



Slide #1

Two new books recently published by Free Grace authors (Curtis Tucker, *Majestic Destiny*, 2011 and Joseph Dillow, *Final Destiny*, 2012) present a different view of rich young ruler from that traditionally taught. For example, they understand (1) that the young ruler was a believer seeking rewards through good works and (2) that entrance into the kingdom is based on works.

While these insights may be new to some, these recent books actually echo earlier writings of Gary Whipple (*Shock And Surprise Beyond the Rapture*, 1992), Arlen Chitwood (*Salvation of the Soul*, 1983 and *Search for the Bride*, 2001), and Robert Govett (*Entrance Into the Kingdom*, 1922).

The intent of this presentation is to present a correct understanding of the interaction between Jesus and the rich ruler and dispel erroneous conclusions.

Slide #2

A very successful businessman gave the keynote address at a conference. He was well respected, having taken a struggling company from millions in sales to hundreds of millions in less than 10 years. Laying out his approach to business, he made a comment that summarized his success. He said, "The way we choose to look at things can be as significant as the thing we are trying to see." Rather than being locked into the same old way of seeing things, a different look, a different perspective, could provide the solution.

The same can be said for success in the study of God's Word. Rather than continuing to have on the same blinders maybe a different look, a different perspective, would be extremely helpful. Remember the businessman's axiom.

Extremely difficult to interpret, the texts concerning the rich young ruler are found in Matthew 19, Mark

Rightly Understanding the Rich Young Ruler

Ken Neff
Director
LeaderQuest

1

Perspective

*The way we choose to look
at things can be as significant
as the thing we are trying to see.*

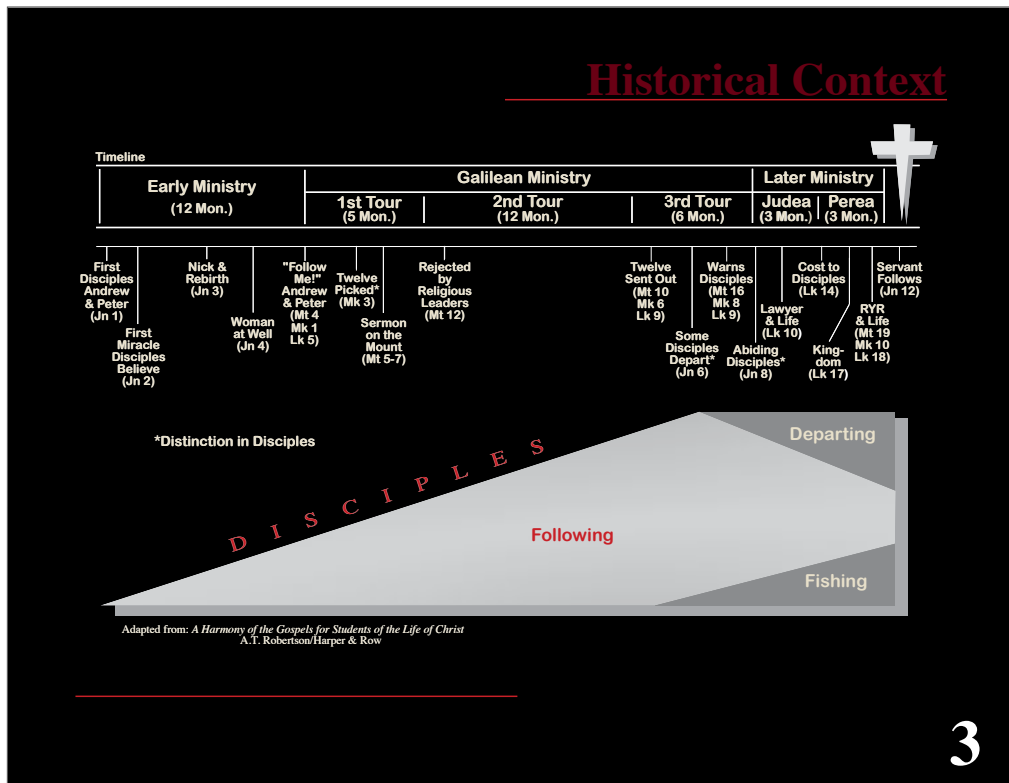
William R. Thurston
President
GenRad, Inc.

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10, and Luke 18. We will examine them, realizing that more than a cursory look is required to understand these texts. Before we look at the passages, we should put them in their historical context.

Slide #3

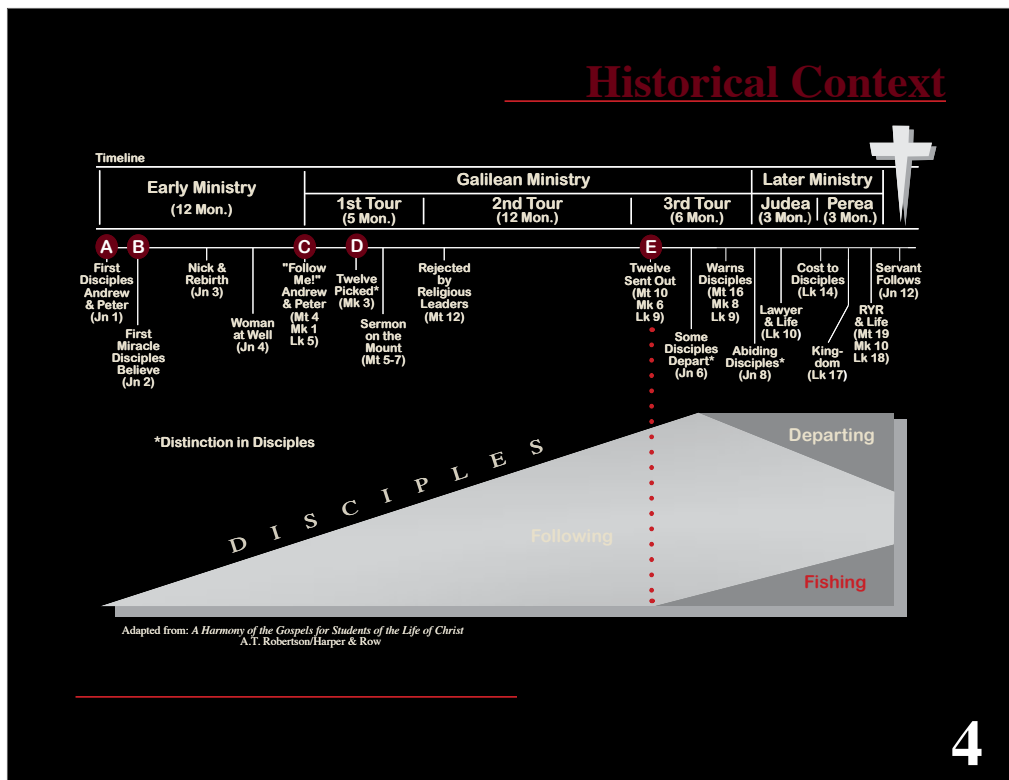
The Chart concerns selected events in the three-and-one-half-year ministry of Christ. Notice that Christ's earthly ministry is typically divided unto three main periods: Early ministry lasting approximately 1 year, Galilean ministry lasting approximately 2 years, and Later ministry lasting approximately 1/2 year. We will address the specific, selected events in the following slides. As depicted, followers or disciples of Jesus grew in number through the early years of His ministry.



3

Slide #4

Notice the red circles, indicated with A to E. At the beginning of His earthly ministry, Andrew and Peter began to follow Christ (A) and they believed in Him as the Christ at His first authenticating miracle of changing water to wine (B). Months later Jesus appeals to these same men to "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (C). That is when they began to follow Him as committed disciples. They and the other ten disciples were selected by Jesus to be His intimate companions during the first preaching tour throughout Galilee (D). Christ then began to focus His attention on the preparation of the Twelve, particularly after His rejection by the religious leaders in Matthew 12, preparing them for what would lie ahead after His return to the Father. Their on-the-job training prepared them for being sent out to minister late in the Galilean period (E). As shown, the Twelve began their fishing ministry during the last year of Christ's earthly ministry.



4

Slide #5

Numbers 1 through 5 in the red circles indicate the primary passages in which Jesus taught on discipleship. As indicated, all five occurred during the last year of Christ's earthly ministry.

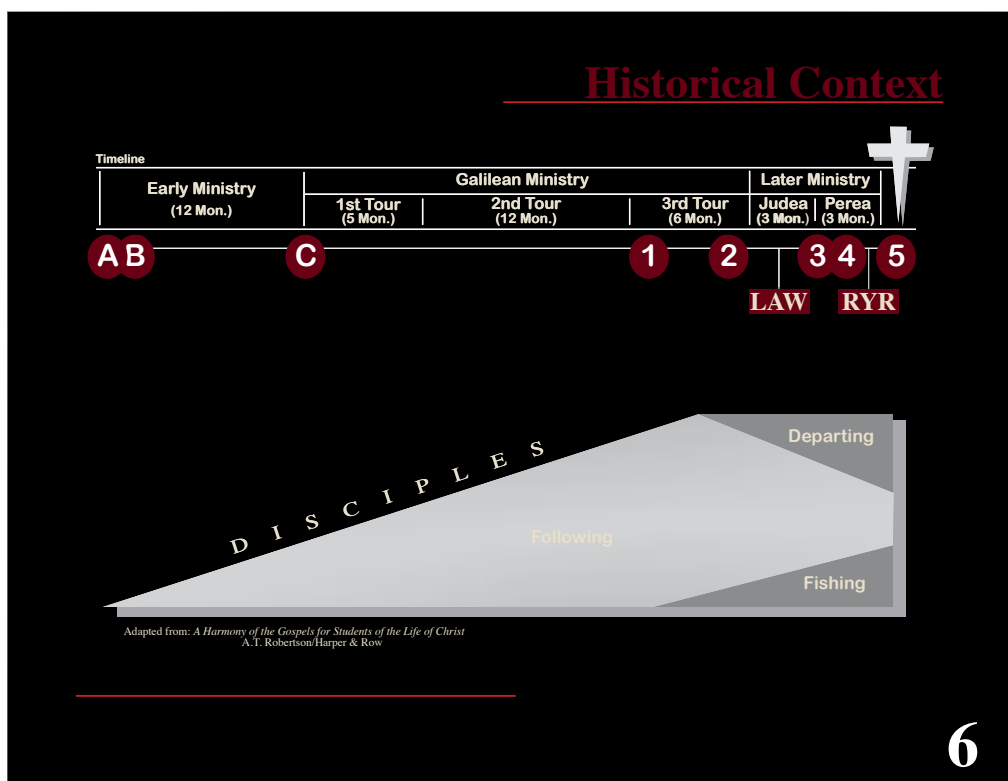
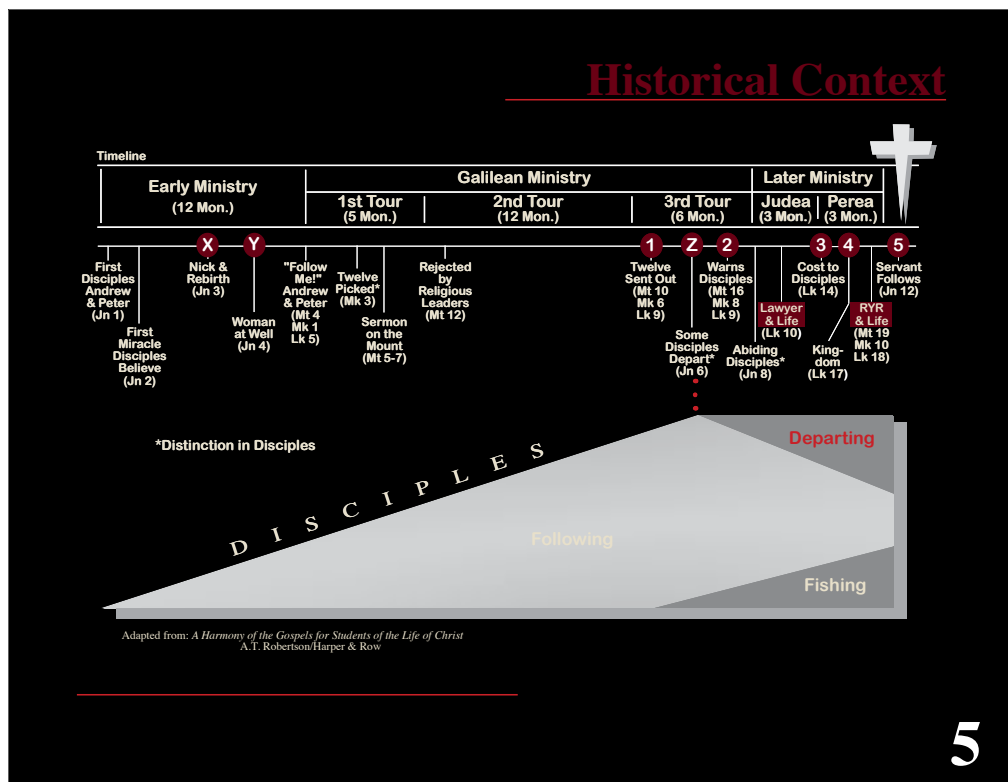
In these familiar discipleship passages Jesus says, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23) and "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother... even his own life, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26). This message seems quite different from His past interaction with Nicodemus (X) and the woman at the well (Y). In those instances He did not mention the cost of following Him. There the attention was focused on believing in Him.

Changing the emphasis, His teachings became increasingly serious with demands for anyone who would follow Him in discipleship. In His bread-of-life lesson (Z) Jesus spoke of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, thereby creating tension and disbelief within the group of followers, with many disciples deciding to depart. Why the change in approach? During the final year of His earthly ministry, Jesus' primary purpose was not to attract additional followers, but instead to invoke commitment from those who were already followers? Establishing a growing intimacy, allegiance, and dedication to Christ became the emphasis so that His followers could be part of establishing the infinite church when He departed.

Notice that Christ's interaction with the rich young ruler occurred in the final months of His ministry. A parallel text concerning a lawyer of the Mosaic Law occurred just a few month prior that to incident.

Slide #6

The red circles, A to C and then 1 to 5, show the most significant events considered in this presentation. Notice that Jesus' interaction with the rich young ruler (Lk 18) and with the lawyer (Lk 10) occurred not only late in His ministry but during His teaching on discipleship.



Slide #7

Andrew and Peter were the first followers (A) and they believe in Christ at the first miracle (B). But months later when Jesus called Andrew and Peter, who were already believers, to enter into committed discipleship, He said, "Follow Me" (C).

Likewise, in the closing months of His earthly ministry, Christ speaks of the demands on all those who would follow Him (1 through 5). His call each time was to "Follow Me." In every case when Jesus said, "Follow Me," His call *never* referred to salvation; rather His appeal was a call to discipleship for those who were already saved.

Historical Context

Timeline		Galilean Ministry			Later Ministry	
Early Ministry (12 Mon.)	1st Tour (5 Mon.)	2nd Tour (12 Mon.)	3rd Tour (6 Mon.)	Judea (3 Mon.)	Perea (3 Mon.)	
A B	C		1 2	3 4 5		
			LAW	RYR		
"Follow Me"	✓		✓	✓	✓ ✓ ✓	

Adapted from: *A Harmony of the Gospels for Students of the Life of Christ*
A.T. Robertson/Harper & Row

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Slide #8

As His final days drew to a close Christ was preparing His followers to impact the world after His departure. Embedded within each of His calls to discipleship Jesus taught the exchanged-life paradox, dying to self in order to really live. The issue wasn't how to possess life, but rather how to experience abundant life.

Certainly Jesus came to die for our sins on the cross so that salvation can be ours. Nevertheless, He also came to establish His church, particularly through the Twelve He had chosen and prepared. Beyond the Twelve, Jesus entreated others to follow Him in order to experience an enriched life and effectively participate in a community of believers. In order to "save one's life," followers must embrace a new way of thinking concerning priorities and behavior. Entering into discipleship was synonymous with entering into life, an enriched experience of fellowship with Christ.

Historical Context

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Early Ministry (12 Mon.)	1st Tour (5 Mon.)	2nd Tour (12 Mon.)	3rd Tour (6 Mon.)	Judea (3 Mon.)	Perea (3 Mon.)	
A B	C		1 2	3 4 5		
			LAW	RYR		
"Follow Me"	✓		✓	✓	✓ ✓ ✓	
To Die is To Live			✓	✓	✓ ✓ ✓	

8

Slide #9

The Twelve’s concern with being the greatest in the coming kingdom erupted in Matthew 18, 20, 23 (first 3 checks) and in Luke 22 (last check). You remember in Matthew 20, the mother of James and John went to Jesus and asked that her two sons be allowed to sit next to Him in His kingdom. As you would expect, the other ten disciples were upset. Even in the Upper Room (Lk 22) the disciples were in the throws of competition, vying for positions of authority in the kingdom. In each of these instances, Christ explained that the one who places himself in the servant’s position would be the greatest in the kingdom.

Jesus appeal to His followers was threefold: “Follow Me,” “Save your Life,” and “Become Great in the Kingdom.” From this historical context, we gain perspective in order to understand Jesus’ interaction with both the rich young ruler (Lk 18), as well as the lawyer of the Mosaic Law (Lk 10). Remember both interactions come at the very end of Jesus’ earthly ministry when He presented (1) the requirements for following Him in discipleship, (2) the necessity of dying to self to experience true living, and (3) that greatness from God’s perspective comes through service to others. In each case, a person must consider others as being more important than themselves and serve them.

Historical Context

Timeline		Galilean Ministry			Later Ministry	
Early Ministry (12 Mon.)	1st Tour (5 Mon.)	2nd Tour (12 Mon.)	3rd Tour (6 Mon.)	Judea (3 Mon.)	Perea (3 Mon.)	
AB	C		1	2	3 4 5	
					LAW RYR	
“Follow Me”		✓	✓	✓	✓ ✓ ✓	
To Die is To Live			✓	✓	✓ ✓ ✓	
Greatest in Kingdom				✓	✓ ✓ ✓	

9

Slide #10

When interpreting Scripture, the context as well as the major issues within a text must be properly understood. Like placing the pieces of a puzzle, everything must fit together as intended by the original author. If not, erroneous conclusions result.

As we consider the rich young ruler, the texts are very complex, containing perplexing issues that are not easily resolved. In the next few slides, we will highlight major considerations and their ramifications.

Interpretative Puzzle

10

Slide #11

The flow of the content surrounding the interaction between the rich young ruler and Jesus is shown. Luke 18 is used with variations revealed from Matthew 19. The progression of thought flows from (1) Jesus' teaching His disciples about entering the kingdom like a child to (2) a series of questions and answers between Jesus and the rich ruler to (3) Christ's statement about kingdom entrance which created tension with the disciples and finally moving to (4) Peter's question triggered by the "Follow Me" instruction to the rich ruler. Perception of this progression is critical to interpreting the context.

Content Development

CHILDREN (Kingdom) Lk. 18:15-17	RICH RULER (What Do To?) Lk. 18:18-23	DISCIPLES (Who Enters?) Lk. 18:24-25	PETER (What for Us?) Lk. 18:26-30
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kingdom belongs to such as these • Kingdom to be received like a Child • Kingdom to be entered into 	<p>Inherit Eternal Life</p> <p>Questions/Answers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good (God's Character) • Law (God's Requirements) <p>Condition/Response</p> <p>Lack One Thing... [Go], sell, give; come, follow Me</p> <p>Went away grieving</p>	<p>Statement</p> <p>Hard for wealthy to enter the kingdom</p> <p>Question/Answer</p> <p>Who can be saved? Possible only with God</p>	<p>Question/Answer</p> <p>Left everything and followed You</p> <p>Will Receive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much present age & • Age to come, eternal life
V A R I A N T	<p>Obtain Eternal Life (Mt. 19:16)</p> <p>If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments. (Mt. 19:17)</p>	V A R I A N T	<p>What then will there be for us? (Mt. 19:27)</p> <p>Will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. (Mt. 19:29)</p>

11

Slide #12

Of particular importance in the interaction between Jesus and the ruler centers on the actual question asked. Why does Luke's "What must I do" question differ from Matthew's? Does "inherit eternal life" in Luke differ from "obtain eternal life" in Matthew? Did the ruler have the same understanding as the Rabbinical teaching of the day, that eternal life was earned by keeping the Law? If so, wouldn't he be asking a salvation question?

Then, why does Jesus' response to Peter's "What in it for us" question vary? Does "will receive eternal life" differ from "will inherit eternal life"? Does the ruler's question in Matthew better fit with Christ's "you will inherit eternal life" response? These critical questions must be sorted out to understand the text.

Content Development

CHILDREN (Kingdom) Lk. 18:15-17	RICH RULER (What Do To?) Lk. 18:18-23	DISCIPLES (Who Enters?) Lk. 18:24-25	PETER (What for Us?) Lk. 18:26-30
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12

Slide #13

Both the rich ruler and the lawyer in Luke 10 asked, "What shall I do to inherit/obtain eternal life?" Jesus' response to the rich ruler was "If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." This is almost His identical response to the lawyer. "Do this [keep the commandments] and you will live." In both instances, experiencing life corresponds to commandment keeping. If so, in Christ's answer did He present a call to discipleship, losing one's life to gain an enriched life? Again, a question that requires sorting out.

Content Development

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<p>Luke 10 Lawyer</p> <p>V A R I A N T</p>			<p>V A R I A N T</p>
	<p>Obtain Eternal Life (Mt. 19:16)</p> <p>If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments. (Mt. 19:17)</p>		<p>What then will there be for us? (Mt. 19:27)</p> <p>Will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. (Mt. 19:29)</p>

13

Slide #14

Nine of the eighteen times (50 percent) the phrase, "enter the kingdom," is used in the New Testament in the context of the rich young ruler, where Jesus instructs His disciples concerning kingdom entrance. "Being like a child" is the requirement, while "wealth" is a deterrent. Does being like a child refer to childlike trust? Or humility? To what then does "salvation" refer? Wouldn't salvation (or deliverance) correspond to entering the kingdom? Wouldn't it also refer to possessing eternal life? Isn't possessing eternal life what Jesus meant in His response to the question, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" in Luke 13:23. Surely that was the emphasis in Luke 19:9 when Jesus told Zaccheus, "Today salvation has come" and followed by "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (v. 10).

Content Development

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<p>V A R I A N T</p>			<p>V A R I A N T</p>
	<p>Obtain Eternal Life (Mt. 19:16)</p> <p>If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments. (Mt. 19:17)</p>		<p>What then will there be for us? (Mt. 19:27)</p> <p>Will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. (Mt. 19:29)</p>

14

Slide #15

Peter's "What in it for us" question was stimulated by the "follow Me" instructions to the rich ruler. If "follow Me" always refers to commitment in discipleship, then wouldn't that mean Jesus was calling the rich ruler as a believer into discipleship? But, didn't the original question concern eternal life and kingdom entrance?

Content Development


CHILDREN (Kingdom) Lk. 18:15-17	RICH RULER (What Do To?) Lk. 18:18-23	DISCIPLES (Who Enters?) Lk. 18:24-25	PETER (What for Us?) Lk. 18:26-30
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			<p>What then will there be for us? (Mt. 19:27)</p> <p>Will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. (Mt. 19:29)</p>

15

Slide #16

To this point, we have stirred up multiple questions and interpretative problems within these texts. Each issue must be addressed, sorted out, and placed in the interpretative puzzle. Only then can the truth within these texts be understood.

Interpretative Puzzle



16

Slide #17

The major issues within the rich-young-ruler texts that must be addressed by the student of the Word are shown. Each issue has a least two options. Obviously, their inter-relationship between one another must be considered.

To provide examples of how the various options are seen from different viewpoints, we will look at three major views for comparison.

[Note: These 10 Items are addressed in detail in *Choose to Live* (Ken Neff, St. Augustine, FL, LeaderQuest, 2012).]

RJR Major Issues						
ITEM	ISSUE	OPTIONS				
1	Who Was Asking?	Unbeliever	or	Believer		
2	What Was Asked?	Works (for eternal life)	or	Works (for rewards)		
3	What Was Expected?	Entering the Kingdom	or	Inheriting Rewards		
4	Kingdom Entrance	Entering Eternal Life (salvation)	or	Inheriting the Kingdom (rewards)		
5	Spiritual Perception	Man's Goodness	or	God's Goodness		
6	Life	Eternal	or	Abundant		
7	Jesus' Instructions	One-directional (for salvation)	or	One-directional (for discipleship)	or	Two-directional (for salvation and discipleship)
8	Treasure in Heaven	Eternal Life (merit-of-life)	or	Eternal Life (proof-of-life)	or	Rewards (evidence-of-maturity)
9	Ability to Save	God (through faith)	or	Men (by works)		
10	What's in It for Me?	Heaven (eternal destiny)	or	Compensation (for obedience)		

17

Slide #18

The typical *Reformed View* understands the rich ruler to be an unbeliever, inquiring in regard to the works necessary to obtain the reward of eternal life and enter the kingdom. Christ's instructions to "go, sell, give; and come, follow Me" demanded one to be a fully committed disciple in order to become a believer and possess eternal life.

Major Views		
ITEM	REFORMED THEOLOGY	
1	Unbeliever	
2	Works (for eternal life)	
3	Entering the Kingdom	
4	Entering Eternal Life (salvation)	
5	God's Goodness	
6	Eternal	
7	One-directional (for salvation)	
8	Eternal Life (proof-of-life)	
9	God (through faith)	
10	Heaven (eternal destiny)	

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Slide #19

The *Free Grace "A" View* is the position found in the recent books *Majestic Destiny* (Curtis Tucker) and *Final Destiny* (Jody Dillow), which understands the rich ruler to be a believer, inquiring about the works required to inherit rewards and enter the kingdom. Christ's instructions to "go, sell, give; and come, follow Me" concern discipleship for those who are already believers. "Follow Me" and "If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt 19:17) are used to support a discipleship question with a discipleship answer. Notice: In both the Reformed View and the Free Grace "A" View, works are required to enter the kingdom.

Major Views			
ITEM	FREE GRACE THEOLOGY "A"	REFORMED THEOLOGY	
1	Believer	Unbeliever	
2	Works (for rewards)	Works (for eternal life)	
3	Inheriting Rewards	Entering the Kingdom	
4	Inheriting the Kingdom (rewards)	Entering Eternal Life (salvation)	
5	God's Goodness	God's Goodness	
6	Abundant	Eternal	
7	One-directional (for discipleship)	One-directional (for salvation)	
8	Rewards (evidence-of-maturity)	Eternal Life (proof-of-life)	
9	Men (by works)	God (through faith)	
10	Compensation (for obedience)	Heaven (eternal destiny)	

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Slide #20

The *Free Grace "B" View*, being my view, understands the rich ruler to be an unbeliever, inquiring about the works required to obtain eternal life and enter the kingdom. Nevertheless, the ruler embraced an incorrect view concerning the means of obtaining eternal life, the same as the rabbinical teachers of that day. Redirecting the rich ruler's thinking Christ said, "If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt 19:17). The same response was given to the lawyer in Luke 10. Life now can be experienced in an enriched manner through obedience. That was the Old Testament promise (Lev 18:5). However, Jesus pressed both the rich ruler and the lawyer to acknowledge that a relationship (possessing life) must be established before experiencing an enriched life now can occur. Christ's instructions to "go, sell, give; and come, follow Me" are two directional; first concerning salvation ("go, sell, give;" a trust transfer) and second discipleship ("come, follow Me;" in faithful obedience).

Major Views			
ITEM	FREE GRACE THEOLOGY "A"	REFORMED THEOLOGY	FREE GRACE THEOLOGY "B"
1	Believer	Unbeliever	Unbeliever
2	Works (for rewards)	Works (for eternal life)	Works (for rewards)
3	Inheriting Rewards	Entering the Kingdom	Entering the Kingdom
4	Inheriting the Kingdom (rewards)	Entering Eternal Life (salvation)	Entering Eternal Life (salvation)
5	God's Goodness	God's Goodness	God's Goodness
6	Abundant	Eternal	Eternal & Abundant
7	One-directional (for discipleship)	One-directional (for salvation)	Two-directional (for salvation and discipleship)
8	Rewards (evidence-of-maturity)	Eternal Life (proof-of-life)	Rewards (evidence-of-maturity)
9	Men (by works)	God (through faith)	God (through faith)
10	Compensation (for obedience)	Heaven (eternal destiny)	Compensation (for obedience)

20

Slide #21

From the list of the 10 Major Issues that we previously discussed, there are issues of critical importance that affect our understanding of each of the other issues. For example, if a believer posed the question to Jesus, your understanding of the remaining issues would radically change from that of a non-believer's inquiry.

The *Critical Issues* are: Who was asking?, What was expected?, and Jesus' Instructions.

So how do we determine Who Was Asking the question? The ruler came to the One he believed could provide the answer to his question. He came respectfully and anxiously. But was he already a believer in Christ or not? Frankly, I believe you cannot tell from the actual rich young ruler texts.

Critical Issues

1. *Who was asking?*
2. *What was expected?*
3. *Jesus' Instructions*

21

Slide #22

But there is a 900lb gorilla in the room that provides needed perspective. In Luke 10 when another person asked the identical question as the rich young ruler, Jesus took him down the same road providing the same answer.

Who Was Asking?



900lb Gorilla

22

Slide #23

Notice the parallels between Luke 10 and Luke 18: same question and same answer. Why would these two men ask the identical question? Was the basis of their question the same? Were their motives the same?

From the text, the lawyer (a teacher of the Mosaic Law) came to “test” Jesus, while the ruler seemingly came with more sincere motives. Based on the Rabbinical teaching of the day, works were required ensure entrance into the eternal life. Quite frankly, the teaching of the religious leaders sounded identical to Christ’s response to “entering into life” for both men—life came by Law-keeping. Using the Law lawfully, Jesus redirects the conversation with both men to experience an enriched life through obedience (Lev 18:5). Obviously the implication is that they first must possess life through faith. Entering into eternal life, their future concern, differed from entering into live now. Understanding the implications of Jesus’ answer, the cynical lawyer is never heard from again, while the ruler leaves dejected.

If the same answer were provided for the same question in both instances, wouldn’t it seem natural to assume that either both men were believers or both were unbelievers? But, which is it?

<u>Who Was Asking?</u>		
	Luke 10	Luke 18
Inquirer	Lawyer	Rich Ruler
Question	<i>What must I do to inherit eternal life?</i>	<i>What must I do to inherit eternal life?</i>
Answer	<i>Do this [keep the commandments] and you will live.</i>	<i>If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.</i>
Response	[Jesus withdrew.]	Went away grieving.

Slide #24

John provides perspective, telling us that many Jewish religious leaders were believers in Christ. In particular, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were His disciples. Notice, however, that in each case these men were fearful of the exposure of their faith in Christ to the religious community.

While Matthew, Mark, and Luke indicated that Joseph of Arimathea requested Jesus’ body for burial, none make reference to other “believing rulers” or to “Nicodemus.”

Who Was Asking?

Many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue.
(John 12:42)

At preparation for Jesus’ burial (John 19:38-39):

Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. So he came and took away His body (v. 38)

and

Nicodemus, who had first come to Him by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. (v. 39)

Perspective from John

Slide #25

Providing an entirely different perspective, the Gospel of Luke suggests that most religious leaders in Israel were not believers. This data strongly indicates that the lawyer and therefore the rich ruler were not believers.

In each of the more than thirty occurrences where religious leaders (e.g., Pharisees, teachers, scribes, and lawyers) are mentioned in the Gospel of Luke with the only exception of Joseph of Arimathea, they are portrayed in a negative manner and as enemies of Jesus. They are consistently depicted as opposing Christ (seventeen times), they continually tried to trap Jesus (six times), or Jesus confronted the religious leaders (six times) and knew their evil hearts and thoughts (four times). These four descriptive lines of argument indicate that the religious leaders in Israel were predominately unbelievers. That is the only conclusion you can derive from this evidence.

Luke 10:25 particularly provides insight concerning the lawyer's spiritual condition. "And a lawyer stood up and put Him [Jesus] to the test, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?'" As previously noted, every religious leader who sought truth and believed in Jesus was fearful of discovery. Nevertheless this lawyer boldly "stood up" amidst a Jewish crowd and "tested" Jesus with a question about eternal life. To assume that this lawyer was a believer, additional proof to support that claim would certainly be required. But there is not a hint of such evidence. If, as the facts strongly indicate, the lawyer was not a believer (Lk 10), the rich ruler likewise should not be considered a believer (Lk 18).

Who Was Asking?					
CHAP- TER	LEADERS OPPOSE	TRIED TO TRAP	LEADERS CONFRONTED	LEADERS THOUGHTS	TOTAL
5	21,30			22	3
6	2				1
6	7,11			8	3
10		25			1
11	16				1
11	45	53-54	43,46,52		5
12			1		1
14	1		3		2
15	2				1
16	14			15	2
19	7				1
19		39			1
19	47				1
20	1,19,26	20,21-22,26	46	23	8
22	2				1
23	10				1
16	17	6	6	4	33

Perspective from Luke 25

Slide #26

So, what was expected? This is the second of the critical issues in the rich young ruler text, particularly the expectation of the future earthly kingdom promised to the nation of Israel.

In the Old Testament, both Samuel and Daniel had much to say about the future kingdom. They foretold an everlasting kingdom established at the coming of the Messiah.

What Was Expected?	
Promise of Future Kingdom	
I will establish his kingdom...I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever....Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever (2 Sam. 7:12-13, 16)	
In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever (Dan. 2:44)	
Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom (Dan. 7:27)	
Perspective from Old Testament 26	

Slide #27

The promise of the kingdom corresponds to the promise of the future deliverance of the wayward nation as revealed by Isaiah. With the coming Messiah, the nation would be “saved” (delivered from national judgment). This salvation would be everlasting.

Deliverance from national waywardness, resulting in establishment of an eternal Kingdom, awaited national repentance and therefore individual salvation [trust in the Messiah].

What Was Expected?

Promise of Future National Deliverance

And it will be said in that day, “Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might **save** [delivered from national judgment] us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; Let us rejoice and be glad in His **salvation** [delivered from national judgment]” (Isa. 25:9)

Israel has been **saved** [delivered from national judgment] by the Lord with an **everlasting salvation** (Isa. 45:17)

Perspective from Old Testament

27

Slide #28

When we come to the first century, the next two slides presents 7 instances in which the kingdom’s coming was immediately expected. The angel announced to Mary that her Son would be reign over the kingdom (Lk 1:32-33) and Zacharias proclaims that Christ would bring deliverance to the nation (Lk 1:69-71). John the Baptist preaches, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt 3:2).

What Was Expected?

Angel’s announcement to Mary:

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His **kingdom will have no end.**

(Luke 1:32-33)

Zacharias proclaims:

[He] has raised up a horn of salvation for us. In the house of David His servant — As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old — **Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES**, And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US

(Luke 1:69-71)

John the Forerunner announces:

Repent, for the **kingdom of heaven is at hand** (Matt. 3:2)

Perspective during Life of Christ

28

Slide #29

Continuing the kingdom expectations from the perspective during the life of Christ, Jesus (Matt 4:17) and the Twelve (Matt 10:7) preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The Twelve expected that the kingdom would be established immediately (Lk 19:11; Acts 1:6).

Of the 162 times kingdom is used in the New Testament, 143 of those times (88 percent) were by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, invariably referring to the coming, physical kingdom. The Messiah was present and the covenant nation was being called back to God in preparation for the establishment of the eternal kingdom.

For the first-century Jew, entering into the eternal kingdom was equivalent to entering into eternal life.

What Was Expected?

Jesus the Messiah declares:

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matt. 4:17)

Jesus sends out the Twelve within 1 year of His death:

And as you go, preach, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 10:7)

Disciples anticipating Kingdom late in Christ's ministry:

While they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately (Luke 19:11)

Disciples anticipating Kingdom following Christ's death:

So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6)

Perspective during Life of Christ

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Slide #30

Dr. Kenneth Barker explains what the nation anticipated. He stated, "The national expectation was for only one coming of the Messiah and when He arrived He *first* would deliver the nation from Roman oppression and *then* immediately setup the promised earthly kingdom from which He would reign forever."

For the Nation there were but two ages, the "present age" and the "age to come." They were all a-millennial in their expectations. There was no millennium in their thinking. When the kingdom began, it was to last forever. They expected an everlasting kingdom and they expected it to occur immediately.

What Was Expected?

The national expectation was for only one coming of the Messiah and when He arrived He first would deliver the nation from Roman oppression and then immediately setup the promised earthly kingdom from which He would reign forever.

Dr. Kenneth Barker
Old Testament Scholar

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Slide #31

Not only must the student of God's Word properly fit together the context of the rich young ruler puzzle, but that puzzle must fit properly together with the whole Bible. A decision made about aspects of the smaller puzzle impacts the total puzzle and visa versa.

Before we move on to the Third Critical Issue (Jesus' Instructions), we need to consider three factors that can help us understand how one entered the expected kingdom. These factors are:

1. Entering the kingdom based on *believing*
2. Entering the kingdom based on *righteousness*
3. Entering the kingdom based on *works*

Puzzle within a Puzzle

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Slide #32

What happens when your expectations don't match reality? If the nation did not repent and embrace the Messiah, what then? Could the individual repent and embrace Christ?

John 3 provides perspective. *First*, verses 3 and 5 inform us that being "born again" leads to entering the kingdom. But, the kingdom has been postponed until the return of Christ. *Second*, verse 16 provides perspective relating to eternal life. Notice that "born again" and "believe Him" are equivalent terms. Not foreseeing the kingdom's postponement, the first-century-Jewish mind would understand "entering the kingdom" as synonymous to (or equivalent to) "having eternal life."

A person possesses eternal life when he believes in Christ and will enter the kingdom in the future.

Entrance Based on Believing

Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God... unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God (Jn. 3:3, 5)

Born Again

Leads To

[— Postponed —]

Entering Kingdom

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life (Jn. 3:16)

Believe Him

Leads To

Having Eternal Life

— Present Age —

— Age to Come —

Perspective of Future Things

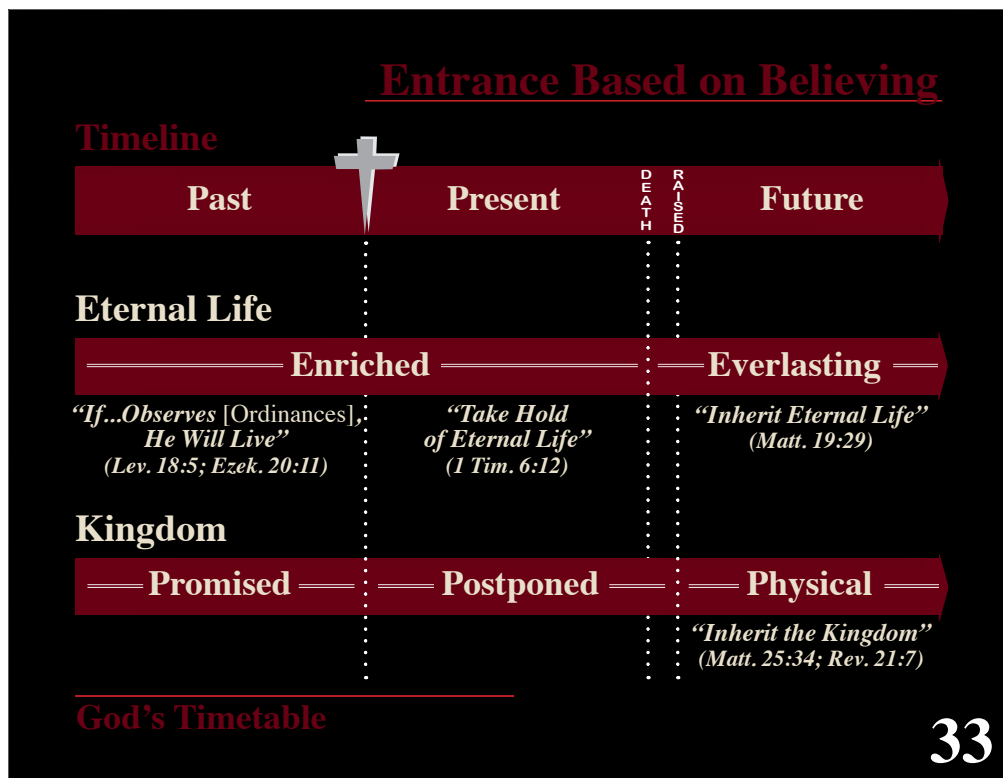
32

Slide #33

With the postponement of the Kingdom, a new perspective on God's timetable is necessary.

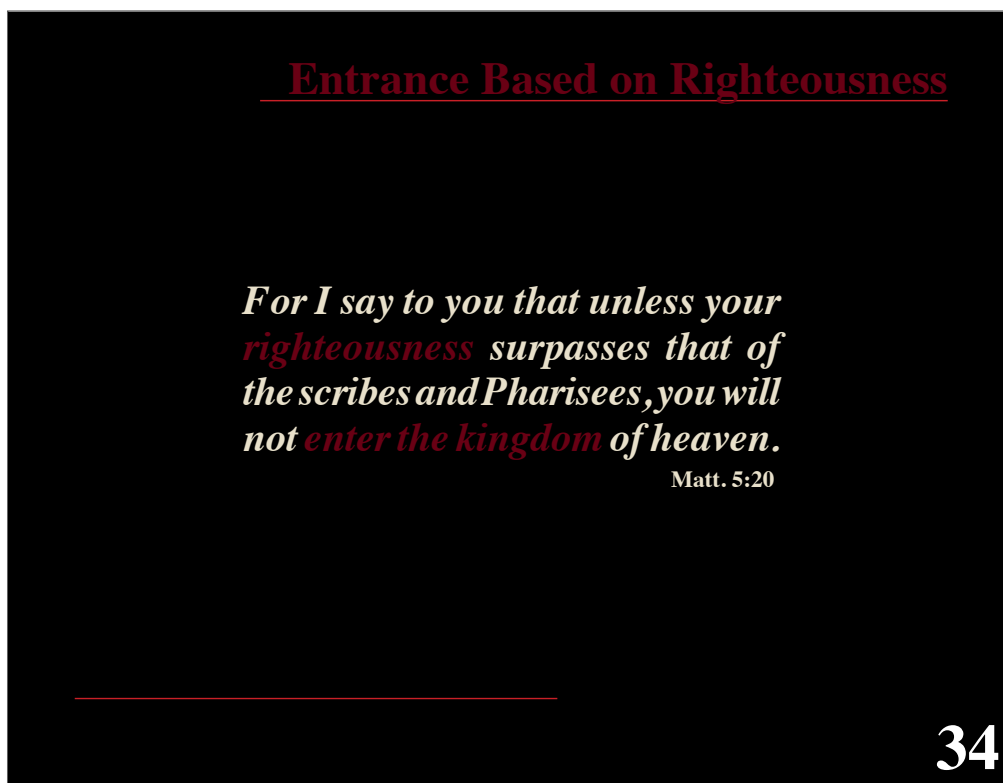
This slide shows the timeline of the relationship between key theological concepts: eternal life and the kingdom. While John 3 tells us that eternal life is a possession at initial salvation. Life can be experienced in an enriched manner by the believer's obedience. In the Old Testament, obedience produced intimacy in fellowship with God. Remember, this is the offer Christ made to the rich ruler (Lk 18) and the lawyer (Lk 10). He said, "If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." Obviously, a relationship (possessing life) must be established before fellowship (experiencing life), an enriched life with God, can occur. Likewise believers today are challenged to "take hold of eternal life," referring to an enhanced or intensified life based on man's works; *it is earned!*

Entering into the future kingdom is promised to those who believe in Christ and are born again; "inheriting the kingdom" and "inheriting eternal life" is an earned merit rather than a gift. From the historical context, earned merit relates to Jesus' call to "follow Him" in discipleship, embedded with the exchanged-life teaching of saving one's life by losing it. While the Rich Ruler (Lk 18) and the Lawyer (Lk 10) misunderstood the concept of "inheriting eternal life," Jesus used the expression properly in the Matthew text. *Inheritance is earned.*



Slide #34

Matthew 5:20 presents the *second factor* impacting one's understanding of the rich ruler puzzle. Notice the text combines "righteousness" with "entering the kingdom." That combination can be understood in one of two major ways.



Slide #35

In the *option "A"* righteousness refers to *practical* righteousness, a works-righteousness surpassing that of the scribes and Pharisees. Obedient good works of the believer in discipleship would be in view. Therefore, entering the kingdom is based on the believer's good works, a prize earned through obedience.

This is based on believers being the exclusive audience to which the Sermon on the Mount was addressed. This is the argument in both *Majestic Destiny* and *Final Destiny*.

Entrance Based on Righteousness

For I say to you that unless your **righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not **enter the kingdom of heaven** (Matt. 5:20)**

Option "A"

RIGHTEOUSNESS	CONDITION	RESULT
<i>Practical</i>	<i>Works</i>	<i>Discipleship</i>

Entering the Kingdom = Inheriting Eternal Life

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Slide #36

In the *option "B"* righteousness refers to *positional* or imputed righteousness, a righteousness standing before God based on the work of Christ. Believing in Christ established a relationship, a righteous standing, with God. Then entering the kingdom would correspond to entering eternal life.

This agrees with John 3, entering the kingdom being synonymous to having eternal life. This option is my position.

Entrance Based on Righteousness

For I say to you that unless your **righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not **enter the kingdom of heaven** (Matt. 5:20)**

Option "A"

RIGHTEOUSNESS	CONDITION	RESULT
<i>Practical</i>	<i>Works</i>	<i>Discipleship</i>

Entering the Kingdom = Inheriting Eternal Life

Option "B"

RIGHTEOUSNESS	CONDITION	RESULT
<i>Positional</i>	<i>Faith</i>	<i>Relationship</i>

Entering the Kingdom = Entering Eternal Life

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Slide #37

The *third factor* impacting one's understanding of the rich ruler puzzle is found in Matthew 18:3-4. Remember from the Historical Context that this incident was the first of four times Jesus taught the Twelve about greatness in the kingdom. In 18:1 they asked, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom?" The answer, "Whoever...humbles himself...is greatest in the kingdom" (v 4).

We must ask ourselves if "entering the kingdom" depends on "humble service?" If so, what does that imply?

Entrance Based on Works

3 Truly I say to you, unless you are converted [change] and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

4 Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. 18:3-4

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Slide #38

Option "A" understands verse 4 to repeat verse 3, emphasizing the necessity of "humble service" and associating humility with a servant's status. Entering the kingdom and greatness in the kingdom are based on the believer's good works. Both are earned through obedience. Entering into life or discipleship is synonymous with entering the kingdom. *Majestic Destiny* and *Final Destiny* hold this position.

Entrance Based on Works

Truly I say to you, unless you are converted [change] and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:3-4)

Option "A"

V. 3 to V. 4	CONDITION	RESULT
Repetition	Humble Service	Enter/Great in Kingdom

Entering the Kingdom = Inheriting Eternal Life

[Note: "Entering life" (Matt 18:8, 9; Mk 10:43, 45) is equated to "entering eternal life," being used to contrast eternal life with God from eternal separation from God. This is addressed in detail in *Choose to Live* (Ken Neff, St. Augustine, FL, LeaderQuest, 2012).]

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Slide #39

Option “B” sees a progression in verse 4 from verse 3. Verse 3 presents the condition for entering the kingdom, childlike trust, while verse 4 provides the condition for greatness in the future kingdom, obedient service. Greatness *in* the kingdom must be distinguished from greatness *to enter into* the kingdom. This is my position.

So, what was expected at the time of Christ concerning the kingdom? “Entering the kingdom” was based on faith, simply trusting as a child, and imputed righteousness. On the other hand, “inheriting eternal life” or “inheriting the kingdom” was based on faithful obedience.

Entrance Based on Works

Truly I say to you, unless you are converted [change] and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:3-4)

Option “A”

V. 3 to V. 4	CONDITION	RESULT
Repetition	Humble Service	Enter/Great in Kingdom
<i>Entering the Kingdom = Inheriting Eternal Life</i>		

Option “B”

V. 3 to V. 4	CONDITION	RESULT
Progression	Childlike Trust	Being in the Kingdom
	Humble Service	Being Great in Kingdom
<i>Entering the Kingdom = Entering Eternal Life</i>		

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Slide #40

Our *last critical issue* concerns our understanding of Jesus’ Instructions to the rich ruler.

There are three major viewpoints regarding the instructions to “Go... Sell... Give; Come... Follow Me.” Obviously, if a believer is in view, this could not be understood in the same way as if the person was an unbeliever.

The *first* interpretation assumes the instructions were given to an *unbeliever*. The ruler asked a salvation question (how to have a relationship with God and possess eternal life) and received a salvation answer. As a result, the instructions are a linear (one-directional) progression leading to *salvation*. The means for a person to be complete in Christ is through receiving the gift of heaven. “Follow Me” refers to becoming believer and possessing eternal life, proven by good works. This is the view of the Reformed position in which becoming a believer by faith-works equates to becoming a fully committed disciple.

Jesus’ Instructions

Instructions:

Go ... Sell ... Give; Come ... Follow Me

Interpretations:

To Unbeliever	Relationship
<i>“Follow Me” = Eternal Life by Faith-Works</i>	

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Slide #41

The *second* interpretation says the instructions are given to a *believer*. The ruler asks a discipleship question (how to obtain rewards) and received a discipleship answer. The instructions are again understood as a linear (one-directional) progression, but this time they lead to *discipleship*. Only through fully committed discipleship can one enter the kingdom, becoming great in the kingdom. “*Follow Me*” refers to a believer becoming a committed disciple with good works leading to maturity and the prize of entering the kingdom. Both *Majestic Destiny* and *Final Destiny* hold this view.

Jesus' Instructions

Instructions: *Go ... Sell ... Give; Come ... Follow Me*

Interpretations:

To Unbeliever	Relationship
	<i>“Follow Me” = Eternal Life by Faith-Works</i>
To Believer	Discipleship
	<i>“Follow Me” = Maturity by Works</i>

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Slide #42

The *third* view sees Christ’s instructions as given to an *unbeliever*. The ruler asks a salvation question and received both a salvation and a discipleship answer. Rather than one-directional, the instructions are two-directional: first, going to sell and give, and then second returning to follow Christ. “*Going, selling, giving*” refer to becoming a believer (a trust transfer, producing initial heavenly treasure) and possessing eternal life; “*come, follow Me*” speaks to that believer then becoming a committed disciple leading to faithful obedience and maturity. I believe this interpretation matches the context.

Jesus' Instructions

Instructions: *Go ... Sell ... Give; Come ... Follow Me*

Interpretations:


To Unbeliever	Relationship	
	<i>“Follow Me” = Eternal Life by Faith-Works</i>	
To Believer	Discipleship	
	<i>“Follow Me” = Maturity by Works</i>	
To Unbeliever	Relationship	Discipleship
	<i>“Go, Sell, Give” = Eternal Life by Faith</i>	<i>“Come, Follow Me” = Maturity by Works</i>

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Slide #43

We have addressed the historical context, the critical issues within the rich young ruler text, and factors outside that text. Then how does Peter's final question and Jesus' response fit as intended by the original author?

Interpretative Puzzle



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Slide #44

So, how do the three major views explain Peter's question, "What then will there be for us?" Remembering the Historical Context during the last few months of Christ's earthly ministry with His teachings on discipleship, enriched living, and greatness in the kingdom, consider these observations:

First, if the rich ruler asked a *salvation question*, why would Jesus answer include works to receive the gift of salvation? This is the central error in Reformed theology and should be eliminated as a valid view.

Second, if the rich ruler, an outsider of the Twelve, asked a *discipleship question*, why didn't Peter, one who had "Followed Christ" for more than two years, already know the answer to "What then will there be for us?" Certainly Peter would already understand rewards to a greater extent than the rich ruler. As a result, this view is also disqualified.

Third, if the rich ruler asked a *misinformed-salvation question*, could Jesus use this as a teachable moment, an opportunity to not only address the free gift through faith but also to redirect the ruler to pursue an enriched life through commitment in discipleship? This view is a better match to the context.

But notice that you still must explain the reason for Peter's question. Shouldn't Peter already understand rewards? In fact, Jesus here for the first time promises His disciples that they will sit on the 12 thrones in the kingdom. The promise is again stated in Luke 22 in the Upper Room. Remember that Jesus taught both the Parable of the Pounds (Lk 19:11-27) and the Parable of the Talents (Matt 25:14-30) after the rich ruler encounter, in the last month of Christ's earthly ministry. These are the texts we turn to in order to understand rewards and reigning with Christ as a result of faithful obedience.

Peter's Question on Target

CHILDREN (Kingdom) Lk. 18:15-17	RICH RULER (What Do To?) Lk. 18:18-23	DISCIPLES (Who Enters?) Lk. 18:24-25	PETER (What for Us?) Lk. 18:26-30
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kingdom belongs to such as these • Kingdom to be received like a Child • Kingdom to be entered into 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Inherit Eternal Life</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Questions/Answers</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good (God's Character) • Law (God's Requirements) <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Condition/Response</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Lack One Thing... [Go], sell, give; come, follow Me Went away grieving</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Statement</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Hard for wealthy to enter the kingdom</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Question/Answer</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Who can be saved? Possible only with God</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Question/Answer</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Left everything and followed You</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Will Receive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much present age & • Age to come, eternal life
V A R I A N T		<p style="text-align: center;">Obtain Eternal Life (Mt. 19:16)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments. (Mt. 19:17)</p>	V A R I A N T
		<div style="border: 2px solid white; border-radius: 50%; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> <p style="margin: 0;">Matt 19:28 Lk 22:30 "will sit on 12 thrones"</p> </div>	<div style="border: 2px solid green; border-radius: 50%; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> <p style="margin: 0;">What then will there be for us? (Mt. 19:27)</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. (Mt. 19:29)</p> </div>

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Not only did the rich ruler not envision rewards in his question, but more importantly that the disciples themselves did not think of rewards as we now more clearly understand them.

Slide #45

Notice that Matthew substituted “inherit eternal life” with “obtain eternal life” in the initial inquiry by the rich ruler. This variation more accurately reflects the question of one sitting under rabbinical teachers of that day. A misinformed-salvation question would certainly be “Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?” I submit that was the intent of the original question; a misinformed unbeliever’s question that concerned entering the kingdom and eternal life.

Notice also that Matthew does use the phrase, “inherit eternal life,” but it is found *only* at the conclusion of the interaction with Peter regarding the benefits of following Christ. Jesus says that Peter “will inherit eternal life.” On the other hand, both Luke and Mark use “inherit eternal life” in the rich ruler’s original question but in response to Peter, “he will receive...in the age to come, eternal life” and not “he will inherit eternal life.” I submit the variations indicate we should understand that Matthew correctly used “inherit eternal life” exclusively with rewards as it is used everywhere else in the New Testament, with the exception of Luke 10 and 18 and Mark 10.

In the Matthew’s text “obtaining eternal life,” which pertains only to salvation, is appropriately contrasted to “inheriting eternal life,” which concerns rewards in the kingdom. *Conclusion:* Entering eternal life is a gift; inheriting eternal life is an earned reward.

Slide #46

What distinguishes those who espouse that “entering the kingdom” is based on works from those who believe that “entering the kingdom” is solely based on faith? How texts are interpreted is the obvious answer, but don’t forget that any interpretation is influenced by “the way we choose to look at things.”

Historical entering-the-kingdom-by-works authors (e.g., Arlen Chitwood) saw two different *aspects* of entering the future, physical kingdom. While all believers would enter the eternal kingdom, only faithful, obedient followers of Christ would enter the millennial kingdom. Unfaithful ones would spend the millennium in a “protestant purgatory,” awaiting the eternal state to begin.



Recent entering-the-kingdom-by-works books (e.g., *Final Destiny*) tend to see entering the kingdom somewhat in a similar manner as

Jesus’ Answer on Target

CHILDREN (Kingdom) Lk. 18:15-17	RICH RULER (What Do To?) Lk. 18:18-23	DISCIPLES (Who Enters?) Lk. 18:24-25	PETER (What for Us?) Lk. 18:26-30
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kingdom belongs to such as these • Kingdom to be received like a Child • Kingdom to be entered into 	<p>Inherit Eternal Life</p> <p>Questions/Answers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good (God’s Character) • Law (God’s Requirements) <p>Condition/Response</p> <p>Lack One Thing... [Go], sell, give; come, follow Me</p> <p>Went away grieving</p>	<p>Statement</p> <p>Hard for wealthy to enter the kingdom</p> <p>Question/Answer</p> <p>Who can be saved?</p> <p>Possible only with God</p>	<p>Question/Answer</p> <p>Left everything and followed You</p> <p>Will Receive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much present age & • Age to come, eternal life
V A R I A N T		<p>Obtain Eternal Life (Mt. 19:16)</p> <p>If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments. (Mt. 19:17)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">V A R I A N T</p> <p>What then will there be for us? (Mt. 19:27)</p> <p>Will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. (Mt. 19:29)</p>

45

Apples and Oranges


≠


46

earlier writers, but an *additional aspect* emerges. “Entering into life,” or experiencing abundant life through discipleship, is equated with “entering the kingdom.” The logical end result is that in order to actually “enter the future, physical kingdom” to rule you must “enter the kingdom” *now* by means of faithful discipleship. See a problem?

“Entering into life” concerns the Christian life, while “entering the kingdom” is a future, physical event that cannot be presently experienced. This viewpoint is being imposed on the interpretations of other passages addressing kingdom entrance, especially influencing the teaching on the rich young ruler. As we have previously indicated, this view requires the following to be true or it collapses:

1. The rich young ruler must be a believer. *Yet*, the context of Luke’s Gospel in fact indicates that both the rich ruler and the lawyer were unbelievers.
2. “Entering the kingdom” can’t be synonymous with “entering eternal life.” *However*, in John 3:3, 5, and 16 they are equated.
3. “Entering the kingdom” in Matthew 5:20 must be based on works righteousness, a present reality. *Nevertheless*, positional or imputed righteousness obviously is the critical requirement for entering the kingdom and fits within the context of Matthew 5-7.
4. “Entering the kingdom” in Matthew 18:3-4 must be based on good works in Christian service. *However*, the works of service in that text concerns greatness *in* the kingdom, not greatness *to enter into* the kingdom.

I believe the current entering-the-kingdom-by-works books do not make their case and they are comparing apples with oranges. Certainly “entering into life” is potentially a biblical reality that any believer can presently experience, but “entering the kingdom” can only be realized when the physical kingdom is established in the future.

Slide #47

Remember the axiom: “The way we choose to look at things can be as significant as the thing we are trying to see.” A proper perspective of the rich young ruler text reveals that an unbeliever inquired about entering the expected kingdom and possessing eternal life. In response Jesus clarifies the difference between possessing life and experiencing life, teaching the following principles:

Entering the Kingdom
is synonymous with
Entering Eternal Life

Entering into Life
(through discipleship)
differs from

Entering the Kingdom
(future, physical kingdom)

Being in the Kingdom
(by childlike trust)
differs from

Being Great in the Kingdom
(through humble service)

Proper Perspective

Entering the Kingdom
is synonymous to
Entering Eternal life

Entering into Life
differs from
Entering the Kingdom

Being in the Kingdom
differs from
Being Great in the Kingdom

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