

MAY 8-14, 2023

Matthew 19–20; Mark 10; Luke 18

“WHAT LACK I YET?”

Summary: *Matthew 19. Jesus teaches about marriage and divorce—Eternal life is for those who keep the commandments—The Twelve Apostles will judge the house of Israel.*

Matthew 20. Jesus gives the parable of the laborers in the vineyard—He foretells His crucifixion and resurrection—He came to give His life as a ransom for many.

Mark 10. Jesus teaches the higher law of marriage—He blesses little children—Jesus counsels the rich young man, foretells His own death, and heals blind Bartimaeus.

Luke 18. Jesus gives the parables of the unjust judge and the Pharisee and publican—He invites little children to come unto Him and teaches how to gain eternal life—He tells of His coming death and resurrection and gives sight to a blind man.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

How do I gain Eternal Life?

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 (Mark 10:17-22)

“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,

Lawyer (Luke 10:25-28)

“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

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. . . .”

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.

What other “little things” bring me to Eternal Life?

The answer to the lesson title’s question, “What lack I Yet,” includes more than a lesson on riches, wealth, worldly aspects, or the letter-of-the-law. 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.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

How can I better understand the principle of mercy?

“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 (**Zechariah 7:9**) put it: “Execute the judgment and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

What is the Law of Consecration to me?

The law of consecration requires concentration! In a celestial sense, it 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.”

What is a comparison of the wealth of Jericho through the ages?

Examining Jericho's history, a reflection of three Biblical events teaches us something about wealth. In Joshua's time, Achan stole wealth when “the walls came tumbling down.” In Jesus' time, Zacchaeus experienced a temptation of wealth and then in this tax collector's conversion, wealth is returned. For added background about wealth, the following is a consideration. Just north of the Dead Sea is Jericho, nestled at the bottom of the Judean Hills. It is still a quiet town of fruit and vegetable growers. It is a trade-route city that has encountered at least twenty-eight different conquests, as evidenced in the excavations of this ancient *tel*. One of those conquests was by Joshua, who led the Israelites on six silent daily walks around the walls of the

city. On the seventh day they made another six silent walks around the city. All the noiseless marching may have confused the ancient inhabitants of Jericho. It was the seventh walk around the city on the seventh day that was made noisily. Accompanied by trumpets and shouts, the walls came tumbling down! “And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, . . . And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city.” (Joshua 6:2-3, 15-16)

What caused Achan to be stoned for Coveting Wealth?

During the conquering of Jericho, the prophet Joshua commanded that all living persons and animals were to be killed except for Rahab (the harlot [could also mean an innkeeper] who had saved the Israelite spies). All gold, silver, other metal, and worthwhile items were to be brought to the Lord’s treasury. Though no loot was to be taken at Jericho, a certain man named Achan succumbed to the temptation of wealth and took some spoils. Because he took loot and hid it in his tent, the Israelites experienced a terrible defeat at their next battle. After Joshua had interviewed them man by man, he found Achan, who confessed the theft. He and his entire family were stoned to death and then with all their possessions they were burned with fire. “And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord

God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it. So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it. And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the Lord . . . And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.”

(Joshua 7:20-25)

How did the Savior handle the temptation of wealth?

At the Mount of Temptation in Jericho, as recorded in the New Testament, Jesus was tempted with the wealth of the world by Satan. This happened at an oasis, an important and busy crossroads. This way station was obviously a place of wealth, both natural and manmade. The Mount of Temptation just above Jericho marks the traditional spot where Jesus’ temptation with wealth may have occurred. “Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” (Matthew 4:8-10) A monastery has been built on the side of the mount. Tradition indicates that for many years, the monastery was “wordless.” Possibly this was done in symbolic gesture of the silent walks the Israelites made around the site.

What was taxation like in Jesus' days?

When Jesus was teaching at Jericho, the tax collector, Zacchaeus, climbed a tree to better see Him. Jesus invited Himself to Zacchaeus's house to dine with him.

People murmured that Jesus was socializing with the expropriator of their taxes. It is interesting to note that tax collectors had to reach a quota set by the Romans. It was imperative that taxes were collected above the normal rate when the economy was good so that the quota could be met when the economy was bad. The people murmured that Zacchaeus may have abused that system for his own benefit. However, a better look into his personality shows a different story, or at least indicates a complete change. Zacchaeus became so impressed with Jesus' teachings that he offered half of his wealth to the poor and fourfold repayment to the people he had wronged. "And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." (Luke 19:1-8) "Taxes would be assessed against the community as a whole, and amongst themselves, the Jews would determine how to distribute the tax burden."

(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) Considering his

stewardship, Zacchaeus may have invested the "over-taxation" and may have benefitted from its growth, being a "steward."

What possibilities of change can I learn from life?

A tree in Jericho marks the traditional site of that event. I recall that some professional tree surgeons (converts, descending from mobsters at the time of Joseph Smith's martyrdom) touring with me several years ago remarked that the supposed Zacchaeus tree looked more like two hundred years old than two thousand. Fortunately, it's not the tree but the story that reminds us of what is important. The three Jericho stories have some connection to wealth. Achan succumbed to temptation, disobeyed, and stole. Jesus was tempted but refused the wealth of the world. Zacchaeus, having surrendered to temptation, was willing to change and to repay his wrongs – fourfold. Everything belongs to God: The important lesson underlying these accounts is that there is no ownership; it is all stewardship. Everything belongs to the Lord. Whatever wealth man assembles in this world is a test of his stewardship.

How ancient – and eternal – is the principle of stewardship?

Allow me to add a personal perspective. 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 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)** 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)** The eternal principle restored again helps us gain eternal life, “What lack I yet?” “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.” **(Doctrine and Covenants 42:30)** Hopefully, this opens your and my eyes as we consider Jesus saying (to us); “. . . Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.” **(Luke 18:42)**