

# Bi132 The Gospels I

## *Lesson Bi132-41 Kingdom Values*

We hear a lot these days about refugees and immigrants. When someone becomes a citizen of a country where they were not born, the government expects certain things. In the kingdom Jesus is establishing, he too has definite requirements for entry. These go beyond what people normally associate with joining a church or religious organization. In this lesson we consider three different stories, describing the process of entering the kingdom of heaven—God’s kingdom.

As he moved around in ministry, people were bringing children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them (Mark 10:13-16).

In this first section Jesus blessed the children, even though the disciples discouraged those who wanted him to touch their children. He visually demonstrated that the blessings of the kingdom are freely given. Jesus taught that those who would enter his kingdom must come like children. So then, what qualities must seekers for God possess? The qualities are openness, receptivity, and trust. We must seek entry not based on anything we have done, but accepting the offer of eternal life as a free gift.

As Jesus started on his way again, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

“Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.’”

“Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”

Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

In this second section, a man approached and knelt before Jesus. He possessed both influence and riches. The fact he knelt and called Jesus good, suggests he was a sincere seeker. But he sensed something was still missing in order for him to fully please God. His

question concerned offering good works to God to merit eternal life. Jesus taught that it is a gift to be received.

Jesus directed the man's attention to God, who alone is good. He questioned the man, in effect saying, "If I am good, do you believe I am God also?" Jesus asked him if he had kept the law concerning relations with other human beings, the last six of the Ten Commandments. The rich man confirmed his external obedience to the commands, yet still sought out a greater duty to perform. He lacked inner relationship with God and the assurance that God had accepted him.

Jesus gave him a look of love, recognizing the man's earnestness. Then he gave him one additional personal instruction. The man had made money his center of attention; Jesus asked him to change that focus. He told him to exchange the riches of this world for the riches of heaven, and then become one of Christ's followers. There is no indication that Jesus' command was meant for all Christians. It applies only to those who have the same spiritual problem that this man had.

The man's face fell as sadness overcame him. He left because his true god was his possessions. He was not like the children in section one. He would not trust and become dependent on the invisible Father. He trusted in a false god he could see and handle. In giving away his wealth, the young man could have removed the obstacle that was keeping him from trusting in Christ. But he refused to do that and went away sad. This prompted Jesus to say how hard it is for those who trust in money to enter the kingdom of heaven.

The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?"

Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."

Then Peter spoke up, "We have left everything to follow you!"

"Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Mark 10:17-31).

Jesus explained that every conversion, everyone who trusted in him, represented a miracle only God could do. The camel was the largest animal in Palestine. The contrast between the largest animal and the smallest opening represents what, humanly speaking, is impossible. Salvation is totally the work of God. Apart from grace, no one can be saved. Human effort can never accomplish God's will. Some of those who have position and riches here will barely make it into God's kingdom, while some who are lowly and poor in this world will be celebrated in

God's kingdom because of their faithfulness. The first here may be last there, and the last here may be first there.

They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way. The disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise" (Mark 10:13-34).

Jesus, for the third time, told them about his coming death and resurrection. The disciples were astonished. The crowds were afraid, perhaps because they feared the violence of the Roman rulers. It was the first time Jerusalem was named as the location of these events. All this fulfilled prophecies which they still didn't understand about the coming of the Messiah.

These stories are **important** because they reveal the contrast between people who receive salvation as a free gift and those who want to earn salvation by doing good works.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that the free gift of eternal life comes only through faith in Jesus, the sinless Son of God who gave his life for sinners.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. Which qualities of the children did Jesus say was most important for eternal life?  
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you answered that Jesus said the qualities of openness and trust are most important, you are correct.
2. What question did the rich young ruler sincerely ask Jesus about?  
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said the rich young ruler asked Jesus, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" you are correct.
3. What did Jesus say would happen to him when he reached Jerusalem?  
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said Jesus told the disciples he would be delivered over to the chief priests, condemned to death, mocked, and killed, you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn the story of the rich young man and what it means. After telling the story to someone ask them this question, "Before you came to faith in Jesus, what did you trust in for God's favor on your life?" If the person is not a believer, ask the question, "What do you trust in for God's favor?" Help the person to understand that salvation is only by grace, through faith. Even faith is a gift of God to everyone who believes.