

To Mock and to Scourge and to Crucify

Matthew 19:14 – 20:23

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~ Supernatural sensationalism surrounds this Spiritual Safari in this section of Scripture. I'm not trying to write it that way intentionally from my human perspective; but friends, when the Bible gets sensational, it can get out of hand real quick. It's imperative we know how to handle this sword so that someone doesn't take it away from us and kill us with it; because if they can – they will! In our last report, I told you I try to keep these simple; and I do. In this report, however, we're going to become somewhat intellectual so we can talk appropriately and distinctly; deducing subjects to their lowest common denominator, thus completing our calculus correctly; because it's critical we comprehend this particular matter we have come to conclusively.

The questions surrounding divorce we considered previously were brought to Jesus by the Pharisees for no other reason than to tempt Him and catch Him bungling His theology. Well, they failed - and were summarily dismissed. Many of them probably went away and committed or, at least, contemplated suicide. The conviction in their heart that the Lord Jesus gave them, I am absolutely sure, was too much to live with for many of them. I'll be perfectly honest with you – it was almost more than I could write. If you read with understanding, then you surely discern it was extremely personal.

Modern morality has replaced the word "adultery" with myriad other terms, such as, "incompatibility" and "infidelity" or "extra-marital affair," of which the latter doesn't sound so bad, actually. Adultery is such an ugly word with such judgmental connotations. Modern psychology has, as its basis, the theory that you should not have a guilty complex because whatever you do is really okay. The modern Ph.D will tell you that if it feels good to do something – do it! You can be whatever you want to be. It's a lie from the pit of hell. According to that, if it feels good to kill your mom and dad or rape a child – go ahead. I must admit friends, after all these years of the psychological community clinging to this philosophy I am beyond

flabbergasted; I'm not that smart and I can see right through them. Well, I just have to try to get along with them the best I can. Maybe it's just not that difficult to "flabbergast" me? Perhaps it is ME that is difficult to get along with? – That sounds about right....

XIX

14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

~ This report is actually part two from our last report. If you have not read the commentary on the first part of this chapter I would suggest you do so. You would be surprised at the number of children that are denied a correct teaching of Christ due to the adulterous activity and divorce induced climate of modern society. I do not have hard facts but I estimate, conservatively I'm sure, that more than half of the people age twenty-one and under today are the product of a broken or godless home. Jesus has just tied this all together for us quite unpleasantly....

15 And Jesus laid his hands on the little children, and departed thence.

16 And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

18 He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

19 Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

20 The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

~ Luke will recount this account in finer detail, but there are certain things we should consider here. The approach of the rich young ruler to Jesus is to call Him “good.” The enemy of God won’t concede that Jesus is good; so this rich young ruler isn’t the enemy. Of course, Jesus is saying that no one is good but God so if the young ruler sees Jesus as good then Jesus is God! This is exactly how the Lord Jesus leads us along that we might accept Him as the Son of God. Notice that the only commandments Jesus recites are those pertaining to other men – not those pertaining to God. This young man has realized there is something lacking in his life. Nonetheless, he could say to God that he had kept all of His commandments. Of course, these are the last six of ten commands that have to do with man’s relationship to man. Jesus only mentioned one of the laws pertaining to God....

21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

~ This forces an immediate decision on this man; and if the choice is to follow God he will have to see that he has failed all of the commandments directed at God. Remember, at this very moment the Lord Jesus is making a beeline to Jerusalem to keep a Passover date with a cross. If this rich young man were to follow Jesus he would end up with no money at the foot of the cross-watching Jesus die. Riches were standing in the way of this man’s decision. Riches may not be your problem – it sure isn’t mine - because I don’t have any – but something is your problem. This should make your hair stand up, friends. There’s no use trying to spiritualize this away because this is not a spiritual lesson primarily. This is a tangible command in reality that you either obey or you depart with this young man....

22 And when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

~ This young ruler had reached the age of accountability and he knew the law of God. This is the decision that was made. There are SO many, many things that are keeping man from the Lord Jesus today. A church

membership is keeping most Christians away from Christ right now. They think they belong to a church so they get an idea that they're now in a fortress where no one and no harm can get to them. They believe that the ritualistic, ceremonial and confessional acting have cleared everything up with God. These people are more unconverted than the deepest, darkest jungle dweller in South America who has never even heard the Word of God; but they have no earthly idea of their state. That is the condition of the church....

23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

~ I'm sure most people miss the humor Jesus uses in this passage - and He's going to get very funny coming up. I have heard many ridiculous stories about what this parable meant. Well, Jesus just happens to be talking about a real camel and a real sewing needle. I am here to tell you that it is IMPOSSIBLE for a real camel to go thorough the eye of a real needle. The so called great and rich men of this world are simply not going to occupy Heaven with me and you, friends. They won't be there. Of course, God can make a camel go through the eye of the needle; but God isn't in the business of doing ridiculous things. Only God can regenerate a man and that is the point the Lord Jesus is making here. I don't care who you are you're a beggar in the sight of God and you are a sinner that needs salvation. Until you recognize those things you may be on the top five richest men in the world but you are bankrupt! Only when you make the discovery that you are not a candidate for salvation do you become a candidate for salvation. The problem is that too many people think they can repay God – and those people are just not saved! Until you hold your empty hands out to Him He is never going to take you up and save you! You may just want to write that down....

25 When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?

26 But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

27 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?

28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

~ Peter seemed to reveal a little personal greed there with that question. I mean, really, what is the point of following Jesus? Notice that Jesus doesn't rebuke him now. Simon Peter and the rest of these men had made a tremendous sacrifice – as in – everything to follow Him. Peter wants to know what the purpose is. I believe every Christian should work down here for a reward in Heaven. Those who have sacrificed everything and, having been saved, continued to work for God will have first place. Paul wrote thirteen puny little epistles. That means I have to write sixty-six large epistles, personally. I am an over-achiever at heart in every sense of the word. This is all that's going to matter when we come into the presence of the Lord. All these men that have made a claim as some kind of Christian superstar – you won't even hear from them anymore. You will be getting very familiar with a large amount of completely unknown saints of God in Heaven. This is a glorious picture of golden apples in settings of silver....

29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

30 But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

XX

~ In chapter twenty we seem to continue to linger in our movement through Matthew just a little while longer. After this we're going to get on down the road to Jerusalem to take part in the Passover feast with Jesus.

We come to a parable that is really a continuation of the remarks the Lord Jesus began in the last chapter. This chapter gives us the light for those remaining dark corners regarding our thinking on the Kingdom of Heaven. Faithfulness to the task and not the spectacular amount of work done is the whole guiding theme as to how rewards are distributed in Heaven and the example is here in the following account....

1 For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.

2 And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

3 And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

4 And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

5 Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

6 And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?

7 They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

8 So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

9 And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

11 And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house,

12 Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?

14 Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

16 So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

~ Jesus made this same statement before, so we have a parenthesis around this part of the chapter. The man had a vineyard, and he hired some men to work in it. They agreed on a wage. The amount of time you work, and the prominence or importance of your position is not the determination regarding your reward in Heaven. It's the faithfulness to the task that is important. Some of these men didn't really do ANY work and they were paid the same as the others. Your work may seem totally insignificant. That insignificance will probably be the most important thing you ever did for some other saint. Maybe they received the Holy Spirit because you took some time with them....

17 And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them,

18 Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death,

19 And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.

20 Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.

21 And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.

22 But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, They say unto him, We are able.

23 And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.

~ We are moving up the Jordan Valley towards Jerusalem with Jesus in our Spiritual Safari now. He has told the apostles that He is going there to be crucified. He can't spell things out any plainer than this. This time we have details of exactly what's going to happen when we get there. We're going to see that this doesn't really fit into the program of the disciples. They just don't quite see it clearly; and it takes a long time for them to get it. Our safari clearly understands where we go from here.

What is the significance of this? Jesus is going there voluntarily to die for you and me. No one is forcing Jesus to go or be anywhere. Jesus could have gone over to the coast and made a very nice living with a healing ministry. Perhaps He could have begun the first mega-church? Well, it's a time such as this we just can't believe what's happening. At least, I can't! I am afraid too many of us worship Christ like Zebedee, desiring certain things! These men had their mom come and ask Jesus the things they want for themselves, too. It's pathetic. Jesus said, "I'm going to die for the sins of the world" and they asked, "...which one of us will be the greatest?" Sound familiar? Maybe she was asking these things for her son with sincerity but, either way, it's the same thing. I don't want to criticize

momma here; she is ambitious - but I do think she missed the atmosphere and understanding of what was taking place at this time.

I made an omission from verses twenty-two and twenty-three and the part I took away is not found in our better manuscripts. This means there is a place at His right hand and on His left hand for you; but Jesus doesn't give that position, in the Kingdom, of authority. The Father Himself appoints those to rule over His Kingdom. I do NOT think He will be setting men to rule according to how He appoints them down here and according to Daniel. These are two separate governments we're talking about. Position is not arbitrarily handed out in Heaven, you may be sure. This teaching is for those who are sincerely preparing themselves for a residency in a very real place they will soon be going to. READ VERY CAREFULLY: Salvation / Heaven are for the asking; your POSITION in Heaven is determined by what you do down here. Christians have completely lost sight of this today and we better get re-focused quickly. What kind of a place are you preparing yourself for? I don't really believe I'll make the right hand or the left but I do want something nice when I get to Heaven – how about you? ~

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