***Worthy of a Throne

RV237-02***

We are studying Revelation 20:4-6. Our subject is "The First Resurrection." This is segment number two.

**The Old Sin Nature**

The old sin nature in each of us enslaves us to doing evil and to serving Satan. In Romans 7:15, the apostle Paul puts it this way: "For that which I am doing, I do not understand. For I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the law, confessing that it is good. So, now no longer am I the one doing it, but the sin nature which indwells me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me; that is, in my flesh. For the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good I wish to do, I do not. But I practice the very evil that I do not wish. But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but the sin nature which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good."

Here is a pathetic analysis and cry on the part of the apostle Paul who says, "Why do I do the things I hate? The very things I want to do, that God and His word inspire me to do, I don't do that. I go negative, and I do the things that I loathe. I stand back, and I'm in disgust with them."

**Freedom**

It is the will of God, we have been stressing to you, for people to be free so as to live their lives as they choose to live. In Galatians 5:1, the apostle Paul says, "It was for freedom that Christ set us free. Therefore, keep standing firm, and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery." Every individual Christian is faced with the problem of keeping his freedom that Christ has given him, and not getting entangled in legalisms, and ritualism, and religious systems that are going to actually restrict his spiritual development.

Every American today, on the broader scale, is faced with the problem of the encroachments upon individual freedom of our citizens by a government which increasingly has lost its way beyond the restraints of our Constitution. It is the will of God that individual people be free. You are to have freedom to live your life as one who owns himself. And never forget that nobody owns you. You own yourself. And you got that privilege, and that position, from God Himself. You didn't get that from government. You didn't get that from some human agency.

However, having said that, the Word of God also tells us, "Don't use your freedom to do what is wrong." Galatians 5:13 says, "For you were called to freedom, brethren. Only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love, serve one another."

**Confession of Sin**

Some people are very uncomfortable when they hear us here at Berean Church stressing the principle of confessing your known sins, and receiving forgiveness for what you have done – completely and totally out of the mind of God once and for all. They say, "Oh, that will make people sin." But that is not the principle of the Word of God. The principle of the Word of God is that you keep your freedom by confessing your own sins. And if you abuse your freedom, and say, "Oh, I can do this, and then I'll confess it," you haven't confessed if you haven't ceased and desisted. That's a fraud, and God will bring you down. You don't get away with anything in the family of God. But freedom is the most precious thing we have.

We have become so used to it that we don't get hopping mad when somebody encroaches on our freedom. We don't even bother to rise up in indignation when the government does it, or some agency that has no business encroaching upon our personal freedom. But we don't use it to do what is evil. 1 Peter 2:16 says, "Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God." We are slaves, but we are slaves to God. We are slaves to righteousness. Personal freedom from the sin nature is secured only through the knowledge and the utilization of Bible doctrine truth.

**Truth**

Jesus pointed this out in John 8:32, when He said, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

We recently received a letter from a taper that summarizes this coming out of darkness, and catching the bulk of our country, and, lo and behold, people entering the vast illumination of spiritual enlightenment: "Dear Dr. Danish, I have been listening to your tapes since November of 1993. I come from basically a Pentecostal background, though I do not consider myself any affiliation to any religion. I believe the Scriptures are God's doctrine. Through the Holy Spirit, and now sound doctrine, my walk with God has purpose and direction, not just a lot of emotionalism that rides like a roller coaster. If I hadn't met Bob Evans (one of our members, and serious students, and witnesses of the Word of God), who has been guiding me, I would not have been introduced to your tape ministry. It has changed my entire life. Thank you for telling me the truth – sound doctrine. In Christ's name. Amen." Then he signs his name.

We get letters like that all the time. We can't get our local people to attend church, but we have people far afield from us, even in foreign countries, that if they could astro-project themselves, they'd be sitting in this room, and bulging the walls out, because they know what it is to be blind spiritually. They know what it is to have their souls fed upon the Word of God. They know you can't ride upon yesterday's doctrine.

So, freedom is dependent upon our knowledge of the Word of Truth. Americans today are ignorant of doctrine. They're sitting ducks to be enslaved by anybody who comes along. No matter how vile person may be, they will enslave you. People who do not know doctrine become enslaved to sins; human good; government; religion; immoral acts; or, creditors. Are any of you enslaved to your creditors?

**Enslavement**

I read that Jimmy Jones (the owner of the Dallas Cowboys) said that when he wakes up in the morning, the first thing he thinks about is how to make money: "How can I make some money today?" He opens his eyes, and looks up at the ceiling, and that's what he thinks. His eyes don't apparently go beyond that ceiling to the God to whom he will someday account. Jimmy Johnson is the Cowboys coach. Jones is the one who makes the money. Johnson is the one who enjoys it. You can have money, and you can be enslaved to fame; enslaved to demons; enslaved to human viewpoint thinking; enslaved to alcohol; enslaved to drugs; enslaved to pleasure; or, enslaved to self-love. Go ahead and be ignore of doctrine. I guarantee you that you'll be a slave to something in this category.

It is the will of God for a person to live totally free from the enslavement of the old sin nature. As staggering a thought as that is, that is the purpose of God for each of you. In Romans 6:12-13, the apostle Paul said, "Therefore, do not let the sin nature reign in your mortal body, that you should obey its lusts. And do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instrumental of righteousness, but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God."

Why would a Christian want to present the parts of his body, including his brain, to the unrighteous acts of the lust patterns of the sin nature, when he is brought to life spiritually, and now has the capacity to put every single piece of his body into the investment of eternity through the service of God. Why would a person do that? Well, the apostle Paul earlier said, "I don't know. I don't want to do those things, but that's what I do. I helplessly struggle against that sin nature. And it sneaks up on me and whips me." A little later on in that passage, Paul says, "The solution is God the Holy Spirit indwelling me; temporal fellowship; and, doctrine in the human spirit. That's the combination. If you don't have that, you are the slave. It is God's grace that has provided the means to be free from the domination of the sin nature.

That is the same thing that kept Christ on track. It was the Word of God, and the leading of the Holy Spirit. For us it is the same thing. It is the Holy Spirit; utilizing the Word of doctrine that we have learned and stored in human spirit; and, then maintaining our position in temporal fellowship by confession of known sins. The domination of the old sin nature is broken when you have the combination of doctrine and temporal fellowship. Romans 6:14 says, "For the sin nature shall not be master over you, for your not under law, but under grace." Grace has given us doctrine, and grace has given us the power of the Holy Spirit to lead us.

**The Grace System of Perception**

We call it here "the grace system of perception;" that is, developing your knowledge of God's viewpoint through the functioning of the local church, or through the functioning of Berean tapes and publications, which takes up the slack for multiplied hundreds of people at a distance from us. You know the grace system of perception. You know the details. It starts right here in the local church. And if you are not here, that system doesn't work. And if you sit in a church service where you are fed corncobs and emptiness to your soul, you are going to pay for it. You will pay for it in this life, and you will regret it in all eternity. Why would you do that to yourself, when you could feed upon the richness of the Word of God?

For this reason, Ephesians 5:15-17 cautions the believer to watch his step to preserve his freedom through the Word of God: "Therefore, be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise; making the most of your time because the days are evil. So, then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." I guarantee you, if you're not sitting in this congregation when these doors are open for instruction in the Word of God, you don't know what the will of God is for your life. And you will wander off into a desert of confusion, and you will look back upon it someday, and wish that you had not made such a foolish move. Its trouble is getting back on track. The sin nature is so proud to come and say, "I played the fool, and I'm coming back into the system where the Word of God is carrying my soul."

**Governments**

The trend worldwide today is for people to lose their God-given freedom to false religion and to tyrannical, dominating governments. That is exactly the thing that Nimrod began in the Babylonian system of religion that said, "Man is god," and the concept that said that the government is the provider of the blessings of people. Our founding fathers had a very clear understanding that the government was the enemy of the people.

I am appalled at how I'm listening to people who are Christians who are saying, "This is a terrible attitude to view the government as some kind of a dominating potential threat." It is. All of the founding fathers knew that the government is always the enemy of the people, because government means power. Government means telling you what you can do and what you can't do. Government is encroachment upon your freedom. If you do not chain it down, there are no limits to what that government will do.

In the state of California (the state of flowers, sunshine, fruits, and nuts), we now have another example living up to its character. The United States of America has filed suit in a California federal district court against a tractor and a disk. That's an appliance that is used to break up chunks of soil. Uncle Sam has ordered the possessed implements to surrender on charges that they ground up animals that may appear to be on the government's endangered species list. The article goes on to tell about Twan Ming Lin, an immigrant from Taiwan who was the owner of this machinery, and who bought 720 acres of desert land near Bakersfield, California, with the plans to grow herbs and vegetables. He checked in with the local officials. They said that everything was OK, and that that land was zoned for agriculture: "Grow what you want. Create jobs. Welcome to America." And he went ahead.

Little did he know that the federal agents also had their eyes on that piece of land. And when they found he was the owner, they now had their eyes on him. His property was listed as a natural habitat for the Tipton Kangaroo Rat. This was unknown to him or anyone else, because the feds don't let you know this until you try to do some criminal act like plowing up the field. Who would not want to preserve the Tipton Kangaroo Rat? And because he plowed up his field on February 20th of this year, a squadron of more than two dozen state and federal agents with helicopters descended on the farm. They raced through the farm, taking pictures, trying to find animal parts that he had ground up with his disk. Then they hauled away his tractor and disk.

Five weeks later, the government told the court that he did knowingly take aid and abet the taking of endangered species life to wit the Tipton Kangaroo Rat. It's hard to know who the real rats are in this picture. The interesting thing is that the feds aren't sure that this was a Tipton Kangaroo Rat habitat. That is because there's another rat called Herman's Kangaroo Rat, and his rear feet are one-100th of an inch longer than the other rat. And they haven't been able to determine which of the two rats were really in this habitat.

Folks, you're paying for this. This is government taking care of you. As a matter of fact, the local farmers have reported that these vermin prefer breeding in plowed-up fields. If they see a plowed-up field, they have a field day multiplying. That's what plowed-up fields to them means. Therefore, the best thing they could do is to plow the field.

Well, they threatened Mr. Lin with a fine of $300,000, which brought on a mild stroke to him. And this sort of behavior is not unusual. The same group of federal agents have brought a suit against the Valley Communications in Kern County in California, because they have threatened the Tipton Kangaroo Rats and the blunt-nosed Leopold Lizards, because they have been plowing an irrigation field, which has been the purifying system for the city. They may have to shut down part of their sewer system if the Clinton administration wins the suit, because water from that land comes from the city waste treatment department, and that might affect the Tipton Kangaroo Rats and the blunt-nosed Leopold Lizards.

Furthermore, the Environmental Department of our government of freedom across the fruited plain has told the county they must erect a $150,000 mesh fence outside of a landfill because they are concerned that the Kangaroo Rats might tumbled into the landfill and hurt themselves. There is it. This is all under the cover of the Endangered Species Act.

A lawyer familiar with the case says, "It's just incredible. You see this sort of thing, and you think, 'This can't be America. It has to be some other country.'"

Ever since we started thumbing our nose at God by turning our back upon the Word of God, and ever since preachers have stopped propagating doctrine from the pulpit and have gone to socializing, and to making people feel good about themselves, and doing all the other things except putting them downwind from them themselves to see what God thinks of them, this nation has lost its spiritual orientation, and its strength, and the backbone that has made it the greatest culture and the greatest nation in the history of the world.

All freedom comes from doctrine. The climax of this encroachment against freedom, of course, will be reached under the world government of the antichrist in the tribulation. At that time, all freedom will be gone.

One of our young men was telling me that computers are now capable of accessing all the information of many personal decisions and transactions that you make that end up going through computers. Freedom of privacy can be invaded at will. You would be surprised, if we had someone with the equipment and the talent to stand here, we could pick anybody out in this auditorium, and in a few minutes time, they could tell you what you've done in the last three months or six months; your transactions; and, what you've been involved in. They could tell you things you wouldn't believe that anybody would know.

People who know not God or His Word serve Satan as they impose their controls on the personal freedoms of the citizens. That's what's so sad. These people who do not know God, and these people who are going to spend eternity in the lake of fire, are making decisions for us that are daily encroaching upon our freedoms. And who is sounding a voice of alarm to stop them? It is only that handful of preachers who know their business, and who know their calling, and where people have a chance to come in and learn the doctrines of the Word of God.

The drama of the end is daily unfolding before our very eyes and ears. The death of civilization is at hand. While the death of civilization is at hand, what are Christians doing? They're snarling and fighting each other. A church in the Metroplex area was visited some time ago by a number of us from Berean Academy, because this church had a school that ran all the way up through high school. And they presented the Melaleuca Funding program to the parents. 100 parents signed up that night. That school immediately began with people using the superb Melaleuca products, and they began receiving a considerable income. And the school was strengthened.

Well, the congregation members started snarling, and snickering, and bickering, and fighting each other. Finally, they chewed each other up; the work collapsed; the school could not be financed anymore; the school collapsed; and, competent teachers of many years of experience are out there completely lost and abandoned to their children. This is a madness because people do not know how to preserve their freedom through restraining the antagonisms of their sin nature. While the world is going to hell, Christians are snarling at each other, and fighting the wrong enemy.

Galatians 5:13-15 puts it this way: "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: in the statement, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' But if you bite and devour one another, Christians, take care, lest you be consumed by one another." How many great works of God have been weakened, and gone down the drain because Christians had their eyes on themselves? That was their preoccupation, and they would not be restrained from snarling and biting and contending until they had taken themselves out of the blessings of God.

**A Royal Throne**

We have found that Revelation 20:4 promises certain believers a royal throne and a realm of jurisdiction in the earthly millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ, and that is what is occupying our attention. Almost anybody acquainted with the Bible knows that there is a promise in the Word of God that when Christ sets up His earthly kingdom, some believers will reign with him. However, many Christians do not understand that that doesn't mean all of you. Not all Christians are going to have a throne and an area of jurisdiction to reign with Christ.

**Confession of Sin**

We pointed out to you last week, just as a review summary, that you have to prove yourself worthy to have a throne in an area of jurisdiction. This includes those of you who are young people, and those of you who are adults. I don't care what your age is. You're stacking up points by which it is going to be determined what you're going to have out in eternity from God at the Judgment Seat of Christ. This is earned, in part, by living in temporal fellowship. 1 John 1:9 (that famous passage) says, "But if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse this from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and His Word is not in us."

The principle is that if you sin, confess it to God the Father; forget it; and, go on. For heaven's sakes, don't come around confessing it to the rest of us, because we're not interested in your dirty laundry, and the Word of God does not require you to go around asking other people for forgiveness. It says for you to confess your sins to God the Father. And that's where your forgiveness comes from.

**Christian Service**

You earn a throne by your Christian service. 1 Corinthians 15:58 says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord."

**Learning Doctrine**

You earn a throne by learning doctrine. In Titus 1:9, we read, "Holding fast the faithful Word, which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict." How nice it is when somebody comes up with some character of Christianity, or a distortion of biblical truths, that you can say, "Hey, that's wrong. That's not what the Word of God teaches." They may say, "Where do you get that idea?" You can say, "Well: here." And you know enough doctrinal principles that you can explain it. When you learn doctrine, you preserve freedom, and you show that you are a worthy person to have a throne.

**Personal Integrity**

It is also earned by your personal integrity. Ephesians 5:3-4: "But do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as is proper among saints. And there must be no filthiness or silly talk or course jesting which you're not fitting, but rather giving of thanks."

We're going to read some literature before we're through, and we're going to read some lists of what Christians can be guilty of doing such that you're going to say, "I never thought that applied to Christians. I thought that was unbelievers." There are terrible things that Christians can do that God says, "If you live like this and do these things, you don't get a throne. You're not going to be a ruler. You're going to be a latrine cleaner in eternity, but you're not going to be an authority reigning." This is serious business we're talking about. Obviously, a lot of you needed to hear this, which is why we have a better attendance today. God has moved you to alert you that there's something that you never stopped to think about, and never put together – personal integrity. It's a terrible thing when personal integrity is not to be found in Christians.

**Faithful Financial Stewardship**

You earn it by your faithful financial stewardship. 2 Corinthians 9:6-7: "Now this I say: he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly. He who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully. Let each one do justice he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." That is how we approach that offering box, and that's how we give: "not under compulsion, but God loves a cheerful giver." When we have a deficit of $4,000 like we do now, we tell you about it, and we alert you to it, and we say, "This is what the need is. What can you do about it?" And out of your own choice and personal decision, you make that giving act (that sacrifice of substance at that offering box) in your personal privacy of your priesthood.

Also, whenever you walk up to an office box, you should remember, as you put that offering in, in your mind should be said, "This is what I am giving to God, and boy, I kept ... ," and put that figure up there in your mind. The Jew had to do that. If the Jew was going to put $10 in there, he better not have in his mind more than $90 that he kept. That was their percentage rate, which we do Christians don't have (a tithe rate). The Christians have perfect freedom. But God has given you everything, and God is the one who leads you in how much you're going to give, and maybe He'll cause you to give a whole lot more than 10%. It's pretty cheap not to give at least 10%. You should never give without, in your mind, at the same time, saying, "This is how much I kept from what God has provided me this week. And don't you forget that He provided for you.

The first time that He undermines some chemical processes in your body, so that you can't function and you can't work, you'll know how dependent you are upon the hand of God to enable you to even earn your income. It is serious business, if you want to earn a throne, to start acting faithfully with your financial stewardship. And the older you are, the more important this is.

**Obedience**

There is one other thing. You get that throne by obeying God's will and His mission for your life. Ephesians 2:10 puts it this way: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which (specific good works) God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

The Lord Jesus Christ on many occasions taught about Christian accountability before God. When He did that, He was laying the groundwork for the great divine judgment that all Christians of this church age are going to face in heaven after the rapture of the church. That judgment that Jesus was preparing us for is mentioned in 2 Corinthians 5:10, where the apostle says, "We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body according to what he has done, whether good or bad." Some of you are going to be recompensed with a throne. You're going to be recompensed with an area of jurisdiction on this surface of this earth in the Millennial Kingdom of a Christ. Some of you will get zilch. It's up to you.

**The Judgment Seat of Christ**

1 Corinthians 3:12-13 is the more detailed reference to this Judgment Seat of Christ: "For if any man builds upon the foundation (that is, of his salvation) with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and straw, each man's work will become evident, for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work." Here is a poetic analogy. God's judgment evaluation is like fire applied to these material things: "If any man's work (his Christian service; his life's work; and, what he's done with his life) which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward." And some will include the reward of a throne: "If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire."

So, we're going to have poverty-poor Christians in heaven; and, we're going to have those who are greatly enriched. It all depends upon what you do with your life as a believer. Jesus spoke of this accountability as a matter of losing your life; that is, the potential of your life for rewards.

Turn over to Mark 8:37 to illustrate this: "So, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Here's a problem. Look up at verse 35: "For whoever wishes to save his life." The word "life" is the same Greek word that they translated as "soul" in verse 37. Verse 37 throws you off when they say, "What will you give for your soul?" It puts it into a spiritual realm like it's dealing with salvation. It's not dealing with salvation. Verse 35: For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it. But whoever loses his life for My sake (and the gospel) shall save it. It is very clear that verse 35 is talking about investing your life (your days and your time on this earth) in God's service, and the consequences to you of what you do with that.

Verse 37 then follows and says, "What shall a man gives in exchange for his life?" What is worth it to you now to use your life in, over against having a throne and a jurisdiction – rewards beyond our fondest imagination, that will come on the basis of our divine good production and service? What could be worth your losing your life? The idea is wasting your life: "What shall a man give in exchange for his life?"

Mark 8:38 speaks of the consequences to a Christian of being ashamed of being a servant of Jesus Christ: "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

This is a problem we have of being ashamed of Jesus Christ. You young people go through a system surrounded by educated barbarians and pagans (your student body). And you are intimidated, and you are ashamed of being a goody-two-shoes, and being a clean cut person. You don't want to be associated with being a Christian such that Christ is your Lord as well as your Savior.

It is like the man that I heard of who worked up north in the lumberjack territory, who was a Christian. And he went up there for the extra good money, and work for the summer. When he came back to his church, they said, "How did you make out there with those terrible lumberjacks, and their lifestyle, and the way they talk and live?" He said, "Yeah, it was terrible, but they never found out I was a Christian at all, so I didn't have any trouble." Are you ashamed to let people know who you are? Well, where that's going to cost you. You avoid identification as a Christian.

This passage does not say that Christ is going to be ashamed of you. And to lose your life here does not refer to your salvation. Hebrews 10:17 says, that when you're saved, God forgets your sins forever. John 10:28-29 says that once you're in the hand of God, you cannot be taken back out again as a believer. You're secure forever. So, this is not a contradiction. This is talking about a different use of life. This is not eternal life. This is your life here on earth. It deals with the loss of honor and the approval of Jesus Christ when He comes to reign on earth. Jesus is going to be ashamed of His child's performance. If He's ashamed of you, I guarantee you that He's not going to consider you worthy of having a throne of authority.

The believer himself, at that judgment, is also going to be ashamed as he looks upon his past life. 1 John 2:28: "And now little children, abide in Him." That means stay in temple fellowship. "Abide in Him" means stay in terms of fellowship. Walk according to the Word of God, and confess when you don't, so that when He appears, we may have confidence, and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. Why would anybody be ashamed at the coming of Jesus Christ? Because we look back on our past life, and we realize what we have done with it. Things in our lives now that do not shame us, which should save us, will be keenly felt in the glorified body when it’s minus that old sin nature.

You hear the exhorting you; warning you; and, cautioning you about things that you ought to be ashamed of. But instead you just get mad at me. Well, the time will be when you too will be ashamed of those things. Philippians 3:20-21: "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has, even to subject all things to Himself." We're going to have a glorified body. The sin nature will be ripped out of it. And then we will think like God. And boy, we will look back upon what we did with our life, with the days He allotted of us on this earth, and our heads will go down. We will have God's holy viewpoint toward our own conduct finally.

There won't be any more justification for what we've done. There won't be any more rationalization. There won't be any more excuses for why you stayed home instead of coming to church: "I didn't feel well." I never feel well. I feel as bad as I look. I'm always struggling to manage to survive. You have a lot easier time than I do. Now that I've hit 50, it's not easy to carry on. And most of you are a lot younger than that. So, don't give me that rationalization and justification for a wasted life. When you're not here, you're wasting your life. That's your orientation. Then there will be only regret and embarrassment because we did not listen to some faithful pastor-teacher who is laying it on the line so that doctrine could have become your life and your guide.

**Zacchaeus**

There's an all-time great illustration of an eternal investment in the case of Zacchaeus. Please turn to Luke 19:1-10. This is the conversion of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was a well-known publican who had been saved through faith in Jesus as the Messiah. Look 19:1: "He (Jesus) entered, and was passing through Jericho, and behold, there was a man called by the name of Zacchaeus, and he was a chief tax gatherer. He was rich, and he was trying to see who Jesus was. He was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature." Zacchaeus was short. The crowd around him was tall, and he was jumping up and down, trying to look over the heads of people, and trying to get a get a look at Jesus. So, he thinks of a clever idea.

Verse 4 says, "He ran up ahead, and he climbed up into a sycamore tree (that is, a fig mulberry tree) in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way." So, Zacchaeus gets up into a tree above the roadway that Jesus is coming down, in order to get a full good picture of Him. "And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to Him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for today, I must stay at your house.' And he hurried and came down, and received Him gladly. When they saw it, they all began to grumble (that is, the religious leaders), saying, 'He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.' And Zacchaeus stopped and said to the Lord, 'Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.'"

Zacchaeus was a tax collector for the Roman government, and he announced his intention to use his great wealth in charity and restitution: "If I've taken more taxes than I should have, I'm going to make it right. I'll give that person four times back. That's according to the principle of the Old Testament that when you defrauded somebody, you gave them four or five times back what you took from it, as well as what you took.

This is unlike the rich young ruler in Luke 18:22-23, when Jesus says, "Fine, you're rich, sell everything you have; give it to the poor; and, I want you to come and follow Me. We're going to work together. And you're going to spend your life in My service, and then I'll provide you with your logistical grace needs." That young man was rich. He shook his head and said, "No, I can't do that."

Here, Zacchaeus, even uninvited, said, "Lord, I've trusted you. You're the Messiah. You're the Savior." He's born-again. The result is that he makes this promise. This born again Zacchaeus was indeed a true son of Abraham.

Verse 9: "And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house because he too is the son of Abraham."

Not everyone among the Jews was a true son of Abraham. In Galatians 3:7, the apostle Paul clarifies for us who is a real son of Abraham: "Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are the sons of Abraham." It is those who have faith in Christ as Savior – they are the spiritual children of Abraham. They are the true Jews.

So, Jesus says, "Here is a true Jew, a real son of Abraham. And he has come to salvation." Verse 10 says, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to see that which was lost." Jesus wanted to encourage Zacchaeus in his zealous resolve to invest his life in God's service. After all, what with his riches. His riches was his life. You get the picture? The only way to get riches is by investing the days of your life. Now Zacchaeus says, "My wealth represents my life. It took the days of my life to get this, and I'm giving it to the work of God. I'm going to make right anything I did wrong. I'm going to go back, and anybody I owe money to, that I rationalized myself that I don't have to return, that I beat them out of, I'm going to say, 'That's it.' I want to get back into fellowship with God. I'm going to pay that money back. I'm going to make it right." Here's a rich man in Jericho, enjoying the privileges and power of the rich.

Now, Zacchaeus made himself considerably poorer, and lost his position of privilege and influence, maybe as a tax collector, and he might regret what he has promised to do. You might even get sick and really need this money. And suddenly, he has to depend upon God to carry him through. Jesus wanted to make it clear to Zacchaeus that losing his wealth on earth in God's service would gain him much greater rewards in heaven for all eternity. That's the point of the story: "Zacchaeus, you're on the right track. This is your life. Invest it for God. And when you have served God with that wealth that took your life to accumulate, you will take it with you. You will go into heaven, and you'll have so many points on your card of having established you as worthy to administer in the kingdom of God, that you will be given a throne and an area of jurisdiction."

**Accumulating Wealth**

Jesus wanted to make clear that losing wealth in the work of God is the way to keep it forever. It is God's plan for man to exercise authority in creation. Genesis 1:26 tells us that man was to dominate creation. There's no such thing as animal rights. There are only rights of man over animals. Psalm 6:4-8 indicate that God has taken man; made him a little lower than the angels; and, put him in domination over all His creation. Yes, God wants you to accumulate wealth. God wants you to get rich.

Oh, there is such a sigh of relief that I see in your eyes now. There is nothing wrong with accumulating material things. But what do you do with it? Boy, if God blesses you: what resources you will have; what opportunities will present themselves; what doors you can open; and, what an impact you can have. But this dominion was lost by Adam through sin. But it is to be regained by Jesus Christ in the Millennial Kingdom.

Zacchaeus is pointing the way. What you have is the way you've used up your life. You invest your possessions in the things of God. And your possessions include your brainpower; your time; all those skills you have; and, everything that you are. When we announce, "Here's an opportunity of Christian service," you say, "I can do that. I've got freedom to do that. I'm in. Count me." And you are not excusing and waiting on somebody else. You're in there, and you're building up the points to prove yourself worthy to be given great authority in the Millennial Kingdom of Christ.

Yes, you're all members of the royal family of God, but not all the members of the royal family in England have a throne. You are qualified by your relationship to Jesus Christ to inherit a throne. If you prove yourself worthy, that's exactly what will come to be.

That brings us to a parable of great impact that makes this even clearer – the great parable of the master who went away, and gave ten minas (three months' wages) to each of ten different servants, and said, "Go to it, and show me what you can do with it." That parable is an enormous source of spiritual insight about being a ruler in the kingdom of God, and we shall pick that up next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1993

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