruler could have become an intimate follower at the level of the others, then Jesus' strict impartiality becomes evident, since He subjects him to the same sacrifices the other more intimate followers had made in order to enter His service. (See on 19:27.)

The young man had supposed that he could keep his wealth and inherit eternal life too by means of some magic formula he hoped to learn from Jesus. But Jesus, acting like God, demanded that he do something that did not fit an already established moral scheme. He suddenly overturned the calculating reasoning of the man and handed him what appears to be the special, tailor-made formula he had requested. And yet it was not a formula that he had expected, because it required no monumental use of his wealth, nor did it depend upon his past deeds or goodness. Rather, it stripped him of his usual supports and economic strength, leaving him practically naked before God and the world, and enrolled by faith in the discipleship of an itinerate rabbi whose future was not yet all that clear. The ironic thing about this whole situation is that he had asked for some nearly superhuman deed whereby he could inherit eternal life, and when, in form, Jesus furnished him precisely what he had requested—although the substance totally overturned his own concept of it—he turned it down. He had practically asked Jesus to play God for him by furnishing an arbitrary task that did not fit the usual scheme of things (such as the commandments in the law), and Jesus gave it to Him. Yet, in essence, He demanded that the ruler simply

repent of his addiction to wealth which is nothing more than the idolatry of covetousness. The specific form his repentance was to take must not obscure the fact that he was ordered to repent.

But is there nothing for the modern Christian in this special demand? Certainly, the surprising thing about Jesus' stringent demand made of the rich young ruler is that it is not just a tailor-made ultimatum specially designed for that man's special situation and personal need. It is the kind of dictate that Jesus could hand ANYONE! (See notes on 13:44-46; cf. esp. 19:29. Cf. Lk. 12:33 in its total context of Jesus' message on trusting God completely, Lk. 12.) The concept of heavenly wealth, as opposed to earthly riches, is not new for Jesus. (See notes on 6:20 in its context of 6:19-34!) In fact, Jesus' demand of the rich young ruler was nothing less than the rule that governed and explains His own matchless life in the fruitful service of God. In order to reign, He too sold all that He had and gave it to the poor! (2 Co. 8:9; Ro. 5:6ff) He too had to conquer by dying to all that was dear to Him. This is the pathway to eternal life for every disciple. (See Special Study: "The Cost of Our Salvation" after 16:28.)

In fact, the difference between Jesus' requirement of the rich young ruler and what He demands of everyone is only a question of details: what specifically must we do with our possessions? The ruler must sell everything and distribute it and we must turn over to Christ all claimed right to our possessions and then utilize them as His administrators, i.e. considering them a stewardship for His use. On 1 Co. 7:29-31, Bartchy (*First-Century Slavery*, 152) is correct to notice that Paul's insistence "that whereas the various earthly activities and relationships in which Christians were involved were not rejected, their definitive character for Christian existence had been negated," was founded not merely upon the passing of the present world scheme or upon the shortness of the time, but upon the call of God. (1 Co. 7:15c, 17-24) It is not "buying" as such that is called in question but rather "the keeping, the seizing, the possessing . . . Also, Paul did not criticize in principle either crying or rejoicing. (See Ro. 12:15.)" That is, we are to fix our attention on what God wants to do in our lives where we are with what little or much we have, rather than concern ourselves over much with the superficial, often accidental, circumstances that characterize our existence on earth, e.g. marriage, slavery, wealth, commercial activities, former religious status, etc. Accordingly, the determining attitude for Jesus' disciple is a refusal to set one's heart on earth and its transient treasures,

“for the *schema* of this world is on the way out!” (1 Co. 7:31b) Can you imagine the revolution in rich-poor relations that such insights must bring to people who accept them?

With insight Tolbert (*Good News From Matthew*, 165f) notes how Jesus’ statement to Nicodemus, “You must be born again,” has been turned into a cliché to repeat to everyone who wants to become a Christian. What would be the result in our twentieth century affluent world, were we to hammer out the demand Jesus laid before the rich young ruler? How many so-called Christians on the rolls today would have ever become a Christian, if they had been required to repent of their covetousness before being baptized? How many are unquestionably rich rulers with more real concern for their possessions than for God? Since when has this idolatry become fashionably “Christian”? Rather than be owned by their possessions, people must be free to be able for Christ’s sake to utilize or dispose of them as the situation demands. The man that allows possessions to govern his thinking and activity cannot allow God to do so. (Mt. 6:24)

E. BUT THE YOUNG MAN BALKED (19:22)

19:22 But when the young man heard the saying, he went away sorrowful; for he was one that had great possessions. The rich young ruler is not like the happy farmer or the pearl merchant (see notes on 13:44-46), because, although he was faced with the supreme cost and value of the Kingdom (“eternal life” or “perfection”), he would not buy. He turned it all down and walked away, and Jesus let him go! Of what use to the Kingdom of God were his talents, his youth, his management ability, his uprightness, etc., if his claim to love his neighbor as himself (19:19) is false? Loving one’s God enough to make this kind of sacrifice for the Kingdom is what the Kingdom is all about! However, everyone’s will to accept must be left free to refuse, so Jesus did not detain him. If he did not really love God or his neighbor more than his gold, what kind of a disciple would he really have made? Although Jesus loved him (Mk. 10:21), He did not compromise His principle a hair’s breadth to attain an influential addition to His cause. Staton (*Servant’s Call*, 10) wisely counsels:

Jesus was not just concerned about the quantity of His disciples but also about their quality. When we go about making disciples,

we must not overlook the kinds of people Jesus disciplined and the kinds He allowed to walk away.

Why was he **sorrowful**?

1. Is he shocked, hurt and grieved that for the strength of His Kingdom the Master can so easily do without the success symbols, means, power and influence that he, as a wealthy person has to offer? He had undoubtedly envisioned a situation where he could keep his wealth, respectability, power and influence, and have his eternal life too. And, if he resembles the other disciples, he was probably convinced that the Kingdom of God was going to need his very gifts and possessions to make its influence felt in the world, for are not these the indicators of success in our world? This would have let him nourish his addiction to wealth and guarantee him a slice of eternal life too!
2. Is it merely because he loved his possessions too much to part with them? If so, although Matthew says, "he had great possessions," it is also true to say, "Great possessions had him!" He was accustomed to the sway over others that wealth can buy. He had heard his money talk and enjoyed its commanding voice. But what would be left of him, if he lost his voice?
3. Or is it because he could see that Jesus had just unmasked him for the moral pauper he really was, and that, stripped of his pseudo-respectability, he could perceive that there was nothing left inside? Could he see that, unless he made the demanded sacrifice of total consecration, he would have wasted all his other efforts at goodness? Was he shaken to see that the pain of withdrawal from his addiction only underlined that much more clearly how thoroughly he depended on wealth to provide him his sources of happiness and security? Because he dreaded to take the risk and make the plunge Jesus indicated, he was not unlikely aghast at his own cowardice, at how needy he was and how very insecure without that crutch that gave him identity and apparent importance. His sorrowfulness is a plain symptom of his addiction, because a person who is not addicted is able to do with less, or at times even without, painlessly. He probably had thought himself equal to anything the Master could demand of him, only to find himself dangling helplessly from his own moneytree.
4. He was **sorrowful**, because he felt deeply the rightness and reasonableness of Jesus' answer. Otherwise, he would likely have scorned it as extravagant or insulting. His grief is the product of his struggle

to choose between giving up his purpose to have eternal life and giving up his possessions.

He had great possessions. Why mention this so late in the incident? Up to this point his major failing seemed to have been his self-righteousness, but here he chokes on the demand to liquidate everything and make practical use of it as gifts to the poor and take up personal discipleship to Jesus. Very possibly his addiction to wealth is mentioned last, after his standard Jewish morality is made abundantly clear, so that the reader may be psychologically satisfied that his wealth is not necessarily ill-gotten gain, and perhaps actually led to the (typically Jewish) conclusion that his wealth is but the normal pay-off for his orthodox goodness. (See on 19:25.) This, then, would be for the purpose of showing that even the undoubted blessing of wealth from God can become the most exacting slavery and the most unquestionable idolatry, and although justifiable within limits, must be unmercifully sacrificed when it becomes the cause of one's own spiritual loss. (Study Mt. 18:6-9.)

F. JESUS' COMMENT ON THE INCIDENT AND TEACHING ON WEALTH (19:23-30)

1. "Entrance into God's Kingdom is difficult for the wealthy."
(19:23)

19:23 **Verily I say unto you, It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.** The young man went away sorrowful, but he left Jesus sorrowing too. The Lord's quiet observation is the reaction of One who fully understands the demand He has just made and is grieved that such a fine, potential disciple could not break himself free from the one slavery, the one idolatry, that held him bound.

But why should it be so tough **for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God?** Two reasons suggest themselves:

1. Simply because his unwillingness to admit that, despite all the tangible evidences to the contrary, he has not really arrived in the Kingdom. He must begin all over, as a little child. (See notes on 18:3, 4; Jn. 3:3-5.) The trauma for so many self-made men would be so great that the necessary self-humiliation would always

elude them. In fact, to admit as final the value system of the Kingdom of God means that they must reject the finality and the this-worldly goals of the often unethical economic systems upon which so much of their wealth is founded. But the habits of mind and practice developed to gain, maintain and increase their wealth will have become so ingrained that to admit that they are totally mistaken means literally that anyone whose whole life has been immersed in that way of life must completely start over. Nicodemus' question (Jn. 3:4) is really pathetic, really pained, because it hurts deeply to admit that most, if not everything one is or has, at best, is wrongly oriented, and, at worst, is a deliberate exploitation and an abuse of others. (Jas. 2:6, 7; 4:1-6, 13—5:6) The deep chagrin felt by every driver who learns that he has gone miles out of his way and yet is nowhere near his destination and must lose further time and spend extra money and effort to arrive at the proper end of his journey only faintly illustrates that inner self-accusation and humiliating disappointment burning in the soul of the man who suddenly discovers that almost everything he represented in the past was foolish and wicked in the balance of eternity. (Lk. 12:13-21; see fuller notes on Mt. 6:19-34.) "Poor rich man!" is no idle comment!

2. Although God had said, "You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant which he swore to your fathers, as at this day." (Dt. 8:18), this precept is easily forgotten in the temptation to bow to economic power as a supreme being in itself. Very few people are capable of keeping their head all the time in the fast-moving rush to hold and increase one's wealth. (Study 1 Ti. 6:9f, 17-19, notes on Mt. 13:7, 22; as also Wilson, *Learning From Jesus*, 273-296.)

In short, the reason wealth blocks its possessor's access to the Kingdom lies, not so much in the possession itself, as if wealth per se contaminated like nuclear radiation, as in the attitude of the possessor toward what he thinks wealth is and what wealth can do. The difficulty, therefore, lies primarily in what wealth does to the possessor. (See full notes on 6:19-34.) In fact, this may explain the low-profile discipleship of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. (Cf. Jn. 19:38f; Mt. 27:57; Mk. 15:43; Lk. 23:50) Vested interests make even good men cowardly lest they lose their grip on their investments in position, wealth, power, etc.

Enter the kingdom of heaven, in this context, means "be saved" (19:25) or "be perfect" (19:21) or "inherit eternal life" (19:16). **The Kingdom**, here, means that life lived under the rule of God which begins in this life with one's salvation from sin and proceeds through his perfection in the character of Christ and culminates in life lived with God for eternity. (See notes on "the Kingdom" after 13:53.) **It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven** means that the man addicted to wealth is an idolater who has too much at stake in his possessions to let God be the Ruler of his life, because this rule is the Kingdom.

Mark (10:24) reports that "the disciples were amazed at his words," a foretaste of their mounting astonishment that breaks out in Mt. 19:25 with their "Who then can be saved?" This close quizzing of the Lord by the disciples that we see taking place in this subsection (19:23-26) is precisely what Jesus intended should happen on other occasions, when, as in the Sermon on the Mount for example, He overturned everyone's expectations about the position and importance that wealth and power structures represented for the Kingdom of God. (Study note on 5:3ff; cf. Lk. 6:20, 24.) Disciples are driven to decide once again whether they think Jesus' view is the only tenable position, or whether their own is real. Is it really true that the blessing of the Kingdom is the possession of the poor in spirit?

2. Apostles are staggered (Mk. 10:24), but Jesus repeats His dictum even more emphatically. (Mt. 19:24)

19:24 **Again I say to you** means that Jesus is coming at His previous statement from another angle, because the **hard** (19:23) is not illustrated by **the camel going through the needle's eye**. In Mark (10:24), Jesus actually repeated His former exclamation: "How hard it is to enter the Kingdom of God!" Although even in Mark Jesus stays on the subject of the perils of wealth as an obstacle to entrance into the Kingdom, it would seem that Jesus means: "You are astonished that I say that it is difficult for men of means to get into the Kingdom? Let me remind you that it is difficult for ANYONE to enter the Kingdom!"

On Mk. 10:24 it should be noticed that the better manuscripts do not have the expression, "for those who trust in riches," "a rich man," nor "those who have possessions." As Metzger

(*Textual Commentary*, 106) points out, "The rigor of Jesus' saying was softened by the insertion of one or another qualification that limited its generality and brought it into close connection with the context."

But Jesus meant to leave it general, because He must also deal specifically with this generality later. (Mt. 19:26) Thus, in Mark He means: "NO ONE can claim prior right to entrance into the Kingdom on the basis of accidental distinctions such as race, wealth and social position, or cultural acquisitions such as the external performance of a legal code."

It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. We need not waste pages deciding whether the camel was really a camel and the needle's eye really a needle's eye. These expressions need no further comment than Jesus' word: "impossible!" (19:26) If it be urged that Jesus did not say that it is impossible for a rich man to enter the Kingdom, then it must be answered that the term "rich man" is ambiguous. Does "rich man" mean owner, or rather steward of great wealth that really belongs to God? The monied man who answers, "That wealth is MINE," cannot enter the Kingdom. The even wealthier magnate who exclaims, "Why, it is only God's: I am just His responsible administrator with no proprietary rights over these vast holdings!," understands Jesus and can enter the Kingdom. The first thinks HE is a rich man; the latter knows he owns nothing and that God is the wealthy One.

The disciples' reaction (19:25) is understandable only if we see them reacting to a paradoxical declaration that pictures a proverbial impossibility. It is a useless exercise to point to any of these words as special "Biblical Greek" capable of special renderings, when every one of these words (*kámelon*, *trématos*, *rhafidos*, *trumaliàs*, *belónes*) is known to classical Greek. (Rocci, 384, 963, 1638, 1853, 1862) The explanation that "camel (*kámelon*) should be cable (*kámlon*)." is but a feeble human attempt to attenuate the rigor of Jesus' hard saying. It does not represent the correct textual rendering of Matthew, Mark or Luke (See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 50, 106, 169.), and should be forgotten by serious NT scholarship, except as a lesson on what not to do with NT words.

3. Dumbfounded, the disciples ask: "If a rich man cannot be saved, who can?" (19:25)

19:25 **And when the disciples heard it, they were astonishingly exceedingly, saying, Who then can be saved?** What does their question mean?

1. Is this the anguished outcry of a pilfering Judas? (Remember Jn. 12:4-6.) Some believe Jesus' unrelenting rejection of a rich man as a proper candidate for the Kingdom was not only to correct the disciples' understanding about the rich young ruler, but also, even primarily, to bring Judas back to reality. In the same way other Apostles were dreaming of thrones and honors, was Judas imagining the wealth that would be his? But Matthew's words is *disciples* (plural), because there were more than Judas who were stunned by Jesus' incomprehensible rejection of the wealthy.
2. It is not unlikely that the disciples' underlying presupposition was a typically Hebrew argument: "Does not God furnish man the power to get wealth? (Dt. 8:18) But would He have blessed the wicked in his greedy grasping? (Psa. 1; Prov. 3:9f, 16; 10:22; 11:24f; 15:6; 22:4; 24:3f) Therefore, whatever other faults the rich may have, they must have some hidden merits which the all-seeing God chooses to reward. Is not wealth, then, evidence of one's righteousness? But if a rich man cannot be saved, who can?!" Such an argument assumes, of course, that any amount of goodness, merits or future obedience can make up for past sins and failures. Had they been considering the licentious rich who cruelly grind the poor under their heel (cf. Jas. 2:6f; 5:1-6), they could have more readily agreed with Jesus. But Jesus was discussing a wealthy person who was but one step away from perfection! "If those whom we deem particularly qualified for the Kingdom cannot enter, then who can?"
3. The disciples' question, "**Who then can be saved?**," means: "Then, no one can be saved!" They rightly sense that Jesus refers to a situation possible for anyone. Their question has its proper answer: "Zacchaeus can be saved in identically the same way Jesus' indicates here." (Lk. 19:9f) But this they do not see. They only guess that all people are attracted to wealth and are driven by it, whether rich or poor. Therefore, since all have the virus, all must be damned.

Does their question mean that they too are secret addicts of wealth, shocked that Jesus had just wiped out their covertly admired heroes? To admire or indulge the practices and philosophy of the wealthy because of the quantity of comforts their wealth can provide them is not merely to acknowledge the addict in us, but also to become their accomplice by tacit or even unwitting secret agreement with them. Idolizing the money-grabber is already a latent commitment to the same paralyzing idolatry that will manifest itself when the first opportunity presents itself. Are the disciples dupes of the propaganda circulated by monied people to ease their own conscience about their own enslaving habit? Unfortunately, those accustomed to wealth often have society's communications media working full-time not only to perpetuate the concept that life is linked with wealth's purchases (contrast Lk. 12:15), but also to make this the official ideology of the world. Those who are relatively poor or really so, then, when confronted with this philosophy, have the choice of rejecting the popular dogma by accepting or rationalizing their poverty and being thought fools, or of becoming Mammon-worshippers too. After all, wealth is relative: one can be as dependent upon wealth with little as with much. Trusting in riches is a question of attitude toward it, not how much one actually possesses of it. There is, of course, Jesus' third alternative: that of relativizing wealth by re-assigning to the means of material wealth its true economic function, by subordinating it to the things of the spirit, which, in His view, is the true treasure. As we saw taught in Mt. 18 and as this section illustrates, the present age of the world is structured in such a way as to draw exaggerated attention to the powerful and the wealthy, who are, from Jesus' standpoint, the less secure, the more infantile, less scrupulous and more bulldozing members of the race.

Nevertheless, Jesus will answer the Twelve's pessimistic question by showing that not everyone will be so selfish. Rather, everyone who is motivated to make the sacrifice will be saved, and at the same time, will be amply repaid all that this cost him, even in this life. (19:29)

In this particular case, the disciples ask, "If a rich man cannot be saved, who can?" But other disciples with other orientations would just as easily ask: "If an ecstatic charismatic cannot be saved, who can?" or "If an ascetic holy man cannot, who can?" Or it might be a philosopher as opposed to the man on the street, or just any man as opposed to a woman, or a free man as opposed to a slave, a Jew as opposed to a Gentile, a powerful king as opposed to a lowly

commoner—and the list is endless. (Cf. 1 Co. 1:26-31; 2:6; 3:18-23; 4:8-18; 1 Co, 7; Gal. 3:28) The reason for this is that, according to each one's orientation, these various groups, due to their inherent merits, are thought to have automatically attained or earned the goal coveted by all. Nevertheless, a Christian's salvation and self-identity does not depend upon his earthly status, but upon what God makes possible for him to become in Christ and in accepting the challenge to be a Christian right where he is with what he has. Christ's invitation to discipleship is not based on the disciple's earthly situation, race, sex or social condition, but upon His own graciousness. Paul had learned this, and so could almost turn eloquent prose into poetry describing "the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord"! (Phil. 3:8-11)

4. Jesus answers: "God is lord of all possibilities." (19:26)

19:26 **With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.** Whatever else the details of this wonderful declaration may mean, Jesus proclaims in dramatic terms the absolute Lordship of God: God is in absolute control of everything: **with God all things are possible.** This declaration has soul-stirring significance for the original hearers and readers of this Gospel, especially because they faced earth-shaking sociological, economic, philosophical and theological upheavals that threatened to leave them adrift on a chartless sea. But to know that God is at the helm of the universe is security. But this fact also had immediate, personal ramifications for those disciples who were not a little perplexed when their Master took a hard line on divorce. (Mt. 19:10) And just now He has all but damned society's greatest, most influential citizens. (Mt. 19:23-25) Their emotions and readiness to believe are being strained to the limit, as if everything they had nailed down was coming loose. With these words Jesus anchors their souls to something solid that counts, something that is eternal, unaffected by time and change, to a God with whom **all things are possible.** (Cf. Lk. 1:37; Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:17, 27; Zech. 8:6)

But the very proposition, **with God all things are possible,** may very well mean that, for the disciples as for anyone else, God may well have to take some unpredictable steps, unforeseeable by limited human conceptions. While God may be counted upon to be perfectly wise, holy and loving, He may talk and act in ways that no one on

earth could have foreseen or predicted with certainty. This is because God cannot be shut in by human categories or definitions. In fact, Jesus' parable of the Eleventh-Hour Laborers (20:1-16) explicitly teaches the unexpected truth that, in contrast to the usual, human notion that recompense should be measured on the basis of work quotas met, everything depends upon the free will and mercy of God.

What is it that **with men is impossible**, but easily falls within the province of **God with whom all things are possible**? Two answers are possible, depending on what is meant by **this** or on what is meant by **with men, with God**.

1. **This** refers to the disciples' question, "Who then can be saved?"
 - a. Basically, their question meant, "Who can be saved from the addiction of wealth so as to be admitted to the Kingdom?" They implied that none could be saved, because all normal people are involved, in one way or another, in the preoccupation with the gaining and maintaining of possessions.
 - b. Further, if those who seem to be gifted, particularly qualified personalities cannot be saved, who can?"
 Jesus answers either standpoint.
2. **With men, with God** means "in the judgment of men or God about what each can do."
 - a. It is a mistake to understand the preposition *with* in either phrase as referring to accompaniment. *With* (*para* with the dative in both cases) does not mean to indicate the person with whom one cooperates, i.e. God or men, as determining the possibilities of the case, as if Jesus had said, "If being saved depended upon other men, men cannot be saved. When men take God's hand, they can do the impossible and be saved." Jesus did not say this.
 - b. Rather, *para* with the dative points to the judgment seat before whom one stands figuratively: "in the sight, or judgment, of someone." This meaning passes over into the simpler "with" and becomes almost equivalent to the dative, "possible or impossible for someone." (Arndt-Gingrich, 615) He means, therefore, that what in human judgment is impossible, God judges perfectly possible. Since we cannot live with wealth and we cannot live without some possessions, we must judge salvation, perfection and eternal life to be unobtainable. But God alone can work the necessary transformation of our vision of wealth,

so that we no longer depend upon it, but upon Him.

Men just cannot merit salvation, no matter how rich or righteous they are, because no amount of human qualifications can remove sin. (Heb. 9:22; Eph. 1:7) Only a perfect sacrifice can effect that. (Jn. 1:29; 1 Pt. 1:18-21; Ro. 3:21-26; 5:6-11; Heb. 7:26-28; 9:11-14, 23-26; 10:10, 26) And only God can furnish a sacrifice like that, for **with God all things are possible**, and, as Jesus will say later, He Himself is that sacrifice, a ransom for many. (20:28) Salvation is in the hands, not of self-congratulating men, but of a God who, seeing the human mediocrity and incapacity to be perfect, can do precisely what Jesus did with the rich young ruler, i.e. provide an arbitrary path to eternal life. This "arbitrariness," however, is apparent only to people who have carefully amassed their fortune in moral merit badges and brownie points with a view to cashing them in on eternal life at the end. But because they are sinners, they must not suppose that any quantity of merit can pay for one sin. This must be atoned for on quite another basis, because any goodness they may have expressed was totally their duty. (Lk. 17:7-10) The "arbitrariness of God" consists in His choice to save, not those who have carefully "earned" their salvation, but those who never earned it at all, but rather trusted Him to be generous and did what He asked. (See notes on 20:1-16; cf. Ro. 4:4, 5.) This is but the Pauline doctrine of justification by the obedience of faith. (Cf. Ro. 1:5; 16:26; 3:25; 4:24; 5:1; 6:17f, etc.)

The reason wealth and religious merit may be connected in this context is that "wealth" is but coined life, i.e. time and energy used to produce a certain result, hence that for which a man spends his lifetime must be considered his wealth, because he considered it worth his effort to produce or pursue it. This is why excessive well-being, too many worries, any earth-bound work carried on unlimitedly, all hinder the individual from possessing the Kingdom, because these leave no space, no time, no energy, no spiritual freedom to dedicate himself to the things of God in the common things of life. Anything that occupies our whole life and leaves no time for the Kingdom of God, anything that leaves us insensitive to Christian concerns or does not permit us to feel the need of God's salvation, is dangerous wealth. This includes that wealth that consists in religious practices punctually observed and carefully registered which salve the conscience that one's duty is done, but at the price of true love for God. (Cf. Maggioni, *Luca*, 237) So, even if a man spends a

lifetime hoarding up a treasure of merit wherewith he may buy his soul out of hell and pay for his right to enter God's eternal rest, his pursuit of this wealth is a striving after wind and vanity too.

The rich young ruler was a man who, by almost anyone's standards, deserved to be ushered into the Kingdom on a red carpet, but, staggered by the unexpectedly high price of the Kingdom, judged it impossible for him to pay, and walked away. In glorious contrast to him, however, there is Zacchaeus, the filthy rich chief tax collector. There hardly lived a man more "camelly" to go through the needle's eye of the Kingdom than he! And yet, during a visit with Jesus Christ, by the grace of God **IN HE WENT!** (Lk. 19:9) Not because rich, but because repentant.

If the Apostles' question means, "Who can break the spell that wealth holds over its possessors?," Jesus' later answer to Peter (19:29) will show that God had already begun to succeed in liberating the Twelve (with the possible exception of Judas) and many others from the fascination of possessions.

G. PETER'S WRONG-HEADED QUESTION ANSWERED

(19:27-30)

1. "We have sacrificed what the rich young ruler would not: what is our reward?"

19:27 **Lo, we have left all.** Objectively, they had sacrificed little more than a few boats and nets and the simple fisherfolk that made up their families, hardly a treasure to compare with the ruler's millions. But it was their entire life: their livelihood, their loved ones. So when they turned away from these things to follow Jesus, they demonstrated as truly their dedication to Jesus as if they had renounced all the finest gold in the world or forsaken the treasured company of kings. **What then shall we have?** Is Peter's reaction to the foregoing statements of Jesus positive or negative?

1. Positive. Peter sees that the Twelve disciples had actually made great sacrifices to be in His personal service. They had willingly done what the rich young ruler had not, although the objective quantity was not near as great. If, then, the road of the wealthy is a dead-end street, what lies ahead on the road of sacrifice? Because the Lord does not seem to scold Peter's abrupt question,

it may be that He interprets Peter as asking, "Lord, since we have sacrificed for the Kingdom, does this mean that we are among the recipients of God's grace for whom He facilitates entrance into the Kingdom? What has God made possible for us?" Since Jesus had pointed out the impossibility to be saved ("With men this is impossible"), Peter may be uncertain about whether they, in their sacrificing, were laying up "heavenly treasure." But the fact that Jesus is not openly scolding in His answer is not decisive, because even His slightest warning (19:30; 20:16) may be thought to contain a criticism of Peter's question.

2. Negative. The rich young ruler had just been turned away because of the hold earthly possessions had on him, and now poor, grasping Peter commits the same basic error! **What shall we have?** means that what the Apostles even then possessed in the Person of Jesus Christ was to be judged meager in comparison with what they considered missing, and undoubtedly less than what they expected to come.
 - a. Peter and anyone who agreed with him was still addicted to wealth, because he just cannot quite stop thinking about what has been surrendered to be in Jesus' service. Worse, he values too lowly the beauty and preciousness of all the compensations with which he was even then surrounded. (Cf. Mt. 13:16f; Lk. 10:23f; Heb. 11:13; 1 Pt. 1:10-12)
 - b. Further, Peter's observation has the flavor of self-righteousness, because **we have left all** reminds the Lord of the greatness of their self-denial. So his question is colored by covetousness. Perhaps he thought, "Our rare success in doing what the most amply qualified citizens find impossible to do must be a very meritorious accomplishment indeed." **What shall we have?**, then, hints for V.I.P. positions and preferential treatment.
 - c. In the larger context, it may be that Jesus' remarks on the dangerous temptations of riches had a discouraging effect on Peter, leaving him uneasy about prospects of immediate reward on earth in the Kingdom of a King who inexplicably refused to be crowned (Jn. 6:15) and steadily predicted His own judicial murder (Mt. 16:21; 17:22f).

Though charity requires that we not condemn Peter without solid proof of his guilt, the latter interpretation seems more correctly to explain his motivation, since the warning Jesus gives in 19:30 and more especially the point of the Parable of the Eleventh Hour Laborers

(20:1-16) grows directly out of this question. Over-concern about contracts with God and the "What is there in it for me?" spirit endangers those who react and reason this way, because of its legalistic calculation, its putting self-interest first in priorities, and its expecting preferential treatment:

2. Jesus' answers: "You will be rewarded, but not on the basis you think." (19:28—20:16)

a. PROMISE: "In the new world, you will reign with me, judging all Israel."

19:28 Although His further remarks will leave the merit-counting self-seekers scratching their heads and frustrated, the interesting thing about Jesus' answer here is the gentleness of His reproof of Peter's self-interested question. Instead of criticizing his question, He answered it! There is a striking similarity between this reaction and His promises given in Lk. 22:28-30, despite the self-seeking dispute among the Twelve about relative rank and importance at the Last Supper (Lk. 22:24-27). A closer look at the answer in each context, however, may convince us that His promise of their future greatness intends to destroy any hope of personal gain or superiority over others. He disappoints every aspiration of personal distinction in a graduated hierarchical scale by seating them on twelve equal thrones. No one is worthy to be seated higher than another. This implies that no merit is accumulated even on the basis of the relatively differing sacrifices made by each one. (See on 20:1-16.)

You who have followed me means "you who have continued with me in my trials." (Cf. Lk. 22:28) The disciples deserved high positions in the Kingdom, not because they had sacrificed so much (Mt. 19:27), but because they had been willing to be His disciples despite all the common-sense rationalizations that told them to drop Him. They would be rewarded on the basis of their well-tested but victorious faith. They had seen in Him absolutely nothing that would concretely sustain any real hope of earthly security or power. Their faith is not perfect: they would misunderstand Him and they would yet express some ambitious hopes. (20:20-28) But these failings, in His view, were but ripples on an otherwise calm sea of deep trust in Him. He did not despise the generosity of their self-denial, however often it might misunderstand Him. Their general humility and willingness to be led was worth everything to Him: why should He fail to reward

them? Only an uninformed, greedy jealousy could raise an eyebrow at the idea of rewarding them for following Him, because, as He has intimated time without number, the rewards of the Kingdom are not the sort of thing that would attract the greedy or arouse the materialistic anyway. (See "The Reasonableness of the Redeemer's Rewarding Righteousness," Vol. I, 198-201; cf. notes on 10:41f and 20:20-28.) And, because eleven-twelfths of their number would finally learn the critical route to true greatness (18:1-4), He now replies to their original question in language more nearly resembling what they hoped He would use. But even then, the nearness of terminology must not be mistaken for nearness in thought!

In the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. As suggested above, regardless of what attraction the Apostles thought they saw in these words as they heard them the first time, they did not receive what they anticipated. And yet the Lord did not deceive them, because it was something similar, but something which their later, maturer Christian judgment would decide far superior and far more gratifying than all their earlier, paltry dreams. But to what does Jesus refer here? Note the two possible time elements and their relative applications:

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|---|---|
| <p>1. The regeneration:</p> <p>a. The Christian age</p> <p>b. The renovation of the universe</p> | <p>2. The Apostles' judging the 12 tribes of Israel:</p> <p>a. By means of their teaching</p> <p>b. By decisions at the great judgment</p> |
|---|---|

It may well be that such neat outlining is far more precise than the Lord Himself, especially if we must make either/or choices between what in the Lord's thinking may have been one continuous process that would include all of the above elements as progressive phases in the process. The details of that process, examined individually, then in harmony with each other, illustrate this.

1. Because Jesus says **in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne**, the time element is contemporaneous with the glorious reigning of the Messiah. Elsewhere, instead of saying "**in the regeneration**," Jesus said "in my Kingdom." (Lk. 22:30) His reign was announced as an accomplished fact the first Pentecost after His ascension. (Ac. 2:33-36) His Kingdom is a present reality. (Col. 1:13; 1 Co. 15:24f; Heb. 1:8; Eph. 5:5; 2 Ti.

- 4:1; Rev. 1:9)
2. **Regeneration** (*palingenesia*), as the Greek word suggests, refers simply to that long-awaited era when everything would begin to be made new. This would begin with the rebirth of men on the present earth. (2 Co. 5:17; Jn. 3:3-5; Tit. 3:5; Ro. 6:4; 8:10; 12:2) But the process would not be completed until this transformation of the present scheme of things affected every part of the total universe itself. (Ro. 8:18-25; 2 Pt. 3:7-13; Rev. 21:1, 5)
 3. It is to be a time when the Twelve would **sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel**. Note the kind of action represented by that present participle, **judging** (*krinontes*): it is durative, representing an action as in progress and continuing during the time when the Twelve would be seated on their thrones with Jesus. If we may presume that, following the great, final judgment, **the twelve tribes of Israel** would have already been finally judged and their fate no longer in question, then with that act also the Apostles' function as judges would come to an end. Thus, their *judging* must have been something in progress prior to the final judgment. Two problems should be noticed:
 - a. The thrones are *twelve*, because Judas would be replaced by Matthias (Ac. 1:15-26) and, for the time being, Jesus is not taking Paul and the Gentiles into consideration, so He does not mention "thirteen" thrones. But if there are at least twelve, there is not to be just one throne in the Vatican, the cathedra of Peter. We see here something far more wonderful: the college of Apostles gathered around Jesus Christ, ruling God's people.
 - b. Should we think of the *judging* in modern terms—only as a strictly judicial function? Plummer (*Matthew*, 270; see also Barnes, *Matthew-Mark*, 201) raises the interesting question whether the Apostles' specific function should be thought of as reminiscent of the position and activity of the Judges in ancient Israel, who not only gave sentence in legal cases, but positively governed the nation. (Cf. Jdg. 3:10; 10:2f; 12:8f, 11, 13f; etc. See Keil and Delitzsch, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, 241.) Contrary to the Jewish expectation that the tribes of Israel would be ruled by the Twelve Patriarchs, the sons of Jacob (Cf. *Testament of Judah* 25:1), Jesus the Messiah elevates His own Apostles to that office.
 4. **The twelve tribes of Israel**, considered as an expression in the ears of a Jewish disciple, could have meant nothing but the ideal people of God. Certainly it may have been badly interpreted as referring

only to fleshly descendents of Abraham, thus eliminating the Gentiles, as it often was. But this abuse does not deny the propriety of Jesus' using it in a perfectly Jewish context. (Cf. Ac. 26:6, 7) It meant the ideal Israel. (Cf. Rev. 21:12) But the true "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16) includes believers of every sex, race and condition (Gal. 3:28). Thus, Jesus' expression is symbolic for the people of God redeemed by the Messiah. (Cf. Jas. 1:1; 2:1 shows that these are Christian.) But is there no sense in which the Apostles ever dealt with the literal tribes of Israel? Certainly, but hear their preaching as they go to "the Jew first and also to the Greek." (Ac. 13:46; 18:6; 26:6, 7; 28:20, 28; Ro. 1:16) The sentencing of the Jews will depend on whether they accepted the inspired preaching of the Apostles or not. But reference to fleshly Israel must not overweigh His reference to the true Israel of God. (Cf. Ro. 9:6-8) It is mistaken to believe that the reference is not intended in any sense to include Pentecost and the Church's establishment, a conclusion undoubtedly founded on the unwarranted identification of **the twelve tribes of Israel** with unbelieving Jews only, and on the too strict identification of the Church and the Kingdom. It should be noted that Jesus did not say "Church" in our text, but alluded to *thrones* suggesting regal judgment and, in the later comment of Lk. 22:28-30, said "Kingdom." His reference is not exclusively to the Apostles' judgment of the Messianic Community, but rather to the total rule of the King, beginning from His accession to the throne and continuing until the end of time. Thus, the Apostles could actually begin their *judging* of the believing and unbelieving Israel even at Pentecost, and not merely with the beginning of eternity at judgment day.

These data, taken together, lead to the conclusion that Jesus' words contain no mysterious, eschatological pronouncement, but simply declare what even the youngest Christian already knows by heart:

1. By their personal example of willing obedience to Him in whom they saw the works of God and from whose lips they heard the voice of God, these Twelve, more than any other disciple, rightly judge all Israel. They did the homework assigned to the entire nation, thus proving that it could and should have been done. (Cf. the example of Noah, Heb. 11:7b) Their example of successful discipleship should stand for all ages as a living monument and worthy of imitation, because even without their saying one further word of condemnation, their faithfulness to Jesus in His

lowest humiliation will damn "the wise and understanding" who thought they knew too much to believe the "impossible, unreasonable claims of that eccentric Nazarene!"

2. The Apostles' inspired doctrine is the official standard by which not only the new "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16; 3:7-9, 26-29) is to be judged, but the proclamation of a Gospel by which the "Jew first" would be justified or condemned. (Ro. 1:16) Today, in the Kingdom of God it is "the Apostles' doctrine" (Ac. 2:42) that is the standard by which everyone is to be judged faithful to God and members of the Church of the Messiah. (See notes on 16:19; 18:18 and all notes on Mt. 10.) This prophecy was already being fulfilled in the Apostolic era. In fact, Matthew's book itself judges us!

In short, what Jesus promised in Mt. 16:18f and 18:18, that the Apostles' legislative and judicial voice would be considered as final, is going to be realized in all questions of faith and practice in the earthly expression of the Kingdom of God. As McGarvey (*Fourfold Gospel*, 548) said it:

During their personal ministry, they judged in person; and since then they judge through their writings. True, we have written communications from only a part of them, but judgments pronounced by one of a bench of judges with the known approval of all, are the judgments of the entire bench.

In the imagery, Jesus pictures the Twelve as ruling **when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne**. Some might object that Jesus' presence in the scene would preclude as superfluous any legislative jurisdiction on the part of the Twelve. However, neither Jesus thought so, nor did they themselves. Undoubtedly every Apostle, during his earthly ministry, could say with Paul: "It is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding, beloved." (2 Co. 12:19b; cf. 2:17; 4:2; 5:11; 1 Ti. 6:13) Like the Thessalonians, believers embrace the Apostles' words as God's word. (1 Th. 2:13) Bruce (*Training*, 258f) exclaims:

Surely here is power and authority nothing short of regal! The reality of sovereignty is here, though the trappings of royalty, which strike the vulgar eye, are wanting. The apostles of Jesus were princes indeed, though they wore no princely robes; and they were destined to exercise a more extensive sway than ever fell to the lot of any monarch in Israel, not to speak of governors of single tribes.

b. ENCOURAGEMENT: "Sacrifice for the Kingdom is a profitable investment."

19:29 **Every one that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father or mother, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life.** Not only are the Apostles in line for exalted blessings as they follow Christ, but EVERYONE who has sacrificed for Jesus' sake will be rewarded even in this life with hundreds of times more than what they give up, and eternal life "in the age to come." (Mk. 10:30; Lk. 18:30) Giving away, letting go, liberating oneself of possessions is the only way of keeping and multiplying them! This is incredible doctrine, if not Utopian nonsense, to our hard-nosed, business-is-business, "practical-minded" world, but no more so for ours than for that of Jesus' original hearers. And yet, the Lord knows that this is the only way to free us from the nearly uncontrollable slavery to things and security-building relationships that distract men from the innumerable possibilities in life that do not involve possessions at all.

Everyone who has made the sacrifice, taken the risk, let go of his earthly securities, kicked the habit of addiction to possessions, says Jesus, **will receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life!** Mark and Luke emphasize the this-worldly character of Jesus' promise: ". . . now in this time, houses, and brothers, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life." In terms of sheer reward, faith in Jesus pays far more than it requires of us, compensating for anything surrendered with 100-fold returns! (Cf. 1 Co. 3:21-23; 2 Co. 6:10)

Inherit eternal life is the language used by the rich young ruler (Mk. 10:17 = Mt. 19:16). What the Lord required of that potential disciple was not hopeless, profitless sacrifice, but an investment paying off handsome dividends!

If **inherit eternal life** sounds like a merited payoff for people whose sacrifices earn their reward, Hendriksen (*Matthew*, 731) shows how these who are saved by grace may truly inherit such blessings: "a. They are freely given to them, not earned by them; b. the gift is based upon justice: they were earned *for* them and are therefore theirs by right; and c. they are theirs forever."

Why should the Lord be so lavish? Why should He NOT bless the man who loves the Kingdom so much that to gain it he would sell everything he has, and then, deciding such sacrifices inadequate, give

himself? Should the Lord not give the man what he gave himself for? However, the sacrifice Jesus rewards is not the calculating self-concern of the ascetic, but the willing surrender of one who loves Jesus. We must not forget that Jesus is answering the disciples' question: "Who then can be saved? To this Jesus answers, in effect, "EVERYONE—everyone who sacrifices whatever hinders his loyalty to me." **For my name's sake** means "for my sake and for the gospel" (Mk. 10:29) and "for the sake of the kingdom of God" (Lk. 18:29). For other notes on suffering for Christ, see on 5:10-12; 10:16-39.

Jesus Christ puts such a high premium on sacrificing everything for Him, because He knows what earth-bound value systems do to people. He knows that riches have a shrivelling effect on our spirit because they supercharge the ego with a false sense of power. This is because, when we have unlimited resources to mold our own fate, we limit our future to the low goals which we can consciously conceive, rather than take life as it comes, a day at a time, with its unforeseeables, its risks. Here is where faith is made real for the believer. But because of these risks, doubts can constrict our souls by tempting us to struggle to make life "safe" for ourselves, so we can continue to enjoy our wealth unendingly. But in this very safety there is psychological stagnation, and faith in God dies, because it is in the unknowns, the risks, that real life takes on the excitement and zest that makes it worthwhile. Thus, security symbols—even the security of safe family patterns (**houses, brothers, sisters, parents, children, real estate**)—may have to be risked in order to be able to grow into the kind of life Jesus offers. Who would have thought that, in our old security systems whereby we guaranteed ourselves a constant supply of whatever houses, lands and kinfolk gave us, were already planted the seeds of our own stagnation and spiritual poverty?

Ironically, but truly, the chief symptom that we are addicted to our possessions (all that we think is ours and is of value to us) is the sensation that we are unable to meet our world without the reassurance that they are there. Our security symbol may be a well-padded bank account, a martini, a shot of a narcotic, modish clothes, business as usual, kinfolks all in their places, eating well, pleasant family surroundings, whatever. A person is hooked if he has the uneasy sensation that, **IF HE SURRENDER ANYTHING HE POSSESSES TODAY, HE WILL BE INADEQUATE OR NAKED WITHOUT IT**, for fear that it might not come back tomorrow. Notice, then, how Jesus even condescends to our all-too-human uncertainty by assuring us, on His

honor as a Gentleman and a Teacher come from God, that not only will we have a constant supply of what we really need for our real security and happiness, but it will be supplied in greatly multiplied abundance. Nor will it be merely "pie in the sky by-and-by," but in this time.

There is also the soul-shrinking reality that, in inverse proportion as our wealth grows and our interest grows in those pleasures wealth can assure us, our interest decreases in those innumerable options in the realm of the spirit that have nothing to do with wealth or possessions. In fact, it may well be that Jesus' **hundredfold** here has only partial reference to expanded material riches or multiplied physical kinfolk. (Otherwise, He would be stimulating the very greed He has just been condemning.) Rather, He guarantees the gain of what would be valued at a hundred times the price of what was given up: the multiplied fellowship of brotherhood in Christ, righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, and much more besides that would far exceed the mundane values abandoned for Christ's sake. (See Wilson, *Learning From Jesus*, "Treasures of the Kingdom" 228ff.) Ponder Bruce's further explanation (*Training*, 262):

Still it must be confessed that, taken strictly and literally, the promise of Christ does not hold good in every instance. Multitudes of God's servants have had what the world would account a miserable lot. Does the promise, then, simply and absolutely fail in their case? No, for . . . there are more ways than one in which it can be fulfilled. Blessings, for example, may be multiplied a hundred-fold without their external bulk being altered, simply by the act of renouncing them. Whatever is sacrificed for truth, whatever we are willing to part with for Christ's sake, becomes from that moment immeasurably increased in value.

Jesus is convinced that He is ordering us what seems like poverty, which, in reality, is itself wealth. It is a measure that is not intended to limit man's maturing, but the condition that will make maturity authentic and actually possible. This is because the man who, out of love for Jesus and the Kingdom, reverses the whole mechanism of covetousness in his life, finds that he has time for God and people like never before. Although he is money-poorer, he is rich in freedom from the cares brought by the economic struggle for "just a little bit more." (Prov. 15:16; 16:8; 1 Ti. 6:9) He is rich in serenity, because he has learned in whatever state he finds himself to be content with it, because his mind is fixed on God (Isa. 26:3; 2 Co. 6:10;

Phil. 4:4-7, 11-13; Heb. 13:5f; 1 Th. 5:18; 1 Ti. 6:6-8) And, because he is now deeply involved in helping others arrive at the only authentic humanity there is—that which is available only in Christ,—he is rich in brotherhood. (Cf. Ro. 1:6-13; Mt. 12:48-50)

Hundredfold: where is all this going to come from? Is God going to rain down manna from heaven on His beleaguered saints? More likely He is counting on that marvelous hospitality whereby His people take care of each other. (Study Ac. 2:44f; 4:34f; Heb. 13:1-3; 1 Pt. 4:9; 3 Jn. 5-8; Ro. 12:8, 13; Eph. 4:28; Phil. 4:14; 1 Ti. 3:2; 5:10; Tit. 1:8; 3:14) More would come from a new work ethic that would create financial independence. (Eph. 4:28; 1 Th. 4:11f; 2 Th. 3:6-13; Tit. 3:14) Above and beyond these human endeavors and resources there is the vast treasury of heaven at our disposal! (Mt. 6:33; Phil. 4:19; Col. 2:2f; 2 Co. 9:8-11; Eph. 3:20)

That no easy life is indicated here is clear from Mark's addition: "hundredfold . . . with persecutions." (Mk. 10:30; cf. Ac. 14:22) That persecution is not merely an accompanying phenomena of the Christian life or even a hindrance, but really part of our profit, is illustrated by Bruce (*Training*, 263):

We see further why "persecutions" are thrown into the account, as if they were not drawbacks, but part of the gain. The truth is, the hundredfold, is realized, not in spite of persecutions, but to a great extent because of them. Persecutions are the salt with which things sacrificed are salted, the condiment that enhances their relish. Or, to put the matter arithmetically, persecutions are the factor by which earthly blessings given up to God are multiplied an hundred-fold, if not in quantity, at least in virtue.

The fact that it is for Jesus' sake that we are persecuted, is a blessing in itself, because it furnishes additional proof that we are really faithful to Him, hence assures us of our belonging to Him and eventual redemption by Him. (1 Pt. 1:6-9; 2:12, 15, 19-25; 3:13-18; 4:1f, 12-19; 5:9) This is no idle promise, either for the early Christians who, in order to share in the Gospel and be in the Kingdom of God for Jesus' sake, actually abandoned family, field and fireside, or for the modern saint who is called upon to sacrifice the companionship of those nearest and dearest to him, because they refuse him for his commitment to Jesus. How many have experienced the literal truth of the Lord's word, in the actual multiplication of dear ones closer than one's own ungodly kin who cast them out?

How many have found in the warmth of the Christian congregation strength to accept the inevitable persecutions (Mk. 10:30; 2 Ti. 3:12), and the incredible joy that comes from accepting the plundering of their property, knowing they have a better, permanent possession that enemies cannot touch? (Heb. 10:34; 1 Ti. 6:17-19; Mt. 6:19-21)

The fact that Matthew and Mark omit "wife" in the list of things abandoned for Christ's sake must not be interpreted as an anti-ascetic reaction on their part, any more than its inclusion by Luke (18:29) indicates the contrary tendency on Luke's part. It may only indicate that the former Evangelists dealt with the problem of man-woman relationships in the context of Jesus' teaching on marriage, divorce and celibacy (Mt. 19:3-12 = Mk. 10:2-12) hence omit "wife" here to eliminate any suspicion of contradiction, whereas Luke, who will treat the divorce problem alone and in a quite different context (Lk. 16:18), could include "wife." In fact, as illustrated at 19:12, Matthew, in principle, does leave the door open for separation from an unbelieving spouse.

The current *Gemeindetheologie* school that believes that the Gospel writers wrote primarily for their own congregations (*Gemeinden*) and so reflected live needs and problems in their own special areas, do not hesitate to date Matthew's Gospel in the 80's and 90's, long after the fall of Jerusalem. However, the heavy insistence that the rich young ruler be immediately ready to sacrifice every item of value for the sake of Christian discipleship and the promise made to any disciple of a hundred times what would be sacrificed, quite easily point to an earlier period. We must not think that such problems arose exclusively at a later age of the Church. In fact, much earlier, people already had begun to experience the suffering of loss of all things for Christ. (Phil. 3:8; 1 Th. 2:14-16; 3:3f; 2 Th. 1:4ff) Rather, if Matthew's pastoral concern is to prepare his congregation for what it must face—and on the basis of what theory of pastoral theology can such a concern be denied?—then the early testimonies to joyful acceptance of the plundering of Christians' property because of their confidence in a better, abiding one (Heb. 10:32-36), tend to indicate a date prior to the Jewish war when the unbelievers of Judaism persecuted the Christian disciples, i.e. a date when Judaism, not yet preoccupied with war with Rome, could turn its persecuting attention upon the upstart sect of the Nazarenes.

THE REWARDS OF SELF-SACRIFICE

Meditate these lovely lines by Bruce (*Training*, 255ff):

The first thing which strikes one in reference to these rewards, is the utter disproportion between them and the sacrifices made. The twelve had forsaken fishing-boats and nets, and they were to be rewarded with thrones; and every one that forsakes anything for the kingdom, no matter what it may be, is promised an hundred-fold in return, in this present life, of the very thing he has renounced, and in the world to come life everlasting.

These promises strikingly illustrate the generosity of the Master whom Christians serve . . . He rather loved to make Himself a debtor to His servants, by generously exaggerating the value of their good deeds, and promising to them, as their *fit* recompense, rewards immeasurably exceeding their claims. So He acted in the present instance. Though the "all" of the disciples was a very little one, He still remembered that it was their all; and with impassioned earnestness, with a "verily" full of tender grateful feeling, He promised them thrones as if they had been fairly earned!

These great and precious promises, if believed, would make sacrifices easy. Who would not part with a fishing-boat for a throne? and what merchant would stick at an investment which would bring a return, not of five percent, or even of a hundred percent, but of a hundred to one?

The promises made by Jesus have one other excellent effect when duly considered. They tend to humble. Their very magnitude has a sobering effect on the mind. Not even the vainest can pretend that their good deeds deserve to be rewarded with thrones, and their sacrifices to be recompensed an hundred-fold. At this rate, all must be content to be debtors of God's grace, and all talk of merit is out of the question. That is one reason why the rewards of the kingdom of heaven are so great. God bestows His gifts so as at once to glorify the Giver and to humble the receiver.

c. WARNING: "Watch for a reversal of earth's value systems."
(19:30)

19:30 **But many shall be last that are first; and first that are last.** This paradox is true, because the logic of the Kingdom overturns the whole merit-counting methodology of those people believed to be *first*. Earthly estimates and evaluations, based upon mistaken premises, however popular and widely believed, cannot but be reversed by God who judges everything according to reality. To worldlings, this must appear to contradict all sense of appropriateness and right, simply because the presuppositions, on which this sense is based, are themselves false. Imagine the world's surprise as all the most glorious prizes go to those to whom everyone would have assigned last place, the "also-rans," the "etceteras." But the big eye-opener will come when those judged "most likely to succeed" finish last! (See notes on 13:25, 30, 43.)

The Apostles had just witnessed a man, who by all counts, should have been *first* in the Kingdom, walk away from it to a destiny of *last* importance. Jesus' betrayer, too, was in line for greatness among the *first*, but Judas would be substituted by a disciple whose name never appears among the first disciples in the Gospels, but who would move straight to the top at the beginning of the Church. (Ac. 1:15-26) To reject the rich young ruler and Judas as not involved in Jesus' thought is to fail to look at Jesus' point from the disciples' standpoint, since they would certainly have considered Judas among the elite, and, as their own reactions showed, they had been staggered at the idea that an almost perfect rich man could not enter the Kingdom. Hendriksen (*Matthew*, 732) agrees:

There will be surprises however, Not only will many of those who are not regarded as the very pillars of the church be last, but also many who never made the headlines—think of the poor widow who contributed "two mites" (Mark 12:42), and Mary of Bethany whose act of loving lavishness was roundly criticized by the disciples (Matt. 26:8)—shall be first on the day of judgment (Mk. 12:43f; Mt. 26:10-13). The disciples who were constantly quarreling about rank (18:1; 20:20; Lk. 22:24) better take note!

There is presumption in Peter's self assurance that takes it for granted that sacrifices should be rewarded and that the only

problem is WHICH reward. He must understand that there is no sense in calculating rewards in a Kingdom in which no one deserves even to serve! Because this maxim connects the Parable of the Eleventh-Hour Laborers with Peter's question (19:27), it very likely rebukes that self-complacency and pride that haggles with God over what He can or should give us. There could be a real situation in which those who considered themselves first because of their own self-sacrifice, would find it all vitiated by pride, and actually be surpassed by those who in genuine humility had equalled them in devoted, self-giving service to the Lord, even if not as fortunate to "get in on the ground floor" as the early disciples. Further, if Jesus' talk about handsome rewards for service might tempt some to serve merely for the prizes and not because they love the King, the Lord deflates such hopes by this prophetic epigram and the parable which follows as its illustration.

Note Jesus' terminology: **MANY shall be last that are first, and first that are last.** This means that not everyone who labors long, faithfully and efficiently in God's Kingdom will be contaminated with the mercenary, self-righteous spirit that congratulates itself on what it calculates as a reward for its arduous labor. God has ever had humble, unassuming, self-forgetful, generously trusting workers in His service. **Many** does not mean that all will be calculating and selfish. And, as Bruce (*Training*, 268f) astutely sees,

If there be some first who shall not be last, there are doubtless also some last who shall not be first. If it were otherwise,—if to be last in length of service, in zeal and devotion, gave a man an advantage,—it would be ruinous to the interest of the kingdom of God. It would, in fact, be in effect putting a premium on indolence.

For further notes, study the following parable which illustrates this point: 20:1-16.

FACT QUESTIONS

1. Describe the man who came to Jesus. What was his character and position in society? What do his questions and answers reveal about him? What does his manner of approach to Jesus reveal about him?
2. What question did he place before Jesus? How does the wording

of Matthew differ from that of Mark and Luke? Interpret and harmonize these differences.

3. What concept of how to obtain eternal life did he have?
4. What preliminary response did Jesus make to the man's request? How does the wording of Matthew differ from that of Mark and Luke? Harmonize and interpret these differences.
5. List and locate by chapter and verse the commandments Jesus cited to the man.
6. What was the man's reaction to this repetition of the commandments?
7. What addition does Mark make that could aid in our interpretation of this text?
8. What did the man lack to be perfect?
9. Explain what was really required of him, i.e. show how total liquidation of his assets, giving alms and discipleship under Jesus would have led the man to perfection. What principle(s) behind these requirements apply to everyone?
10. Did Jesus say that rich men per se cannot enter the Kingdom, i.e. because they have the misfortune to have riches, or did He imply that those who trust in riches cannot enter? What is the evidence for the former conclusion? What is the evidence for the latter?
11. What is meant by the figure of the camel and the needle's eye?
12. How did the disciples react to Jesus' closing the Kingdom to wealthy people?
13. How did Jesus react to their reaction?
14. How did the disciples react to Jesus' further reaction?
15. What does Jesus mean when He says, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible"?
16. What question did Peter ask as a general reaction to Jesus' firm stand on wealth and its relation to the Kingdom? What did the Apostle mean by his query?
17. What did Jesus refer to in His promise of twelve thrones for the Apostles? When and/or how would they "judge the twelve tribes of Israel"?
18. According to Jesus, what are the rewards of Christian service?
19. With what pithy principle did Jesus punctuate His remarks? What did He mean by it?
20. List the texts in Matthew 18 which find practical application in this section.