

March 29th, 2009 “The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 40”

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Luke 19:11-14

11 Now as they heard these things, [Jesus] spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately.

12 Therefore [Jesus] said: **“A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.**

13 So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Do business till I come.’

14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We will not have this man to reign over us.’

Thank you very much for coming to hear the message for today. Before we begin our next lesson, let us reiterate our reason for attending Church.

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

We discussed the case of the tax collector Zacchaeus in our last lesson. I speculated that since Zacchaeus was unpopular, as he practiced an unpopular trade, and he was easily ridiculed, as he was extremely short, that Zacchaeus probably had emotional problems. But, Zacchaeus responded to the ministry of Jesus Christ and found solace in his faith, as Jesus responded to Zacchaeus’ pledge of charity, in **Luke 19:9-10**:

9 And Jesus said to [Zacchaeus], **“Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham;**

10 for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Jesus did not make this pronouncement to Zacchaeus privately, but in front of the crowd that was following Him. The crowd was interested in the idea of being sought out and saved by divine intervention, but they were not thinking about their heavenly destiny. You may remember that in our last lesson, we read of the Lord speaking to the Nation of Israel, in **Deuteronomy 28:9, 11-13**:

9 “The LORD will establish you [the Nation of Israel] as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways.

11 And the LORD will grant you plenty of goods, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your ground, in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you.

12 The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land

in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow.

13 And the LORD will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them.

From its' beginning, the Nation of Israel was ordained by God to be the leading nation in the world. But the day came in which Israel changed its' religious focus, and God withdrew His promise of world economic and religious leadership from Israel. Let us take a look at part of the religious history of Israel.

The change of religious focus began near the end of the reign of Solomon, the son of King David. David, the greatest King of Israel, planned to build a great Temple for the worship of God, but God told David that, as a military man and the warrior King of Israel, he was not the diplomat to spearhead the effort to gather the resources from all the nations needed for the building of the Temple. So, David gathered the financial resources required to build the Temple and then charged his son and successor Solomon to complete the task upon becoming king. Solomon did not have the intelligence, knowledge or wisdom of David to administer the kingdom of Israel, but Solomon was wise enough to understand his deficiency and his need.

After Solomon sacrificed a thousand animals to God as a sign of his devotion, God appeared to Solomon in a dream. Solomon asked God for the wisdom to do the job that his father David left for him to do. God answered Solomon, in **1Kings 3:11-14**:

11 Then God said to [Solomon]: "Because you have asked [for wisdom], and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice,

12 behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you.

13 And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days.

14 So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days."

God gave Solomon the wisdom to oversee the building of the great Temple of Israel, the writing of the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, and also gave Solomon untold riches. But all of God's blessings are contingent upon the blessed person remaining a devotee of the worship of God.

In those days, the kings of countries other than Israel commonly acquired a harem of women. When the kings of two kingdoms wanted to establish political alliances with one another, in addition to establishing treaties and trade agreements as we do today, the kings would marry one another's daughters, becoming in-laws and thus aligning themselves with one another by marriage as well as politically. As a king negotiated more alliances, he acquired more wives. But God specifically forbade the Israelite king to practice this custom in **Deuteronomy 17:17**:
17 Neither shall [the king] multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.

Understand Solomon's temptation. God gifted Solomon with wisdom to lead through the negotiation of alliances and diplomatic ties rather than military solutions. In the secular kingdoms of the world, the currency with which such alliances were sealed was familial relationships, as kings exchanged daughters and married them, thus becoming in-laws. Solomon was faced with the decision to either participate in diplomatic relations through marriage as practiced by the secular kings, or to develop an alternate method of sealing diplomatic relations that allowed him to follow the commandment of God to not acquire a harem.

In the opening of my sermons, I repeat our reason for attending church, which is to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

If we actually decide to be obedient to the Bible, we will find ourselves out of step with the norms of our peers in the world. Being different makes us stand out, and we have to decide whether it is better to conform to the norm and reject the Word of God, or to reject the norm and face the criticism of our peers. Solomon unwisely chose to participate in the practices of his peers rather than to obey the Word of God. **1Kings 3:1** records:

1 Now Solomon made a treaty with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and married Pharaoh's daughter; then he brought her to the City of David until he had finished building his own house, and the house of the LORD, and the wall all around Jerusalem.

Solomon did not stop with the Pharaoh's daughter, but acquired a huge harem for himself, as **1Kings 11:1-4, 7-8, 11** records:

1 But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites—

2 from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love.

3 And [Solomon] had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart.

4 For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David.

7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon.

8 And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

11 Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant.

Solomon profaned the sacrament of marriage, which is designed to develop depth in men and women by the committed combination of their intelligences and emotions with one another as they face the trials and tribulations of life together, as God ordained, in **Genesis 2:24**:

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

By having a harem, Solomon unwisely turned the sacrament of marriage into a superficial

form of sexual Olympics, in which his interaction with the women that he controlled became the combination of occasional sexual intercourse and the granting of a wife's wish.

Just as Solomon profaned marriage, the exclusive relationship of one man and one woman, he also profaned the Temple that he built for the exclusive worship of God in Israel by building temples for the worship of the idol gods of their countries to please his foreign wives. This started a practice of idolatry that ultimately caused Israel to lose its' economic and military preeminence in the Promised Land as God withdrew His promised blessing. The Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks, and finally the Romans successively conquered and took control of the Israelites that were once under Solomon's reign. Although God appointed Solomon and gifted him with sufficient wisdom and riches to develop a great worship tradition by building the Temple, Solomon brought idolatry to Israel, making God jealous, and causing God to withdraw His blessing from Israel. Solomon's idolatry began Israel's downward spiral into division and captivity. And I have come to the conclusion that the jealousy that many wives show when their husbands waver from their exclusive focus on them as feminine refreshment is a reflection of the jealousy that God shows when the people whom He has chosen to bless worship other gods.

In **Luke 19:9-10**:

9 And Jesus said to [Zacchaeus], "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham;

10 for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Many that saw Jesus' miracles and listened to Jesus' preaching hoped that Jesus had come to restore Israel to the preeminence that the nation enjoyed during the reign of David, and before the idolatry of Solomon. During Jesus' life, the king of Israel was not an Israelite, but Herod, who was a descendant of Esau rather than Jacob. Herod was a vassal of the Romans, who maintained a military presence in the Palestine under the leadership of Pontius Pilate. Neither Herod nor Pilate had any particular concern for the worship of God or the sovereignty of Israel, but the rank and file Jews looked at Jesus, with His preaching of the Kingdom of God and His ministry of healing, as a powerful and palatable person to restore the Kingdom to Israel. After all, someone that could raise men from the dead would be the perfect person to lead a rejuvenated Israelite army, as Jesus' power of resurrection would render all of the troops invulnerable. Jesus was a great recruiter of men, and was on His way to Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, at the time when all able bodied Israelite males would be in town for the Passover and available to participate in an uprising against the Romans. Because Jesus had proven himself to be a great choice for an earthly leader, whenever Jesus said salvation or Kingdom of God, the rank and file Jews heard the Kingdom of Israel. Jesus wanted to make it clear that His statements about the Kingdom of God did not mean the Kingdom of Israel. Our text for today, **Luke 19:11-14** tells us:

11 Now as they heard these things, [Jesus] spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately.

12 Therefore [Jesus] said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.

13 So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do

business till I come.'

14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.'

The reference to receiving the kingdom in the far country and then returning was meant to indicate to the Jews that Jesus would have to go away and return receive the Kingdom. In point of fact, the far country represents Heaven, to which Jesus went to receive the Kingdom after He died on the Cross. A mina is a certain denomination of currency, which the nobleman gave his servants to invest during his absence. The delegation sent by the servants that hated the nobleman represents the Jewish religious leaders who rejected the leadership of Jesus Christ, not because of any deficiency in Jesus' ministry or His interpretation of the Word of God, but because of their short term view that their deal with the Roman leaders maintaining the leadership of Rome in Israel was more profitable for them than the permanent benefit of participation in the coming Kingdom of God. The Jewish leaders had fallen prey to flawed thinking as did Solomon, who facilitated the short term desire of the his wives to worship idols and forsook the permanent principles of God. When temporary concerns become more important to us than permanent principles, we tend to follow in the footsteps of Solomon.

The parable continues, in **Luke 19:15-17**:

15 "And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

16 Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.'

17 And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.'

The nobleman invested in his servants to ascertain which of them could be trusted with delegated leadership, just as God gifts us with talents to ascertain our abilities. God initially decided that Solomon demonstrated the humility required to be a steward of the power of God, but God warned Solomon that the power of God is not unconditionally delegated to men, but is based upon our continued adherence to God's principles, as **1Kings 3:11-14**:

11 Then God said to [Solomon]: "Because you have asked [for wisdom], and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice,

12 behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you.

13 And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days.

14 So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days."

The nobleman that went to the far country gave his servants money to invest, looking for a return, just as God gave Solomon wisdom and riches, expecting Solomon to build Him a magnificent Temple that would increase the worship of God in Israel and spread the worship of God to the countries with which he was aligned. Although God made a unique investment in the life of Solomon, this was not God's only investment. Jesus Christ made a great investment in us,

dying on the Cross to pay the penalty that we owe for the sins that we have committed, and then explaining the Plan of Salvation to us so that we can spread the knowledge of the Jesus Christ and increase the numbers of those that will take advantage of Jesus' sacrificial investment. **Luke 19:18-19** continues:

18 And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.'

19 Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.'

However, all of those who receive Jesus' investment do not produce a profit, as **Luke 19:20-21** tells us:

20 "Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief.

21 For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.'

There is a Christian doctrine known as "Once Saved, Always Saved", or the doctrine of Eternal Security. Christians are sometimes complacent about faith because of their misunderstanding of this doctrine, which was developed from an interpretation of **Romans 10:9**, which reads:

9 that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

From this passage of Scripture, some theologians have come to the conclusion that the only activity required for people to be saved is to simply say the words "Jesus is Lord", and to acknowledge the truth of the historical fact of the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ. The problem with this conclusion is that it does not take into account the contextual meaning of the phrase, "confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord".

During the days of the early Church in the Roman Empire, the Romans allowed the various territories that they conquered to continue worshipping the gods in which they believed. The Romans, however, also demanded that the conquered populations worship the Roman Emperor. Now, they did not have to go to the Church of the Emperor, or anything that formal, but, when they pledged their political allegiance to the Roman Empire, they did so by saying, "Caesar is Lord".

The Romans allowed Judaism to continue to exist in the Palestine after they conquered it, but the Jews chose to persecute the members of the new sect of Christianity, and recruited the Romans to persecute them as well. When a person was brought before a Roman court having been accused of being a Christian, they were asked to say that "Caesar is Lord". When faced with this requirement, a true Christian would not say "Caesar is Lord", but rather "Jesus is Lord", and would then be subject to the wrath of the persecution of the Roman Empire. Between 34AD, the year in which Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead, and 313AD, the year in which the Roman Emperor Constantine ended the persecution of the Church and became a Christian himself, an estimated 1.8 million Christians were martyred, including all of Jesus' original disciples except John, and almost all of the men that they appointed as leaders in their stead, because of their confession that "Jesus is Lord". Confessing with your mouth that Jesus is Lord means to do so in any circumstance, regardless of the repercussions that you may suffer for your confession.

A few weeks ago, we covered Peter's denials of Jesus Christ. **Matthew 26:69-75** records:
69 Now Peter sat outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came to him, saying, "You also were with Jesus of Galilee."

70 But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you are saying."

71 And when he had gone out to the gateway, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, "This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth."

72 But again he denied with an oath, "I do not know the Man!"

73 And a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, "Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you."

74 Then he began to curse and swear, saying, "I do not know the Man!" Immediately a rooster crowed.

75 And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." So he went out and wept bitterly.

After His Resurrection, Jesus forgave Peter's cowardice, but in **John 21:18-19**, Jesus told Peter:

18 Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish."

19 This [Jesus] spoke, signifying by what death [Peter] would glorify God. And when [Jesus] had spoken this, He said to [Peter], "Follow Me."

History records that Peter was martyred because he confessed that "Jesus is Lord" in his Roman trial. After being sentenced to crucifixion, Peter asked that he be crucified upside down, because he was not worthy to be crucified in the same way as Jesus Christ. To be saved, it is not sufficient to confess Jesus Christ as Lord in the supportive environment of a church, but you must maintain your confession, even in the most hostile environment in which you may find yourself.

An environment hostile to the confession of Jesus Christ is the work of the devil.

Revelation 12:10-12 records:

10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."

When you confess your Christianity in a hostile environment, you actually show that you believe, in your heart, that God has raised Jesus Christ from the dead. The reason that anyone would be willing to give up their life for their confession of Jesus Christ is that they are convinced that dying physically is only a temporary experience followed by a glorious resurrection to the presence of Jesus Christ, who will approve of those that will maintain their confession.

In our parable for today, the mina represents the knowledge of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us to invest that knowledge, by witnessing to the truth of the Resurrection and spreading the Gospel to others. The first two men complied with Jesus' request and maintained their confession, but the third man refused to do so, ostensibly so that he would not have to do the work of the Gospel and allow the Lord to reap the benefit. But should we fail to stand up for our belief in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we may find the "eternal security" of which the theologians speak to not be as eternal as we thought, as the nobleman reproves the servant that failed to produce a profit, in **Luke 19:22-23**:

22 And [the nobleman] said to [the unprofitable servant], 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow.

23 Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?

Peter's denial is so prominently spotlighted in the Scripture and in Christian doctrine so that we will be aware of the necessity of standing up for our faith. Paul tells us that we have to confess "Jesus is Lord" to be saved. The Revelator records that we overcome the devil by the word of our testimony. If we never travel to foreign countries as missionaries, and if we never venture into unfamiliar territory to preach the Gospel, we ought to at least maintain our good confession of Jesus Christ before our family, friends and acquaintances. If we cannot even do that, we might expect to hear that which the nobleman told his servants, in **Luke 19:24-26**:

24 "And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.'

25 (But they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas.')

26 'For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.

The doctrine of Eternal Security is a great doctrine, but we should recognize that to believe in Jesus Christ means that we maintain our allegiance to Him regardless of negative circumstances. The devil is here to try to shake our faith, but the Apostle Paul tells us, in **2Timothy 1:7-11**:

7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord [Jesus Christ], nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,

10 but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

11 to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

We need to produce a profit from the investment that Jesus Christ has made in us on Calvary. His death on the Cross provides our salvation, but He does not want us to come to Heaven by ourselves. Jesus wants us to multiply His sacrifice by our participation in Kingdom building business. Jesus told His apostles, in **John 14:12-14**:

12 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also;

and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.

13 And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14 If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

In the parable, the nobleman gives resources to his servants. Jesus Christ gives us access to the resources of God when we are in the service of the Lord, working the objective to grow the Kingdom of God by increasing the number of people who hear the Gospel because of our confession. The greatest resource that Jesus gives us is His love, as **John 3:16**:

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Let us use the love capital of Jesus Christ to increase His love investment of Jesus Christ in our world as we spread the knowledge the love that He showed for us in His sacrifice on the Cross.

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