

April 22-28 2019

Matthew 18; Luke 10

“What Shall I Do to Inherit Eternal Life?”

Summary: *Jesus explains how we are to treat our offending brethren—The Son of Man came to save that which was lost—All of the Twelve receive the keys of the kingdom—Jesus explains why we should forgive.*

Jesus calls, empowers, and instructs the Seventy—They preach and heal—Those who receive Christ’s disciples receive Christ—The Father is revealed by the Son—Jesus gives the parable of the good Samaritan.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What is the difference between stewardship and ownership?

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 Saints,” people who committed themselves to first the building of the Kingdom of God.” As a discipline and living a 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. “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.” (Acts 4:32-35)

How long has the principle of stewardship existed?

Stewardship is an eternal principle also given before Jesus’ time. “For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.” (Exodus 32:29) “And behold, thou wilt remember the poor, and consecrate of thy properties for their support that which thou hast to impart unto them, with a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken.” (DC 42:30)

What prompted two different 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."

Rich Man: "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)

Lawyer: "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)

What lesson can I learn?

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)." "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

(Zecharia 7:9) put it: ". . . execute the judgment and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother." (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

What is the location of the parable that includes a Samaritan?

From the Dead Sea an ancient highway goes up to Jerusalem. In just a dozen miles or so, there is a climb of about four thousand feet in elevation from thirteen hundred feet below sea level to about twenty-seven hundred feet above. The term "up to Jerusalem" has a physical as well as a spiritual implication. The ancient road out of Jericho leading to Jerusalem was rather desolate. Most of it is below sea level and below the rainfall line. It was, however, the road traveled by temple priests who lived in the Levite city of Jericho and served in Jerusalem's temple. The travel was about a day's journey. "Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished." (Luke 18:31)

Caravan Travel: Travelers in ancient times included animals in their caravans. The animals were used for transportation and food, as well as for barter. Travelers had to carry money for accommodations, so it was not wise to travel alone. As a support group and defense against highway robbers, caravans were organized and regularly scheduled.

Rules of Cleanliness: Special travel rules of cleanliness applied to the priests who had to remain "unblemished" to serve in the holy temple. They stayed away from any decay or waste matter. They kept at least a specific distance away from anything dead (unless it was killed as a sacrifice in the temple). "And whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean." (Numbers 19:16) It is still a custom among some of those considering themselves to be Levites to circumvent graveyards or any place where there is death.

What term does the Savior use describing people in the parable?

On the road from Jericho to Jerusalem, an old inn has been restored to represent the inn of a New Testament story Jesus told. Modern Christians refer to the inn as the "Good Samaritan Inn." The truth is that Jesus never used the term *good Samaritan*. The setting, however, reminds us of the parable Jesus chose as he answered a lawyer, who challenged Him, the Lawgiver: "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25)

Carpenter, Craftsman or skilled in the law?

Some background will be helpful in understanding the reason Jesus answered as He did. It is sometimes surprising to consider Jesus, known as Rabbi, to be a "Master of the law" (*rabbi* in Hebrew), instead of a carpenter. You'll remember, that the New Testament Greek word was not *carpenter* but *craftsman*. The craft in Nazareth was a huge stone quarry. It may be more than mere coincidence that Jesus was referred to as the "Rock of Salvation" and the "Chief Corner Stone." Was He sent to earth to be educated as a craftsman or carpenter? Or, is it more likely that Jesus studied the law that He was supposed to restore? After all, He is the lawgiver, our advocate with the Father. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John 2:1)

Who is my neighbor?

He was recognized as a rabbi, a lawyer, one schooled in the law; he was authorized to read in the synagogues. "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read." (Luke

4:16) So, answering the lawyer who challenged Jesus and having been trained in the law himself, the new rabbi from Nazareth answered with a question, “What is written in the law? how readest Thou?” (Luke 10:26) Showing his own legal acumen, the lawyer recited the first law of loving God and neighbor, but challenged Jesus to a legal definition. “Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29) The Savior then related this story: “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by the other side. But a certain Samaritan [a non-Jew] . . . came where he was: . . . and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine and set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn and took care of him. (LUKE 10:30-34)

Would Jesus imply that Jews were bad by saying the Samaritan was Good?

Today local Jews don't use the term “good” Samaritan; to some, it has anti-Semitic implications to bad Jews. I remember that an instructor of the Ministry of Tourism Guide Course even suggested that Jesus was an anti-Semite. She said, “Even when Jesus made up a story, he portrayed the Jews as ‘bad guys’ and the non-Jew as the ‘good guy.’”

What was the real Intent of the parable?

Of course, Jesus had no intention of portraying Jews as uncompassionate. In His story He's making a legal point responding to the lawyer's question, “Legally, who is my neighbor?” The Hebrew inference was that the priest and the Levite were within their legal rights - not to be defiled by being too close to the dead – and rather than take a chance, they walked on the other side. Their lack of action was strictly legal, but it missed the higher law of compassion, governed by the spirit not the letter of the law. Talmudic commentary written some hundreds of years later indicates an additional guideline. “The Talmud prescribes that if a priest, even the High Priest, chances upon a corpse by the wayside, and there is no one else in the area who can be called upon to bury it, then the priest himself must forgo the requirement to abstain from defilement and perform the burial of this person (a *meit mitzvah*). (Talmud Yerushalmi to Nazir 7:1, Kethuboth 113a)

How can I truly be a good neighbor?

In developing true forgiveness, understanding and childlike faith, and to truly be a neighbor, we should consider removing the “good” from the “good Samaritan,” thereby removing the inferred “bad” from the Jews in the story. All three were good in their own perceptions. The Levite and the priest just missed the point of a higher law. That doesn't mean the lesser law is bad and those who ardently attempt to keep it are thereby bad as well. As an example for us, the Savior's compassion for all of God's children rises much higher than the question, “Who is my neighbor?”

Who Are the Samaritans today?

In Israel's history, a foreign ethnic group, Samaritans, intermarried with Israelites and wanted to assist in building the temple at Jerusalem, but they were refused. These Samaritans then built their own temple on Mount Gerizim. Thereafter, their interaction with the rest of Israel was tenuous at best. “Samaritans (are) a small religious sect residing in Israel whose members consider themselves to be direct descendants of the Israelite tribes. According to Samaritan history, they broke away from the Israelites in the 11th century B.C.E., refusing to accept a change in the location of the religious capital. To this day the Samaritans maintain that Mount Gerizim near Shechem (Nablus, in northern Israel) is the place chosen by God as the center of Israelite worship and not

Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. They have therefore continued to live around Shechem and to make pilgrimages to Mount Gerizim.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

What are the religious beliefs of the Samaritans?

“The Samaritans refused to accept any of the Jewish religious writings which followed their split with the Israelites. Their religion is therefore based mainly on the Five Books of Moses. Neither the Mishnah nor the Talmud is regarded as valid. But Samaritans adhere strictly to the laws of the Pentateuch and have maintained biblical traditions and rituals for thousands of years. Thus, while the Jews ceased to offer sacrifices after the destruction of the Second Temple, the Samaritans still celebrate the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb on Mount Gerizim each Passover, and all Samaritan families share in the ritual slaughter and feasting. The Samaritans also make pilgrimages to Mount Gerizim on the three pilgrim festivals of Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot, and continue to observe Rosh Ha-Shanah, Yom Kippur and Simhat Torah. They do not celebrate Purim or Hanukkah, however, because these festivals are not mentioned in the Pentateuch and were instituted only after the split between the Samaritans and the Jews.” “As they use a different calendar system, the Jews and Samaritans rarely celebrate their holidays at the same time. Yet there is a distinct similarity between the two groups. The Samaritans also observe the Sabbath on Saturday and also maintain *kashrut* laws. They even have a bar mitzvah ceremony, but instead of on the boy's 13th birthday, they celebrate upon the completion of his basic religious studies, which can take place any time between the ages of six and ten.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

From where do Samaritans trace their priestly authority?

“The Samaritan community is headed by priests who are interpreters of the law and keepers of the secret calendar. Until the 17th century these priests claimed direct descent from Aaron. But the last descendant died in 1624 and the priesthood passed to another family.” “The Samaritan population has remained small due to persecutions and plagues throughout the centuries. By the beginning of the 20th century there were only 150 of them left. With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 this minute community was split into two centers --- one under Jordanian rule and the other in Israel. But the Six-Day War in 1967 ended the isolation of the two branches and under the protection of the Israel government, their population has grown to about 500 persons.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How does the Law of Consecration require concentration?

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.”