

SPECIAL STUDIES NUMBER EIGHT

Mark 10:17

Mark 10:17 reads as follows:

"And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

This verse, like so many, occurs within a context that is pregnant with great truth. My purpose, however, is to consider the verse solely as it relates to our subject matter, the Deity of Christ. The story of Mark 10:17-22 occurs also in Matthew 19:16-22 and Luke 18:18-23.

The enemies of Christ, those who deny His Deity, use this story in an effort to prove that Christ is not God. This conclusion is arrived at on the basis of verses 17,18. The rich young ruler addressed Christ as "Good Master". In response, Christ said, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God." Thus, the enemies of Christ argue that Christ denied that He was good, and, therefore, not God. Let us see.

The words cannot be so understood as to mean that Christ is not God, for if that be the point intended, then such would militate against all the positive statement that He is God, as in John 1:1,2, John 20:28, Romans 9:5, Philippians 2:6, Hebrews 1:8, I John 5:20, etc.

Moreover, the words cannot be so understood as to mean that Christ was denying that he was good, for if that be the point intended, then such would militate against Christ's own words of Himself, "...I am good" (Matthew 20:15). He said, as recorded by John, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." Christ was not only inherently "good", but he "went about doing good". (Acts 10:38).

Was Christ good? Or, was he God? When Christ asked the rich young ruler, "why callest thou me good?..." Why didn't he answer the question?

One thing is certain as the story unfolds: The rich young ruler did not have a right estimate of the Person of Christ which one must have or eternally perish for Christ said, "...if ye believe not that I am (the he is in italics), ye shall die in your sins...and...whither I go, ye cannot come" (John 8:24,21).

If the young man did not have a right estimate of the Person of

Christ, then Christ's question and answer was designed to bring that to light, not to deny that He was God manifest in flesh. In other words, if one does not believe that Christ is God, then "why" call Him "good" since "there is none good, but one, that is, God." This was exactly the situation in Mark 10:17-22. This will become increasingly clear as we study.

Let us now quote Mark 10:17-22 in order that the reader can see the entire story as follows:

"And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandment, do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy Father and Mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. 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. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions."

The word "Master", verses 17,20, are from the same word translated "teacher", as in John 3:2. There was certainly nothing wrong with calling Him "Master", and often His disciples addressed Him as "Master", as in Mark 4:38; 10:35. The Lord is indeed the "Teacher", as in Matthew 26:55, Mark 14:49, Luke 11:1, John 3:2, John 7:35, Acts 1:1, etc., and to a certain extent this was acknowledged by His enemies, Mark 12:14. But, the enquirer of Mark 10:17 adds the adjective "good" to the noun "Master". The Lord was not at all satisfied with this form of address, and we believe it was because the young man did not have the proper concept of Christ.

In verse 17, he addressed the Lord as "Good Master". But, when Christ asked, "Why callest thou me good?", and responded, "there is none good but one, that is, God," verse 18, the young man immediately dropped the "good" in his next address, verse 20, "And...said unto him, Master..."

In verses 18,19 the Lord speaks of certain of "the commandments". Upon hearing them, the young man responded as follows:

"...all these have I observed from my youth", verse 20.

Whether the young man was sincere in this confession, or not, I am not the judge of. But, I do know that Christ made absolutely no reply to it, but He does develop the subject matter in such a way as to prove that the young man neither had kept the law, nor had a right estimate of the Person of Christ. Christ was not fooled by this man, any more than He was fooled by anyone else, Judas included. Only Jehovah knows, and searches the heart (I Samuel 16:7; Jeremiah 17:9-10). Yet, Christ possessed that very ability, and demonstrated it repeatedly (Mark 2:6,8; Luke 7:39,40; John 2:24,25; Revelation 2:19,23, etc.). He was not duped by this young man.

He knew his heart, and, therefore, knew exactly what he needed. Thus, when the Man said, "...all these have I observed from my youth," the Lord said:

"...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."

There is a great message in the "one thing". See also "one thing" in Philippians 3:13, "one thing" in Psalms 27:4, "one thing" in Luke 10:42, "one thing" John 9:25, etc. Every lost sinner lacks "one thing" that is more important for him to realize than anything else, and that is that he is a lost sinner, and in need of the only One who can save him from his sin, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

"One" commandment, omitted by Christ, "Thou shalt not covet" (Exodus 20:17), was the very one, above all the others, that proved the young man had not kept the law. Covetousness is a condition of the heart, and Paul said, "...I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Romans 7:7). When Christ informed him of the "one thing" lacking, and explained its obligation, how did the young man react? Notice as follows:

"And he was very sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions."

This reaction proves two important things:

1. He was covetous, and, therefore, had not kept the law as he apparently thought. Christ knew this beforehand, and interrogated him in such a manner as to convict him of his

sin.

2. And, he truly did not have a proper estimate of the Person of Christ, which confirms the manner in which Christ addressed him in verse 18.

The conversation employed by Christ, and the demand which He made, was suited to the particular circumstance, and the state of mind of the young man. Had the young man the proper estimate of the Person of Christ, He no doubt would have done what Christ instructed him to do. He did not do what Christ instructed him to do. Therefore, he showed no respect for the One who so commanded.

If this young man really believed that this One was the Good Teacher, would he not have been willing to obey him? Instead, "he was sad...and went away grieved." He was covetous, and thus a sinner. And, He did not have a right estimate of Christ, and thus did not obey Him. The Lord's words in verse 18 simply compelled the enquirer to consider his own words. "Why callest thou me good?..." does not mean that the epithet was not true of Christ, but that one should not use ascriptions of goodness as mere courtesy, or politeness. The man was instructed to think about God, the absolute goodness, and to measure himself by that standard. This case is parallel to the unwillingness of Jesus to be called Christ indiscriminately, unless the one who gave Him such honor knew full well what he was doing.

"What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Christ had clearly said on another occasion, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life...whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:47,54). The requirement "believeth on me" is precisely what the young man did not believe. When he addressed Christ as "Good Master", he was like those of whom Christ said, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me" (Matthew 15:8).

It is interesting to note that the question asked by the young man, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?", was similarly asked by others in God's word, as with the "certain lawyer" of Luke 10:25. But, of all those who asked such a question, not one, as far as the record goes, ever responded to the truth presented so as to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" except the Philippian Jailer, whose question, "...what must I do to be saved?", was similar in meaning. This is sobering, but clearly reveals the fact that many people enquire, who are not even remotely interested in heeding the message. How tragic are the

words, "...he was sad...and went away grieved..." (Mark 10:22). As far as the record goes, he never responded to the truth so as to be saved.

What estimate of the Person of Christ do you have? Do you simply speak of Him as "a good man", or "a good teacher", or "a martyr who died for what he believed"? Or, do you believe "the record that God gave of his son"? To obligate you to trust in a creature, or to honor and worship one who is less than God, is a gross insult to the integrity and holiness of God! Jesus Christ is the Creator of "all things". He therefore has power over life, and is able to "give...eternal life". It was no creature who said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). It was no creature who said, "...I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35). The One who so spoke was Very God. He was made flesh, and laid down His life in death on behalf of sinners, which death satisfied what the justice of a holy God demanded as payment for sin. Thus, on the basis of justice satisfied, God is able to save all who believe in Jesus Christ. You are a sinner before God. And, "the wages of sin is death". But, Christ, in His death paid the price for you. Trust Him today and be saved for time and eternity.