

April 17-23, 2023

Matthew 18; Luke 10

“WHAT SHALL I DO TO INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE?”

Summary: *Matthew 18. 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.*

Luke 10. 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

How do we greet the King?

In 1994, an event happened befitting this lesson, because

it deals with Israel’s neighbors, the Jordanians, its then recently deceased visionary King Hussein, and little children. The background to the news story included an expected celebration as a new bridge, named the Hussein Bridge, was opened across the Jordan River, connecting Israel and Jordan. The king was coming to visit Israel, this time officially and publicly. The media waited for the two previous enemies to meet halfway across the bridge. They were surprised however, that the Israeli officials did not arrive on schedule. Instead, Israeli children with bunches of flowers ran toward the Jordanian king. Unarmed, unaccompanied, they surrounded the king and gave him the flowers. The king wept. The media didn’t understand. Even in a land and among a people that don’t know their King of Kings, they know how to greet a king. They send their little ones. “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.” **(Matthew 18:10)** “And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones. And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open,

and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them.” **(3 Nephi 17:23-24)**

How did a child learn the cost of peace?

I was in the Galilee with tourists on that day when the headline news called out, “The King is coming!” As mentioned, children were sent first to cross the new bridge across the Jordan River and greet the man, Hussein, the modern-day King of Jordan. It was the year 1994. In 1951, this king was a child standing next his grandfather, King Abdullah, as Abdullah was shot to death while in prayer at the Al Aksa Mosque in Jerusalem. The underlying reason for the assassination was that Grandfather Abdullah envisioned a peaceful coexistence with the Jews of Israel. Moslem fanatics apparently thought that killing the king would eliminate peace. Among the shots was a bullet that glanced off a medal on young Hussein’s chest. His life was spared. Somewhere tucked in the environmental code of his royal blood, Hussein was destined to become the king who would see the peace his grandfather yearned for. Although not the first peace treaty a Moslem nation would have with Israel, it is by far the warmest peace agreement Israel has with any Arab neighbor. The

gladness and warmth of this peace are reflected by Arabs in Israel. In those days, I heard the question repeated almost daily, "Mister Danny, have you been to Amman yet?" By now, I have – several times, and so have thousands of Americans, Europeans and others of the world family. Setting aside man-made fear and with calmed hearts, we visit the Holy Land, all of it – Israel, Egypt, and Jordan.

How important is it to me to understand, even experience the Holy Land?

The *Holy* of the land was Jesus of Nazareth. He was born in Bethlehem, moved to Egypt, returned to Galilee, visited beyond the Jordan River and fulfilled his mission in Jerusalem, the Holy City. His influence reaches out from these places to all the world. Have you been to the Holy Land? If you haven't, you should. President Spencer W. Kimball (1895-1985) also suggested that every Latter-day Saint should visit the Holy Land. He said, "It will change your life . . . I went and it changed mine." The peace you will experience will warm your heart. You'll experience what the lifeblood of this land really is. Symbolically, between the first king in this land and the last king was the King of Kings. His purpose was to bring peace, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (**John 14:27**) You should know that modern peace is still preserved. The prophetic promises of peace are slowly, however steadily happening now. It is a time when a number of Arab and Jewish children will grow up together in a new understanding of tranquility. This window of time has also opened an opportunity. You can be touched by the ancient culture, religion, and spirit that still reflects ancient truths that have been restored in modern times. I welcome you, vicariously or in person, to see, hear, and feel the gospel in its

ancient environment. It will help you prepare to greet the king -- for soon the King of Kings is coming!

How do I learn about Eternal Life from a non-Jew?

The principles of forgiveness, understanding, and childlike faith are necessary elements in modern peace as well as in eternal, personal peace. Another powerful way of affecting our modern lives is to understand the real background of the Samaritan story that Jesus told to a man "Learned in the Law." Now, visualize going "up to Jerusalem." 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**)

What reason would Caravan Travel be more advisable than individual travel?

Journeys 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. Biblically, there were rules of cleanliness. Special travel rules of

sanitation 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.

How have narratives evolved into misunderstandings?

On the road from Jericho to Jerusalem, an old Byzantine 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)**

Some additional 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 *technitis* 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 only as a craftsman or carpenter? Or is it more likely that Jesus studied the law that He was restoring? 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)** 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)**

How does a lawyer answer another lawyer’s question?

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, however, 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)**

How have antisemitic implications crept into our dialogues?

Today local Jews don’t use the term “good” Samaritan; to some, it has anti-Semitic associations inferring bad Jews. I remember that an instructor of the Hebrew University Tourist Guide Curriculum 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.’” Now, what was the real intent of this 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 in their determination, 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 additional guidelines, in that – out of respect and sanctity, Levites, or Cohens, are required to bury the dead if they chance upon a cadaver.

How does my "why" determine my actions?

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?" it is the higher law encompassing "What shall I do to inherit Eternal Life?"