

“What Shall I Do That I May Inherit Eternal Life?”

Lesson
17
Summary

Mark 10:17-30; Jesus counsels the rich young man, foretells His own death, and heals blind Bartimaeus.

Mark 12:41-44; Jesus teaches: Beware of hypocrisy; lay up treasures in heaven, rather than on earth; prepare for the coming of the Lord; where much is given, much is required.

Luke 12:13-21; Jesus again heals on the Sabbath—He teaches humility, and gives the parable of the great supper—Those who follow Him must forsake all else.

Luke 14; 16; Jesus gives the parable of the unjust steward—He teaches of service and condemns divorce—He gives the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

“Seek Ye First The Kingdom of God.” Let us consider the last paragraph of supplement lesson number nine. “In the days of the Savior, all believing members committed their time, talent and even their lives to “the kingdom.” I participated in an archaeological survey close to Jericho where we were discussing the odd nature of a beautiful synagogue floor of the first century.

What was odd about it was the signature. Almost every ancient mosaic floor found in Israel has the signature of the donor with his family name and title. This one simply had an inscription that indicated that the “entire community” had done this work. I had the distinct feeling we were standing on the remains of a worship center used by early saints, “former-day Saint,” people who committed themselves to first the building of the Kingdom of God.”

Stewardship Instead of Ownership: As a discipline and behavioral structure, the early Saints gave everything to the Lord. By consecrating their resources to the Kingdom of God, they were learning stewardship instead of ownership. “. . . were of one heart and of one soul . . . they had all things common . . . and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.” (*Acts 4:32-35*) Stewardship is an eternal principle also given before Jesus’ time. “For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD . . .” (*Exodus 32:29*)

Two Men, Same Question, Two Answers: In Jesus’ day, two men asked what they should do to inherit eternal life. Jesus gave each one an answer that applied to him because each had to learn a principle he needed most. The rich young man was told to keep the commandments and when he answered that he observed them all, he was told to sell what he had and give to the poor. On the other hand, a lawyer was asked a question and when he answered correctly Jesus told him to follow his own answer. In other words, “Do it.”

The Rich Man Needed this Lesson: “And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? . . . Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven. . .” (*Mark 10:17-20*)

The Lawyer Needed this Lesson: “And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. (*Luke 10:25-28*)

Which Answer is Yours? The answer to the lesson title’s question includes more than a lesson on riches, wealth or worldly aspects. It is a lesson in stewardship, humility, and a fervent purpose of service to others guided by mercy, piety, wisdom, humility, gentility, and understanding. “The *shofet*, or judge, had to meet strict qualifications, besides just knowing the law. Among these qualifications were piety, wisdom, humility, gentility and human understanding. When Moses set up the first courts, he looked for “able men such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain” (*Exodus 18:21*) and “wise men, and understanding and full of knowledge” (*Deuteronomy 1:13*). They were charged to “hear the causes between your brethren and judge righteously between a man and his brother and the stranger,” not to be partial in judgment but to “hear the small and the great alike, fear no man, for judgment is God’s” (*Deuteronomy 1:16-17*).”

More than Ritual: “Ritual alone does not please God, who demands that it go hand in hand with mercy and compassion.” “The exercise of mercy is an obligation for all Jews. By this it is meant that they must act with compassion and forgiveness towards all mankind, and perform deeds of charity and kindness. This quality is an essential characteristic of God who is known as *Rahum* ("Merciful") and, in accordance with the tradition which sets as man's goal the imitation of God: "As He is merciful, so be you merciful." Just as God is bound by His covenant of mercy with His people, so is the Jew bound by specific commandments to act mercifully to the oppressed, the alien, the orphan, the widow, and indeed, every living creature. The stress placed upon this quality is evident both in the many charitable institutions existing in Jewish communal life, and in the daily prayers which implore God to deal compassionately even with the undeserving man. Human beings are frail, imperfect creatures constantly open to error, and so they are totally dependent on God's mercy. But God, as depicted by the rabbis, embodies a combination of justice and mercy, of strict judgment and lenient compassion. This combination of justice and mercy in God is represented by the two names of God --- Elohim and YHWH. The former stands for justice and the latter for mercy. Though they may seem contradictory, one actually complements the other and, when there is a conflict between the two, God usually favors mercy. Judaism demands of its judges this same balance, and the principle of mercy thus assumes extreme importance in the administration of Jewish law. The prophet Zechariah (7:9) put it: "...execute the judgment and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Doing Without Being Instructed to Do So: The law of consecration, in a celestial sense, is a stewardship of doing without being instructed to do so. Those that have to ask, “What must I do to inherit life?” must grasp the opportunity to reach higher so that the spirit can dictate the answer, “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God.”

Daniel Rona, born in Israel and living in Jerusalem has authored Old & New Testament, Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Supplement Study Materials to be used in conjunction with the weekly LDS Gospel Doctrine Lesson study. NOTE: Three versions of the supplemental study materials are available *at no charge* at www.HolyLandsRevealed.com. (Just click “LDS SUPPLEMENTS”)

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