

A Rich Man's Question

Below is a record of a conversation that Jesus had with a rich Jewish leader as recorded by Luke, a doctor who collected a number of the stories and accounts surrounding Jesus

A certain leader asked Jesus, "Good Teacher, what must I do to have life forever?"

Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? Only God is good. You know the commands: 'You must not be guilty of adultery. You must not murder anyone. You must not steal. You must not tell lies about your neighbour. Honour your father and mother.'"

But the leader said, "I have obeyed all these commands since I was a boy."

When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "There is still one more thing you need to do. Sell everything you have and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me." But when the man heard this, he became very sad, because he was very rich.

Jesus looked at him and said, "It is very hard for rich people to enter the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."

When the people heard this, they asked, "Then who can be saved?"

Jesus answered, "The things impossible for people are possible for God."

Peter said, "Look, we have left everything and followed you."

Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, all those who have left houses, wives, brothers, parents, or children for the kingdom of God will get much more in this life. And in the age that is coming, they will have life forever."

Luke 18:18-30

How would you describe the man in this report?

Do you think he deserved to 'life forever'? Why?

Jesus didn't quote all Ten Commandments. What are the first four about?

What is the last one about?

Why do you think Jesus left these out?

The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20)

"You shall have no other gods before me.

"You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

"You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

"Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

"You shall not murder.

"You shall not commit adultery.

"You shall not steal.

"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.

"You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour."

What does this man's reaction tell us about his attitude towards his possessions?

Do you think Jesus knew this?

It seems to me that Jesus asked the man to give up the thing he was most attached to in order to follow Him. Are there any other examples you can think of where God's asks someone to give something up?

The story does not tell us whether or not the man did as Jesus asked or whether he turned away and kept his wealth. Imagine you met him just after this conversation with Jesus. What advice would you give him?

Can rich people enter the Kingdom of God?

Can you enter the Kingdom of God simply by being good?

Why do you think Peter reacts like this?

Do you think it is a worthwhile decision of the disciples to give up everything and follow Jesus?

Do you think you could say "I have left everything and followed you"? Discuss your answer and reasons why.

Extension: Compare this conversation with what happens when Jesus meets Zacchaeus in Luke 19

Do you think it was fair of Jesus to ask this man to give up all his possessions?

Why?

Do the Ten Commandments say that this man has to give all his possessions away?

Why do you think Jesus asks him to?

To think about: Would you be willing to give up all your possessions if God asked you to?