

# The Story of Redemption

## *Matthew: King and People -Lesson #137*

Years ago a preacher gave a modern day illustration of 1 Samuel 16:7.

1 Samuel 16:7, "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.'"

This preacher was speaking at a large conference with hundreds of people in attendance. During the first session he noticed a man sleeping on the front row. At first it didn't bother him. But when he saw this same gentleman at the second, third, and fourth sessions sleeping in the very same seat on the front row, he began to get a little frustrated. What? Is this man trying tell me that I'm boring? Why not just tell me? Why does he have to be so rude about it?

By the end of the conference, the preacher had become quite irritated by this elderly man, because he'd seen his kind before. Rather than privately expressing his dislike for this speaker, this older man made a public spectacle for all to see, essentially saying, "The preacher is a bore!" And that is why when on the last day of the conference and this elderly man and his wife approached this preacher, the preacher — Chuck Swindoll — tensed, readying himself for the verbal insult. And yet, far from an insult, he was shocked at what they said. When the woman got to him she said, "Thank you so much for your ministry. My husband and I are great supporters of you. In fact, my husband loves you so much that even though he's on chemotherapy, he still insisted on being here today. I hope his sleeping didn't bother you."

Man sees not as God sees. That was the lesson Samuel learned over 3000 years ago. And That was the lesson Chuck Swindoll learned a couple of years ago. And it was this lesson that the people of God needed to learn during the days of Christ. In Christ's day, just as today in the church, there is a tendency to relate to each other based on outward appearance. If you were Jewish, male, circumcised, of a prominent family, wealthy, or one of the disciples, then the kingdom of God was yours. But if you were none of these, you were considered a second class citizen, and treated rather shamefully (James 2:1; Galatians 2:6; Acts 6:1). That is why when Christ shared with His disciples the glorious news of Matthew 19:

Matthew 19:29, "...everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, shall receive many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life."

Christ qualified it with this statement.

Matthew 19:30, "But many who are first will be last; and the last, first."

The meaning of this phrase isn't at all obvious.

What is meant by, “The first will be last and the last first?”

Who are the “first” of this text?

Who are the “last?”

And in what way do the “last” become “first?”

Matthew 19 answers these questions.

## The First and the Last

Matthew 19:13-15, “Then some children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, ‘Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.’ And after laying His hands on them, He departed from there.”

It is important to note that the people flocking to Christ (so that their “children” might receive a blessing from Him) were Jews! So the focus of this passage is on the status or importance of the covenant child. Now based on what we’ve seen, how important are children in the covenant community?

Genesis 17:7, “And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.”

In the God’s redeeming plan the Lord deigned to establish a community of believers in which EVERY member was important! In fact, the promise of this text established a priority and value upon the children of a believer that was unsurpassed in the ancient world. Throughout world history, the weak have always been the object of severe abuse and neglect. And children are no exception. In Bible times, they were slaves, sacrificial fodder, punching bags, sex toys, and anything else that a sinner’s whim might desire. The same was true of their status throughout world history.

- In 1762, Jean-Jacques Rousseau called the baby “a perfect idiot.”
- In 1890 William James [founder of American pragmatism] described a baby’s mental life as “one great blooming, buzzing confusion.” (Bloom, 2010)

Against this backdrop, you can see how radical was the view of the Bible which says that the child born to believing parents is nothing less than a disciple of Christ. With that in mind, notice the text, the women of Christ’s day who understood Him to be the Messiah endeavored to bring their children to Him to receive a blessing. The disciples, thinking that Christ was too busy to be bothered by women or babies, turned them all away. Christ knowing that His disciples had fallen into a grave error in their thinking, rebuked them saying, “Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

This was and is a radical statement for it states in no uncertain terms that covenant children are children of God! You say, “But these babies haven’t done anything to merit such a claim!” Indeed! From this we conclude that salvation is according to the predetermined choice and working of God! There is nothing we do in order to receive it.

Ephesians 2:8-9, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.”

As Christ ended the conversation, a man came up to him having perhaps witnessed the rebuke that Christ gave to His disciples. The young man wanted the same assurance that Christ made with regard to the covenant child: “You are indeed saved!”

## Salvation and the Stranger to the Covenant

Matthew 19:16-17a, “And behold, one came to Him and said, ‘Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?’ And He said to him, ‘Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good...’”

It is quite obvious from the start of this passage that the man before Christ was all about show! He really didn’t believe that Christ was “good.” He said that in order to gain Christ’s affection, which tells us that the man before Christ was a manipulator. Perhaps this was how he gained his riches: he was a good salesman! Regardless, after calling the young man to the carpet for his false praise, Christ addressed his question.

Matthew 19:17b-20, “‘...but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.’ He said to Him, ‘Which ones?’ [We all want lists when it comes to salvation and our walks. By nature we are moralists! This man wanted to hear THE list of rules which he had to follow in order to earn salvation. Accordingly, Christ purposely played right into his hand...] And Jesus said, ‘You shall not commit murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother; and You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ The young man said to Him, ‘All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?’”

The man who stood before Christ was one who failed to realize that what defiles a man is NOT what occurs on the outside, BUT what goes on in the inside (which is why he thought little of calling Christ, “good”). Religiously he was blameless as it pertained to the Second Table of the Law and this was made abundantly clear in the first half of his exchange with Christ. But then the Lord shifted the focus of the conversation to the First Table of the Law and that which occurs on the inside.

Matthew 19:21-22, “Jesus said to him, ‘If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’ But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieved; for he was one who owned much property.”

The young man’s god clearly was not Yahweh, but his wealth. Christ knowing this did two things: He focused the conversation on the conduct of the man as the basis for salvation, and then He focused the light on the man’s short-coming.

Matthew 19:23-25, “And Jesus said to His disciples, ‘Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye

of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.’ And when the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, ‘Then who can be saved?’”

As it is in most cultures, so it was in Judaism, the wealthy typically were the leaders: socially, politically, and religiously! As such, they were the ones who everyone knew would be saved if push came to shove. And so it is in our day as well. Who is it that represents the epitome of one making a claim to godliness? Those who are rich in:

- Moral uprightness.
- Religious sacrifice and service.
- Goodness and grace.

We always assume that these people are saved. Yet this is wrong, isn't it (cf. Matthew 7:22-23)?! The epitome of one making a claim to godliness is brokenness and repentance, sorrow over one's sin (cf. Matthew 5:3-4)! At this time, the disciples missed this and so fell prey to the same thinking of the rich young man. If a wealthy person isn't saved, then who can be?

Matthew 19:25-26, “And when the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, ‘Then who can be saved?’ And looking upon them Jesus said to them, ‘With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’”

Indeed! Salvation is by the grace of God alone! It is not our choice of God, but His choice of us! Whether you were born as a covenant child or born as a pagan, salvation is one and the same: by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ! Yet this ought not to make us lazy in our living. For truly obedience has its reward. The more we give, the more we receive. And that raises the question of the hour: What is it that we receive on account of our service in the Kingdom of God?

## The Query

Matthew 19:27-30, “Then Peter answered and said to Him, ‘Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, shall receive many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last; and the last, first.’”

There are incredible blessings that await the child of God on account of his citizenship! Yet the chief reward that awaits us is Eternal Life! This is more valuable and precious than...

- Thrones.
- Authority.
- Reunions with loved ones.
- Family.

- Etc.

And this raises the question, “What is ‘eternal life’?”

John 17:3, “And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”

In the past decade we have looked at this passage on numerous occasions. As you know, “Eternal life” is that which is granted to every child of God upon their conversion to Christ. However, it is not something we equally enjoy or share. For notice, eternal life is nothing less than a love-relationship with Christ.

John 17:3, “And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”

The word for “know” here is ginosko, which is a relational term in the Bible.

Genesis 4:17, “Cain knew his wife and she conceived.”

The word for “know” in the Septuagint is ginosko.

Amos 3:2, “You only have I chosen [lit. “known”] among all the families of the earth.”

This doesn’t mean that God is limited when it comes to His knowledge of those on this earth, He is omniscient. Rather, this means that of all the peoples of the earth, only with Israel did God enter into a special, intimate relationship! We read of Christ’s words to the reprobate on the last day.

Matthew 7:23, “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you...’”

Again this doesn’t mean that Christ had no knowledge of these unbelievers. But rather, that Christ did not have an intimate relationship with them as their Savior and Lord! When John 17:3 equates Eternal Life, which again is the Christian’s ultimate reward- with the mutable (not “loose-able”) relationship of knowing Christ, we understand the essence of the Christian’s reward: It is a level of intimacy and communion with Christ. To labor 50 years on this earth for Christ is to grow in one’s capacity to love and enjoy the love of Christ and thus, the reward awaiting all who deny themselves and live for Christ today, who forgo the passing pleasures of sin “looking for the reward” (Hebrews 11:25, 26) is a greater intimacy and communion with Christ both now and in the age to come!

Revelation 21:7, “He who overcomes shall inherit these things (the privileges of Heaven), and I will be his God and he will be My son.”

It is true that if we live as we ought in this current state (diligently serving God), at the day of God’s final judgment we shall receive a reward. However, the reward is nothing less than a greater enjoying of God, His beauty, and His glory upon our death! And this naturally raises a criticism: aside from a greater depth in ones relationship with Christ, this makes it sound as though there is no difference between the child of God who labors 70 years in the cause of Christ and one who labors one day. Is

that correct? Anticipating the objection, Christ turned His focus to a case study.

Matthew 20:1-2, “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard.”

This would have been a typical scene in the days of the Bible. As we have employment agencies today, in the first century A.D. in Palestine there were places where the common man gathered who sought work.

These laborers were men who were unskilled at a trade. As such, they were near the bottom of the social-economic scale. In fact, many of them were not far above beggars. They worked from job to job, many of which lasted no more than a day, and often less. Because they had no guarantee of work beyond what they might be doing at the time, they would gather in the market place before dawn to be available for hiring and that is where the landowner of this parable found these men.

Now the kind of labor that was sought after here was the work associated with a vineyard. Christ does not state the nature of this labor, but we know that it was hard work. For example, vineyards generally were planted on terraced hillsides, most of which were stony. Preparing the terraces involved digging out the tiers and using the stones to build small retaining walls on the outside edges. When the terraced areas were completed, they had to be filled with good soil which usually had to be carried a considerable distance up the slopes from more fertile ground below.

Now that your land was readied for a vineyard and the vines were planted, you still were not finished. Every summer, both new and old vines had to be pruned back to improve production, which represented a considerable amount of work.

The final major operation was, of course, harvesting which occurred in late September or early October. If for some reason the grapes were slow in ripening, the time for harvesting could be significantly shortened. Consequently, the grape harvest was a hectic and demanding time. Now, because most owners did not have enough household servants or regular slaves to do these seasonal jobs, temporary day laborers were hired from nearby towns and villages; which brings us to our parable and the promised pay a denarius.

A denarius was the wage of a Roman soldier (cf. Tobit 5:14; Tacitus Annales, 1.17; Pliny 33.3) which doesn't mean a whole lot to us, but meant a great deal to those listening. For while soldiering for Rome wasn't the most glorious or prestigious job, it nevertheless was higher up the social ladder than the common, Jewish laborer of Palestine. Thus the promise of a denarius to these day laborers would have been understood to be quite generous, and so they “agree” and that undoubtedly with great eagerness!

Now, this particular landowner's property obviously was large, and so he needed more laborers to get the job done. Thus we read this:

Matthew 20:3-7, “And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market place; and to those he said, ‘You too go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give

you.’ And so they went. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did the same thing. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing; and he said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day long?’ They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You too go into the vineyard.’”

Once again, this would have been a description of a very common scene in Christ’s day, the hiring of workers. Now notice a couple of the phrases here.

Matthew 20:3, “...and saw others standing idle...”

This does not denote laziness, just unemployment. Perhaps these laborers hadn’t been hired for work yet, or perhaps they had just finished a previous job- the text doesn’t say.

Matthew 20:4, “...whatever is right I will give you.”

As in all rural communities, everyone knew everyone else, and these workers no doubt trusted the owner as a man of his word. As such, while the owner does not promise a particular wage, no doubt these workers knew it would be fair.

Matthew 20:3, 5, 6, “...third hour... sixth hour... eleventh hour...”

The Jewish work day began at 6:00 a.m., which was called the first hour. As such, the 3rd hour began at 9:00 a.m., the 6th hour began at 12:00 noon, the 9th hour began at 3:00 p.m., and the 11th hour began at 5:00 p.m.

Now brothers and sisters, it is at this point that this parable begins to get a little peculiar. By the 11th hour (5:00 p.m.), most work on most plantations would have been winding down. As such, most laborers waiting for work at this time would have began losing hope that they would work that day. And yet, in this particular town it was different. Why? It was different because of the generosity of the landowner. Dr. Hendriksen put it this way:

What a gracious man this estate-owner is. It is clear that he is interested not only in his vineyard but also in the unemployed. He hires them when they, and everyone else, must have thought that for such men as these all hope of working in the vineyard on that day was baseless.  
(Hendriksen, 2002)

We are dealing here with the story of a landowner hiring workers for his vineyard, and because he is gracious, he hires some a little later than would be expected. This is a rather typical story to this point. And yet, here the parable takes a twist. Notice...

## **The Reckoning**

Matthew 20:8, “And when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last group to the first’”

Because there were many unskilled laborers in the ancient Near East with little chance for steady income, many were desperate for work, and therefore vulnerable. Because of the poor man's economic status, it wouldn't be very hard to take advantage of them and not pay them for weeks and even months on end (and maybe never). As such, as far back as Leviticus 19:13 and Deuteronomy 24:15, God commanded His people to have compassion on these men. Israel was to pay their laborers at the end of each day! And that is what every conscientious Jewish employer did in obedience to Old Testament law.

And yet, the typical mode of payment even back then was "first come first served." Here we see a peculiarity. Notice that it was "last come first served." The text continues:

Matthew 20:9-10, "And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each one received a denarius. And when those hired first came, they thought that they would receive more; and they also received each one a denarius."

Though Christ does not say it, the implication is clear. ALL the workers up to those hired first were paid a denarius. Now as human nature would have it, we can imagine how the laborers who worked all day felt as they heard and saw those who worked far less than they and yet got paid one denarius. The natural thought would have been, "If the owner gave one denarius for working one hour, we who have worked twelve stand to gain a bundle!" And yet, their hopes were dashed; they too received one denarius which leads to the complaint.

#### The Complaint

Matthew 20:11-12, "And when they received it, they grumbled at the landowner, saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the scorching heat of the day'"

As we have said, working in a vineyard was hard work. It involved laboring on a hillside in the heat of the day with few breaks! As such, we can sympathize with these people's complaint of, "It's not fair!" In fact, the picture conveyed is that these laborers' joy turned to anger as they realized that they received the same pay as some who had worked for only one hour. As such, they were determined not to leave until they received "satisfaction" from the landowner.

And yet, we also get a glimpse into the real problem here. Notice Matthew 20:12 again. They do NOT say, "You have made us equal to the late-comers," BUT, "You have made them equal to us." In other words, not only were they dissatisfied with what they themselves had received, but more fundamentally, they were envious of what had been given to the others! See they thought that:

- They deserved more.
- They were better, and thus more worthy than the others.
- When it came to importance, THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN FIRST!

And yet, they were last not only in the order of receiving compensation, but more fundamentally in the perceived value placed on them! And that was their main problem. They who should have been first, were made to be last! And yet, notice their response.



Matthew 20:13-15, "But he answered and said to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours and go your way, but I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own? Or is your eye envious because I am generous?'"

The refutation on the part of the landowner is complete and crushing. All that is left to do for the laborers is take their denarius and go home. And yet, notice the particulars.

Matthew 20:13, "...friend..."

This is not the term for a close friend, but rather a casual companion. That the landowner only addresses one person implies that this "friend" probably was the spokesman of the group.

Matthew 20:13b, "...I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius."

Truly, these men were out of line. Before 6:00 that morning, they had "agreed" with the owner on a price for their labor (cf. v. 2). And as mentioned earlier, a denarius was a fair, yea even a generous, wage for their labor. Truly, both had lived up to their end of the bargain.

Matthew 20:15a, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with what is my own..."

What the landowner paid other laborers, or what the landowner did with his own money was no business of the laborers. In fact, if the landowner wanted to give half of his wealth to one of these laborers, he would not be unjust, and we would admire him for his generosity.

Matthew 20: 15b: "...or is your eye envious because I am generous."

With this we see again the root of the problem. It is not the landowner, but the laborer's sin that needs to be addressed. Rather than rejoicing at the good fortune of the other laborers, these workers became envious and bitter!

Matthew 20: 16, "Thus the last shall be first, and the first last."

With this, Christ brings the Parable to its appropriate end and application. In the Kingdom of God, our perceived position makes no difference, "God shows no partiality" (Gal. 2:6)! In fact, it is just the opposite to what we naturally think when it comes to the kingdom of God...

Matthew 20:25-27, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave..."

We are brought to the point of this parable and the question, "What is Christ teaching in this parable?" The answer is obvious. To a group of disciples promised so much by way of reward when it comes to the kingdom of God, they must realize that these benefits do not make them any better

or more important than anyone else in the kingdom.<sup>1</sup> In fact, when it comes to the things that this world values and in which we are inclined to boast, “The last shall indeed be first, and the first last” (Matthew 20:16).

The theme of this passage is that in the Kingdom of God, Many of those who are first will be last, and many of the last will be first. Now how do we apply a text like this? Do we simply accept the fact that others may

- Be saved later than us.
- Do less work than us.
- Suffer less than us.

Yet, still receive the same salvation? I can handle that, yet that is a rather shallow application of this passage! To answer this question it is important to recall again the “problem” in this text. It is NOT the injustice of a mean and cruel landowner, BUT the mercy of a gracious and loving farmer.

Matthew 20:15b, “...Is your eye envious because I am generous?”

One of the most self-harming sins that we can commit as God’s children is the taking of God’s grace for granted! By right we deserve nothing less than death (Romans 6:23), but by grace we get life (Ephesians 2:8-9). And rather than living by grace, accepting

- The providences of God- be they sweet or bitter.
- The provisions of God- be they plentiful or sparse.
- The love of God- regardless of the form it takes.

As gifts from the Lord for our benefit and good (Romans 8:28), we take God’s grace for granted and live according to the world’s standard which says:

1. He who works the longest receives the most pay. That is just.
2. He who is most blessed is most deserving.

And the result in all of this? Bad or unexpected things happen in our lives and we feel gypped! Dr. John MacArthur put it this way when he wrote this:

The charge of unfairness was not grounded in a love for justice but in the selfish assumption that the extra pay they wanted was pay they deserved. (Dr. John F. MacArthur 1988, pp. 212-213)

A Bible teacher explained it this way to one of his classes. At the beginning of his teaching career, he assigned three papers. On the due date of the 1st paper; 90 percent of the class had turned in their paper on time but at the end of class, a group of students gathered around him begging for an extension, which was granted. On the due date of the second paper, 80 percent of the class had

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<sup>1</sup> This doesn’t contradict the truth that in heaven there will be different rewards (cf. Mt. 16:27; 1 Cor. 3:8, 13-15). Rather, we learn from this that heaven itself is the sinner’s unconditional reward based not on the merits of man, but the pleasure of God! The lesson in this parable is not the differences of rewards but the equality of salvation.

turned in their paper on time and at the end of class, a larger group of students gathered around him begging for an extension which also was granted. On the due date of the third and final paper 70 percent of the class had turned in their paper on time and the teacher became upset. This time he asked during class where the other papers were. The 30 percent who were late very casually said that they would get it to him and that he shouldn't worry about it to which the teacher replied, that all late papers would get a zero. One student who was late called out, "That's not fair!" The teacher responded to this student who also had been late on his previous paper, "You want fairness? O.K. 'F' on this paper and 'F' on your previous paper. That's fair!"

The teacher's point in telling this story was to illustrate the sinfulness of our hearts and how we tend to take grace for granted and so expect grace... JUST LIKE THE WORKERS OF THIS PARABLE. Let there not be one here who takes God's grace and mercy for granted. In the Kingdom of God, there is no such thing as merit! God's grace is granted according to His good pleasure. What I have and what I am going to receive in Christ are distributed according to the kind intention of God's will!

And thus if another is more blessed, used by God in a manner judged by others to be more glorious, or is suffering greatly on account of this state of sin and misery, rather than charging God with unfairness, let us

- Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15).
- Glory that the cross is being preached (Philippians 1:18).
- Bear the burdens of another without grumbling or complaining (Galatians 6:1).

Truly, let us be done with the unhealthy "work-for-wages" mentality by which we relate to God based on our effort- it is counter-productive. For observe, the laborers in this parable who simply worked with little thought as to their reward received more than what they could have dreamed of. But those who set a standard, who negotiated for their wages, were sorely disappointed! And that will be the case for every believer who "negotiates" with God, who comes to expect more than what God Himself has promised, or who sets his heart on the reward at the neglect of God. Disappointment and despair await all who travel this road.

And yet, the application even goes beyond this.

- How many here have ever struggled with feelings of incompetency when it comes to the kingdom of God or discontentment on account of your lack of skill or service in the body of Christ?
- How many here have ever wished for a greater gift or a more important ministry?
- How many here have ever felt inferior to another in the body of Christ and thus less important?

Do you realize what this text means? It means that all dissatisfaction that you have had with yourself in comparison to another is silly. The greatest and most notable of all Christians is not saved more than you, and is no more important to God than you! J. C. Ryle put it this way:

True faith in Christ, even if it is only a day old, justifies a person before God as completely as the

faith of someone who has followed Christ for fifty years. The righteousness in which Timothy will stand at the Day of Judgment is the same as that of the penitent thief. Both will be saved by grace alone; both will owe all to Christ. (Ryle 1993, p. 179)

Let our confidence and joy in this life be based NOT on what we have or do not have, BUT on WHO we have! For on the last day, when we stand before our Savior there will be no superstars, CEO's of heaven, or presidents and secretaries. There will only be a King on whom all eyes will be fixed! Samuel Rutherford put it this way:

The bride eyes not her garment, but her dear bridegroom's face; I will not gaze at glory, but on my King of grace; not on the crown He gifteth, but on His pierced hand: The Lamb is all the glory of Emmanuel's land. (Taken from the Trinity Hymnal #599)

No one is more worthy than another to receive salvation, and no time of salvation is more significant than another. What counts is whether or not we have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. J. C. Ryle again put it this way:

One thief on the cross was saved, that none should despair; but only one, that no one should presume. A false confidence in those words, 'the eleventh hour,' has ruined thousands of souls. (Ryle 1993, p. 180)

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# **The Story of Redemption**

## ***Matthew: King and People***

### ***Lesson #137***

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d. The Response, vv. 13-16.

B. The Theme of the Passage: In the Kingdom of God, Many of Those who are First will be Last, and Many of the Last will be First.

III. Homework

A. Memory Verse: Mt. 19:27-30

B. Hymn #402, "Abide With Me"

C. Preview Mt. 21:18-46