

29. Who is on the throne?

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A little girl name Amanda had to go to the hospital because of her fever. The doctor who wanted to make her at ease said this while he was looking into her ear, "Who is in there, Donald Duck?" "No," Amanda replied. Then, he looked into her nose and asked again, "Who is in there, Mickey Mouse?" Again, she replied, "No." This time the doctor put his stethoscope on her heart and asked, "Who is in there, Barney?" Amanda wrinkled her eye brows and said, "No, Jesus is in my heart, but Barney is on my underwear."

The encounter with the rich young ruler was known for his greed. But the bottom line is more than greed. It is idolatry. He was worshiping himself and his possession over God. Unlike Amanda, the rich young ruler did not have Jesus in his heart.

A. WHAT IS YOUR IDEA OF GOOD?

Matthew 19:16-17 Now behold, one came and said to Him, "(1) Good Teacher, (2) what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."

This rich young ruler has made it to the top, financially secure, well known in his community, he is young and healthy physically. That means he was an yuppie of the day.

In response to this encounter with the rich young ruler, throughout the rest of this chapter Jesus will contrast the poverty of the young man's riches with His richness of poverty.

This young man made four critical faults in approaching Jesus:

Fault 1) He failed to recognize Jesus as God.

He addressed Jesus as "Good teacher." Romans 3:10 says that there is none righteous, no not one. What Jesus was trying to convey to the young man is, "Since God alone is good, are you saying that I am God?"

Jesus is not many ways to approach God, nor He is the best of the several ways. But He is the only way to get God.

Fault 2) He failed to understand God's grace.

The young ruler was seeking the way to heaven with his own strength and goodness. That was his own standard. Jesus tells him how to meet God's standard. But he just doesn't get it. Or maybe he convinced himself so much that he chooses not to see the difference like many people in this world.

After two thousand years, people still believe that they can be good people and will go to heaven. Almost every major religion except Christianity teaches that if they are good, they will achieve tickets to their heaven. Christianity is the only one that requires faith in Christ Jesus to get to heaven. While other religions say, "Do," Christ says, "Done!"

Matthew 19:18-20 He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love

your neighbor as yourself.” The young man said to Him, “(3) All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?”

Fault 3) He failed to admit his sins.

The young ruler didn't follow the commandments according to the Sermon on the Mount which Jesus spoke of. He only had his own expectation and he was willing to override God's standard. To him, he was sinless.

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Jesus answered to him with a portion of the Ten Commandments:

“You shall not murder.” - the 6th Commandment

“You shall not commit adultery.” - the 7th Commandment

“You shall not steal.” - the 8th Commandment

“You shall not bear false witness.” - the 9th Commandment

“Honor your father and your mother.” - the 5th Commandment

For a good measure, Jesus threw in one extra that compiles all the commandment from 5th to 10th in one sentence: *“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*

USA Today printed the Cowboy's Ten Commandments posted on the wall at Cross Trails Church in Fairlie, Texas.

- 1) Just one God.
 - 2) Put nothin' ahead of God.
 - 3) Watch yer mouth.
 - 4) Git yourself to Sunday meeting.
 - 5) Honor yer Ma and Pa.
 - 6) No killin'.
 - 7) No foolin' around with another fellow's gal.
 - 8) Don't take what ain't yers.
 - 9) No telling tales or gossipin'.
 - 10) Don't be hankerin' for yer buddy's stuff.
- Simple, ain't it?

However, from the deep within his heart, the rich young ruler still realizes that he is lacking something. At the same time, He was hoping that Jesus would answer him with a big exclamation mark and saying, “Atta boy, you are in for heaven!”

“What do I still lack?” That is the question still being asked from every human being who doesn't have Jesus in their hearts. If you've been asking this question to yourself, you can find the right answer today.

Matthew 19:21-22 Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” But when the young man heard that saying, (4) he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Fault 4) He failed to receive eternal life from Jesus and walked away.

This man had an opportunity to receive the eternal life by following what Jesus told him to do so. But he evaluated it and discarded it.

The call to forsake everything and follow Jesus is a call to put God first before all things. It requires full obedience to the first and second commandment of God.

Ex 20:3-4 You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

In this, the wealthy inquirer failed miserably, because money and himself were his gods and he is guilty of idolatry.

Yet, we find Jesus loved him in Mark 10:21.

Mark 10:21 Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."

Does this mean that Jesus is against having money? Absolutely not. Our God is not against us having money, but against money having us.

1Tim 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

The rich young ruler was blind to the deity of Jesus Christ, he was blind to the grace of God, and he was blind to his own sins. When you tally all of these, it equals his spiritual blindness. So he came as a spiritual blind man to the eternal light Jesus Christ and walked away as a spiritual blind man because of his own stubborn refusal.

B. NO TWO MASTERS

Matthew 19:23-24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

Poverty does not produce automatic spirituality. Many of the greatest men in Scripture were exceedingly wealthy: Abraham, David, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea.

Riches ensnares us, because they tend to make us to be satisfied with this life, instead of longing for following God with all of our hearts.

It's hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, because riches can make one independent of God and intolerant of others. When we do that, we forfeit the Kingdom of God.

Matt 6:24 No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

The Roman emperor Charlemagne knew that. An interesting story surrounds the burial of this famous king. Legend has it that he asked to be entombed sitting upright in his throne. He asked that his crown be placed on his head and his scepter in his hand. He requested that the royal cape be draped around his shoulders and an open book be placed in his lap.

That was A.D. 814. Nearly two hundred years later, Emperor Othello determined to see if the burial request had been carried out. He allegedly sent a team of men to open the tomb and make a report. They found the body just as Charlemagne had requested. Only now, nearly two centuries later, the scene was gruesome. The crown was tilted, the mantle moth-eaten, the body disfigured. But open on the skeletal thighs was the book Charlemagne had requested - the Bible. One bony fin-

ger pointed to *Matthew 16:26*: "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" You can answer that one.

C. GRACE UPON GRACE

Matthew 19:25-26 When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

The disciples were amazed because in those days, the rabbis taught that the closer one was to God, the richer he would be. Prosperity doctrine was around even back then.

God's grace is sufficient to save rich men, if they choose to put their trust in Him.

D. THE COST OF FOLLOWING JESUS

Matthew 19:27-30 Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?" So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

Does this mean that Jesus want us to neglect our family and any earthly belongings to follow Him? No, what He meant is that comparing our love for God should make the love for our family insignificant.

Our God wants us to seek Him with all of our hearts, minds and bodies. The rewards for those who seek Him will be great.

Heb. 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

What Jesus said to Peter was not making a sacrifice, but making an investment in the Kingdom of God.

You may say, "I don't practice idolatry." But if you don't have Jesus in your heart as the Lord and Savior, you are practicing idolatry. It can be your job, or your finance, or your spouse, or your house, or your car, or your favorite sports, or your religion, whatever that replaces Jesus in your heart.

After almost every Sunday sermon, I give out an invitation to you guys to come to know Jesus as the Lord and Savior. Some of you sit there in the seat and are thinking, "Yeah, whatever. But I can make my way to heaven even though the Bible says I cannot. Because I am a good person and God knows that." If you try to convince yourself with that notion, you are sadly mistaken and you will have a rude awakening in hell.

What are you still lacking? No one, nothing can fulfill that void in your heart except Jesus.

If you don't have Jesus as your Lord and the Savior in your heart, you don't have His love for you as His child and you will not go to heaven. That is why you have fear for your death.

1 John 4:18-19 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him, because He first loved us.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) There is only room for one on the throne in our hearts.

A. W. Tozer said, "In every Christian's heart is a cross and a throne. And the Christian is on the throne until he puts himself on the cross. If he refuses the cross, he remains on the throne."

We must put our selfish desire on the cross, not on the throne. There is only One who can be on the throne in our hearts. That is our God Jesus Christ, not ourselves. Remember, anything other than following Jesus as our Lord and Savior translates to idolatry that comes from pride. God despises our pride.

Prov 6:16-19 These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.

2) We should not put the richness in this world as the goal of our lives, but we must set our mind on the richness of God.

Matt. 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

3) God is no debtor to any man. It is impossible to outgive God.

Don't think that we are doing too much for God or giving too much to Him. Let's remember what He did for us. Jesus gave His life for us and took all of our sins unto Himself - past, present and future sins - for us.