

Opting Out

Key Verse: *“Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.”*
—Mark 10:21

Selected Scripture:
Mark 10:17-31

ONE DAY A YOUNG JEWISH

man approached Jesus and asked him what he needed to do to gain eternal life. Jesus responded by stating several of the commandments of the Mosaic Law, asking the man if he was aware of these. The man replied, “Master, all these have I observed from my youth.” (Mark 10:20) Then Jesus spoke the powerful, but no doubt perplexing, words of our Key Verse.

The words of Jesus give indication that a new arrangement was now to be in effect for those who desired to attain eternal life.

No longer would one hope to do this by merely keeping the commandments of Moses, for it had been clearly demonstrated that no one among imperfect men could keep them. Even though this young man claimed to have kept the Law, most certainly he had not done so perfectly and, therefore, could not gain eternal life through it. Jesus stated that eternal life could only be attained by those who gave up their own earthly possessions, showed a character of love by helping their fellowman, daily sacrificed their own wills to do God’s, and followed him as he was doing these very things.

The account says that the young man “was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.” (vs. 22) While it is evident that the young man had a measure of love and respect for Jesus and his teachings, he could not commit himself to the requirements Jesus had put forth. He was rich in this world’s goods, perhaps well known among the people. He was unwilling to give up his earthly treasures. Jesus had said that keeping the requirements for eternal life would be counted as laying up treasure in heaven. On another occasion, he said of such treasure, “neither moth nor rust doth corrupt.”—Matt 6:20

All those during this present Gospel Age who desire to gain eternal life must do so by the same process as Jesus described. They must first present themselves fully to God in consecration, giving him their heart, their all. In doing so, they must also present themselves in sacrifice. (Rom. 12:1) Then they must seek to develop a character of love, one which gives of itself to others. Finally, all such must strive to “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.”—Rev. 14:4

As Jesus surveyed the situation around him, he concluded it would be very difficult, although not impossible, for the rich to enter the kingdom of God. (Mark 10:23) Most would consider it too great a cost to give up their earthly riches for ‘heavenly treasure.’ Apostle Paul said, “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.” (I Cor. 1:26-29) Let us be as Peter, who said to Jesus, “Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.”—Mark 10:28 ■