

36. Jesus Warned of the Danger of Riches

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to share the Word of God in love, so that the Word will expose the thoughts and intents of the hearts of those who need to repent of their sin of unbelief. We saw that the Word exposed to a young man that his god was his money. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus warned about the danger of riches.

The rich young ruler had just walked sadly away from Jesus, because he chose to reject Jesus and depend on his riches. Jesus then warned His disciples about the danger of trusting in riches. Mark 10:23-27 says, “Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, ‘How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!’ And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, ‘Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! 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.’ And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, ‘Who then can be saved?’ But Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With men *it is* impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.’” Here, we see that Jesus began to warn the disciples about the danger of riches.

Jesus said that it is very hard for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God. The reason why it is so hard is due to the fact that many with riches depend on their riches, instead of coming to Jesus in repentance and faith. In Mark 8:35-37, Jesus had said, “For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” The reason it is hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of God is that they choose to depend on their own efforts to save their lives. They try to reach heaven through their own efforts, instead of realizing that they can only come to the Father by repenting of their sin of unbelief and placing their faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus. They might gain great worldly riches but at the same time lose eternal life.

The disciples were surprised at the words of Jesus, because the Jews taught that worldly riches were a sign of the favor of God. The Jews thought that a rich man could earn his salvation by buying many animals to use as sacrifices and by giving money to the poor. In contrast, Jesus made it clear that it is impossible for any person to earn salvation. Titus 3:5 says, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” This verse makes it clear that we are saved by mercy, because the Father was satisfied with the payment Jesus made by shedding His blood for our sin. The Father showed this satisfaction by raising Jesus from the dead. The Persians had a saying that it was impossible for an elephant to go through the eye of a needle. The Jews did not have elephants so they had changed that saying to camel which was their largest animal. Jesus made it very clear that no one can be saved by works. That was why the disciples wondered who could be saved.

Jesus then explained that it was impossible for men to save themselves. However, Jesus then

pointed out that the things that are impossible with men are always possible with God. God can save rich people who come to Him in repentance and faith, just as He can save any other person.

Jesus went on to answer a question from Peter about rewards for those who did follow Jesus. Mark 10:28-31 says, “Then Peter began to say to Him, ‘See, we have left all and followed You.’ So Jesus answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. But many *who are* first will be last, and the last first.” Jesus said that there is a reward, both in this present life and in the life to come, for those who have left home or family for His sake and for the sake of the Gospel.

In this life, we see that we become a part of a much larger spiritual family. John 1:12 says, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.” This verse shows us that we become children of God. Then, Romans 8:16-17 adds, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.” These verses promise that we experience two privileges as a part of this much larger family.

First, on this earth, we will have the privilege of suffering with Christ. John 16:33 says, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” Acts 5:41-42 adds, “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ.” We see that, in this world, we can expect tribulation as a Christian. At the same time, we know that God will also give us peace. We can expect tribulation because Satan is not happy. 2 Timothy 3:12 says, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”

Second, in eternity, we see that we will be glorified together with Christ. We were given eternal life by Jesus at the moment of salvation. In the future, we see that we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. This means that we will share all of the blessings of heaven together with Jesus for all eternity. Romans 8:18 says, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” God is going to reveal His glory in us throughout eternity.

Jesus went on to speak again about His coming death and resurrection. Mark 10:32-34 says, “Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: ‘Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.’” Jesus shared with the disciples why they were

going to Jerusalem, even though He knew they would not understand until after His death, resurrection, and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said that they were going up to Jerusalem. After His resurrection, the disciples asked Jesus, in Acts 1:6, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel.” Here, we see that the disciples were looking for the immediate arrival of the earthly kingdom, even after the resurrection. That is why Jesus went on to say, in Acts 1:7-8, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Jesus let the disciples know that it was not yet time for the earthly kingdom.

Jesus said that He would be betrayed to the chief priests and scribes. The chief priests were the leaders of the worship that happened in the temple at Jerusalem. Even though they were very religious, their hearts were far from God. Jesus described the heart condition of these religious leaders very well when He said, in Matthew 23:27, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men’s* bones and all uncleanness.” The hearts of these religious leaders were filled with all uncleanness.

Jesus then explained, to the disciples, what the chief priests and scribes would do. Jesus said that the religious leaders would condemn Him to death and then deliver Him to the Gentiles. Matthew 26:63-66 says, “But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, ‘I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘*It is as* you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.’ Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, ‘He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! What do you think?’ They answered and said, ‘He is deserving of death.’” Matthew 27:2 says, “And when they had bound Him, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor.”

Finally, Jesus told the disciples that the Gentiles would mock, scourge, spit on, and kill Him. Matthew 27:27-31 says, “Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His *own* clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain what Jesus told His disciples. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these verses.