

AF A9 BIBLE STUDY: “The Rich Young Ruler” Luke 18

Scripture of Lesson: Luke’s Gospel 18: 18-30

1. *The rich young ruler’s quest for eternal life*

- A. This unnamed young ruler asked Lord Jesus how he could have eternal life [v. 18]. He called Lord Jesus, “Good Master.” All Jews of the time knew that only God was good and none else. This fact Lord Jesus reminded this ruler. Yet, he did not seem to understand that he was conversing with the Son of God [v. 19].
- B. Lord Jesus pointed him to the first requirement for eternal life: a moral life by keeping the Ten Commandments. He did this by iterating some of the commandments: “Do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother [v. 20].” In Matthew’s account [Matt 19: 18-19], He mentioned two other commandments: “Do not commit adultery, love your neighbor as yourself.” At this reminder, the young ruler answered that he had been keeping them from his youth. He did not, however, mention the commandments against covetousness.

2. *What was lacking in the young ruler’s life and what the Lord offered him*

- A. There are not many people who can attest before God that they have been leading a moral life. However, God points to the very part that is lacking in us. Lord Jesus showed it to this man to help him attain the eternal life, which he was seeking.
- B. The Lord’s command was “to sell all his possessions, give them to the poor people, then come and follow Me.” [v. 22]. He reassured him that he would have treasure in heaven through this act of giving all his possession to the poor. Note that this command was specifically for this person and not for all rich people. Through this command Lord Jesus was pointing this young man to open his eyes to the following two great privileges:
 - i Lord Jesus saw that this man, although he claimed to have a moral living, also had a great love for the riches. In this era of corruption and power play with the Herodian government and the Roman colonial government, the dual slave drivers that exploited the common people of Israel, how could this young man be both rich and have a high government position? Very likely, he himself was an extortioner and power player using his wealth. He wanted all of the political power, wealth and eternal life on top of them. He had to lose his love for the material wealth and power first before seeking eternal life.
 - ii Secondly, Lord Jesus offered him to join Him in His ministry. The 12 disciples of His had left all they had—their families, homes, relatives—for the kingdom of God and were following the Lord. If this young man had joined the Lord’s ministry, we would know his name today as recorded in the Bible. He would have had the privilege of carrying the gospel ministry to the world as a messenger of the Messiah. Yet, he missed seeing this privilege.

3. *The rich and eternal life*

- A. Lord Jesus saw the young man in agony [v. 24]. One cannot have both: craving for wealth and the kingdom of God in himself. The two things cannot be in harmony in a person’s heart and life. You cannot serve both God and mammon [Matt 6: 24]. When faced with this basic truth, the young man chose mammon but was sorrowful that he could not have both.
- B. Lord Jesus compared this situation as a camel trying to go through a ‘needle’s eye.’ A needle’s eye in the Jewish society is thought to be the tiny gate next to a city’s main gate. At sunset, the main gate is closed but the small gate [needle’s eye] could be opened to humans arriving after dark because leaving them outside the wall placed them to the risk of wild animals or vandals. A camel with a load could hardly enter the needle’s eye because of the bulk. It had to be stripped of all load, lie low and then be pushed to barely enter through the small space. This shows the difficulty of a rich person with love for his wealth in entering the kingdom of God [v. 25].
- C. This story is very relevant to the rich American society, where many affluent people are Christians. They need to understand the fundamental truth that they cannot serve God and material riches together. One must be made subject to the other. In other words, one must learn to place the material in the service of God. “The things that are impossible with men are possible with God.” [v. 27]

4. Encouragements to those in the Lord's ministry

A. *So, He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life."* [v. 29-30]

B. Those in the Lord's ministry are often poor and have to suffer separation from their families, comforts of homes and certainly material riches. Rewards for the Lord's servants are great in this life and eternal life is guaranteed to the in the life after. In other words, what the rich man sought and could not gain in sorrow, this eternal life is guaranteed to those in the Lord's ministry who follow His true example in their service to God.

For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. [Matt 16: 27]

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. [2 Tim 4: 7-8]

C. Likewise, Christians, who keep their priorities right so that their service to God is not hampered by greed for wealth or power, will have similar crowns of glory on the day of rewards from the just Judge, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Discussion topics:

- 1. Have you known a person like this rich young ruler who sought both material and spiritual riches together? What were their lives like?*
- 2. How can we apply this lesson to our own lives?*