

Jesus Christ's Encounter With A Young Rich Ruler

Matthew 19:16-22 [NIV] *“Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, ‘Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?’ ‘Why do you ask me about what is good?’ Jesus replied. ‘There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments.’ ‘Which ones?’ the man enquired. Jesus replied, ‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honour your father and mother,’ and ‘love your neighbour as yourself.’ ‘All these I have kept,’ the young man said. ‘What do I still lack?’ Jesus answered, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’ When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.”*

[**Luke 18:18** adds that this man was a ruler]

What can we learn from the encounter?

There are several indications that this young man had an attractive character.

He ran to Jesus shows eagerness [**Mark 10:17**]. Also he showed respect to Jesus as a teacher by kneeling before Jesus and added the word “*good*” to His title of teacher.

The fact he claimed to have kept the God-given laws shows that he was claiming to be a moral man.

When Jesus responded to this young man, what He was saying is “*do you really know the One to whom you are speaking?*”

For by calling Jesus ‘good’ he was calling Jesus ‘God’ whether he knew it or not.

Also had this man really fully kept all these commandments?

The claim that in his own mind he was a very moral man?

The young man was expecting Jesus to give him some other commandment to keep as he considered he had all the others, all of which referred to human relationships.

Instead Jesus gave this man the opportunity for a spiritual decision, a complete abandonment of his comfortable physical life to follow Him, and become His disciple.

This young man did **not** realise the danger he was in by claiming to be a moral man.

This young man had just enough religion to delude himself and deceive himself that he was good enough to be all right with God, because he had kept God’s laws.

I’m going to ask you to decide whether this young man had kept the commandments Jesus had listed and referred to as part of the original list found in Exodus 20:1-17.

“You shall have no other Gods before me” – the young man knew this command well but when Jesus told him to put God before his love or riches, he turned his back on God [Jesus Christ].

“You shall not make for yourself an idol” – yet loving his wealth before loving God had made it an idol.

Even as this young man talked with Jesus they were surrounded with the poor, beggars, crippled and starving.

Jesus had suggested that as a condition of following Him, he distributed his earthly goods to those he could see around him.

The young man flatly refused.

Was this “loving his neighbours”?

Was not this coveting?

The young man claimed “*all these I have kept*”, I hope he was not lying but he was terribly deceived.

It is entirely possible for us to imagine ourselves to be all right with God because of our moral stance when we are not at all right.

Jesus plainly faced this young man with the terms of eternal salvation, follow the example of Jesus Christ by offering our lives to Him, as He was about to offer His life to God the Father for the salvation of others. [Romans 12:1]

Instead he was like many moral Christian people declaring their own goodness, even while standing knee-deep in broken laws.

Expressed a defensive attitude, bargaining with God about the sins that they consider they did **not** commit, instead of full acknowledgement of sin and complete trust in the person of Jesus Christ and utter abandonment to His Lordship alone.

Look at the example of Paul, as far as humanly possible, as a Pharisee, kept the commandments, yet he confessed himself as the worst of sinners. [1 Timothy 1:15]

The rich young ruler never showed this sense of his own sin and unworthiness. He trusted in his own moral defence rather than acknowledge his sin and need for God’s grace.

No person has any hope of eternal salvation apart from trusting completely in Jesus Christ and His life sacrifice as a substitute for our own deserved death. [Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23]

There are so many people who wish to put their trust in Jesus Christ plus something else for salvation.

They want to trust Jesus Christ and then point to the merit of their good works, baptism, church membership or stewardship.

The rich young ruler thought he possessed all of the necessary plus signs, yet in truth he possessed nothing that really mattered. He was a religious man of his day, but he was a lost man.

The truth is that people can be respectable, religious, prayerful, and eager to ask the right questions and talk about religion and still be lost.

They have not come into the Kingdom of God through repentance, trust and abandonment to their only Saviour Jesus Christ.

This rich young man was a seeker, the Church today would have put his name on a list of potential members. But he walked away and turned his back on the offer and appeal of Jesus Christ.

I refuse to deceive you by teaching that you can be a true Christian and love this present world, for you cannot.

You cannot be a genuine Bible Christian and still love the world and its culture.

It is not enough to inquire about the power of a crucified life and a Spirit-filled life, it must be desired and claimed above everything else in our life.

Actually, this rich young ruler had sold Jesus even as Judas had sold Jesus for silver.

How about you?