

an insincere and flippant manner. Jesus does not reject the title, but rebukes the spirit in which it was used. A right understanding of his answer affirms rather than detracts from his divinity. "It is a very pointed rebuke of the very view of Christ which those who deny his divinity entertain."—*Alford*. **What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?** The similarity between this question and that asked by a certain lawyer, and a few other coincidences (Luke 10, 25), led Strauss to suggest that both accounts originated in the same incident. Stier claims that all plausibility of such an inference is removed by the fullness with which Luke relates both events. Evidently this inquirer had some ceremonial transaction in mind when he asked the question. His Jewish spirit was indicated also in the word "inherit."

**18. None is good save one, God.** The young ruler asked, "What good thing . . .?" (Matt. 19, 16.) Jesus leads him away from dependence upon a mere "good thing" to the Supreme Good in personality. The look and manner of Jesus gave great weight to these few words. Not in doing things, but in being Godlike (godliness), is the true fitness for eternal life (1 Tim. 4, 8). An earnest effort to be Godlike soon leads to a joyful appreciation of the God-man (Eph. 2, 18).

**19. Thou knowest the commandments.** It is implied that inquiries about new duties are not consistent when well-known duties are not faithfully performed. In Matthew's account an additional sentence is given, "If thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments." The ruler answers, "Which?" He expected Jesus to emphasize some particular one as "the great commandment" (Matt. 22, 36). Jesus quotes the laws of the second table. "With the second table of the decalogue begins our duty to our neighbor. The laws of probity follow the laws of piety, that the river of justice may be derived from the fountain of love to God."—*Farrar: The Voice from Sinai*.

**20. All these things have I observed from my youth.** The answer suggests that he had mistaken a nominal approval for thorough obedience. Many imagine that they are complying with principles because they admire them.

**21. Jesus looking upon him loved him.** The Master loved everyone, but for this young man with many excellencies and great opportunities he had an especial interest. He saw that he was in great peril from weaknesses that he did not realize. Jesus regarded him with deep and yearning affection, and longed to bring him up to an estate of strong and holy manhood. **Go sell [all] . . . and come, follow me.** This was the wise and loving prescription for a radical cure. Had this young ruler been resolute enough to obey the Master's order he might have ranked with Peter, John, and Paul as a chief apostle.

**22. He went away sorrowful.** Too weak

to enter the kingdom of truth and blessedness, in which he might have enjoyed high honor and great usefulness. He turned his back upon a spiritual palace in order to return to his hut filled with the things which amuse a sordid little mind.

**23. Jesus looked round about.** Evidently with grief and pain. To his discerning eye the bondage of the young ruler to wealth was a soul-tragedy greater than an assassination or a suicide. **The kingdom of God.** This means much more than escaping future punishment and admission into heaven. It means a life beginning now in the realm of divine truth and holiness. To give up spiritual living for temporal riches is like giving up bushels of wheat for handfuls of chaff.

**25. Easier for a camel.** An oriental proverb, literally meaning an utter impossibility, but figuratively meaning an extreme difficulty.

**27. All things are possible with God.** Divine grace can enable the rich man to overcome his pride and become an example of all Christ in virtues. Christianity will lead to the sanctification of wealth as well as the extirpation of poverty and cruelty.

### The Lesson Council.

**Question 1.** Did Jesus mean to deny his own absolute goodness in the answer in verse 18? Why did he give this answer?

Possibly he accepted the appellation "good," and based upon it a claim to divinity. But probably he did not direct attention to himself at all. The merely polite use of "good" in "good Teacher" gives occasion for correcting imperfect notions of moral goodness: "Why call me good in this shallow way, and fancy that your own good deeds will earn heaven? Only God can claim goodness for himself; your self-assertion is out of place; God requires self-surrender." The important variation in Matthew not only agrees with, but also requires, some such interpretation.

**Question 2.** Did Jesus mean that a man may obtain eternal life by obeying the Ten Commandments? Is not this salvation by works alone?

Eternal life is the gift of God. Obeying the commandments is the condition with which man must comply before God can give him this gift. Christianity is not a substitute for a right life; it is God coming into a new relation to men in order to give them power to live a right life. A righteous life is not necessary to salvation; a righteous life is salvation. Salvation is not remission of penalty; it is remission of sin. The great promise of the Gospel is power to enable men to keep the commandments; that is, to live in harmony with God's will.