

THE FALSE PREMISE OF THE INQUIRING RICH MAN

A Paper

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by
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THE FALSE PREMISE OF THE INQUIRING RICH MAN

A false premise is an underlying error which serves as the basis of an argument or discussion. In Matthew chapter 19:16 the Lord is met with a rich man who starts off a discussion with the Lord with a question based upon a false premise:

Matthew 19:16 Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

The Lord immediately points out the false premise of this original question, a clarification which apparently nobody catches (either then or today).

Matthew 19:17 So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."

Notice here the Lord immediately blows the false premise out of the water: "No one is good but One, that is God" From this point on, the Lord decides to continue the discussion with the rich man in order to point out the absurdity of the false premise of the original question which was, "what good thing SHALL I DO that I may have eternal life".

The false premise of the inquiring rich man was that it MIGHT be possible to produce enough good works within his own unregenerate soul to, in fact, BE as Holy as God is Holy, thus enabling this rich man to forever remain in the presence of a Holy God, A God who can never and will never gaze upon sin without the source of that sin immediately being annihilated from His Holy presence.

So, the remainder of the exchange between the Lord and this rich man is focused on silencing the original false premise. So the Lord eventually cuts to the chase of the self-justifying discussion by telling the rich man to "sell all that he has and give it to the poor".

In other words, if you want to be as righteous as God is righteous, (which is the standard which one must perfectly and without fail produce in his person in order to be as selfless as God is selfless), then sell everything you have and give it to the poor, because, that is exactly what the Father did when He sent his son into the world to become sin for us. In other words, if you want to forever dwell in the presence of God on the basis of your own goodness (the original premise of the rich man), then that goodness MUST be equal to the goodness of God.

Everything that meant anything to the Father, that is His Son, He gave over to become sin (which He cannot look upon) in order to satisfy the sin debt of sinners, sinners who, for the most part, are not really interested in a relationship with God. It was the perfection of God's character which enabled him to selflessly die for people who, at the core of their being, were antipathetic towards having a relationship with Him.

This was the selfless perfection of character the rich man would have to perfectly emulate if he were to forever dwell in the presence of God on the basis of the false premise of his original question.

Matthew 19:21 Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." 22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

So, not liking the answer the Lord gives, the rich man hastens away. Apparently the disciples did not catch the strategy of the Lord, for they had been sucked in to the false premise of the rich man's original question.

Matthew 19:25 When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?"

So the Lord once again addresses the absurdity of the false premise in the following verse:

Matthew 19:26 But Jesus looked (straight at) them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

In other words, the false premise of the rich man was impossible to fulfill. However, God has a different way, in which men can forever dwell in the presence of God..... The New Birth.

Unfortunately, most people will never experience that because, they too, have embraced the false premise of the rich man.