

'THE REALLY GOOD LIFE!'

(The Life of Christ Series)

Gospel of Luke

Death & Taxes

There is an old saying, *'Only two things are certain in life – death and taxes'*. For most people both of those inevitable things are foreboding thoughts to ponder. It's true that dying someday is certain; it's also been said, *'Nobody gets out of life alive'*. It's also true that for most people in the world paying taxes to the governing authority where we live is for certain. Neither life *ultimatum* needs to be something dreadful if you just plan ahead and adjust accordingly.

Death doesn't need to be a terrible event if you have planned ahead and prepared for the next life by repenting of your sin and trusting in Christ as your personal Savior and Lord (**John 5:21-24**). If you don't do that, then eternity in the sin-debtor's prison called *hell* is a terrifying prospect, as is the ultimate eternal destiny of all who choose something or someone else other than Christ - *the Lake of Fire* (**Revelation 20:11-15**). In light of eternal destiny options, paying taxes in this life doesn't seem so terrifying.

Paying taxes is biblical for everyone, including Christians (**Romans 13:5-7**). John the Baptist told tax collectors who came asking what they should do to qualify for his baptism. He commanded them: **"Collect no more than what is appointed to you"** (**Luke 3:13**). So, being a tax collector wasn't a sinful vocation as long as one didn't abuse the position – Jesus even chose Matthew (a tax man) to be an apostle after he voluntarily resigned from that lucrative position (**Luke 5:27-28**). In one incident, paying the *temple tax* (*an annual gift for temple upkeep/ about 2 day's wages*) was important enough for Jesus to miraculously put that amount in a fish's mouth for Peter to donate (**Matthew 17:24-27 includes teaching of Jesus on the subject of taxes**)!

When Jesus' enemies debated the tax issue with Him, the Lord taught that giving money with the Emperor's likeness stamped on it was analogous to people with God's image in them giving themselves to the Lord (**Matthew 22:15-22**). In Scripture, only generous giving of tithes and offerings to the Lord is more important *due diligence* than paying one's fair amount in taxes for services rendered by the civil authorities under whom we live and work and do ministry (**Proverbs 3:9-10, Matthew 6:19-21, Romans 12:7, 2 Corinthians 8-9, Philippians 4:14-20, Hebrews 13:15-16**).

As the Lord Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself 100% to pay our sin-debt and purchase our eternal heavenly citizenship (**Philippians 3:20-21**), we pay our taxes for benefits of earthly citizenship while in this life. A big part of our Christian stewardship responsibility is being faithful, responsible, mature managers of everything God gives us throughout our Christian life, even material and financial blessings (**James 1:16-17, 1 Peter 4:10**).

Giving most generously in tithing and to the Lord's work in the church He has called you (**Galatians 6:6-10**) then paying our taxes to the authority over us is foundational to expecting to hear Him say **'Well done, good and faithful servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities'** in the Kingdom Age to come (**Luke 19:17**). Giving to the Lord and paying taxes now may seem inconvenient for the present, but in the Millennial Kingdom to come, you will be glad you were obedient in these things; the investment returns with interest coming your way will be worth it all when the Lord Jesus Christ audits your life. **PtL**

An HIM-Possible Tax Refund

(A Tax-Man Meets The God-Man)

Luke 19:1-27

Zacchaeus' Precarious Perch

(Out on a limb without the Lord)

"Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. Now behold, there was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. So he ran ahead and climbed into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way."

19:1-4

Sometimes it's easy to see if someone is truly ready to come to Christ. Zacchaeus had a lot of money, a power position job and influence in the community, but he had a bankrupt heart he tried to fill with greed and dishonest gain. His desperation shows in *his seeking to see Jesus, running ahead of the crowd and climbing up into a tree for a better view, and not a bit concerned what anybody thought about his overtly zealous behavior.*

- Did you feel desperate when God moved you to come to Christ?
- What were some abnormal things you did to improve your position to meet Christ?
- What are some ways to tell somebody is probably being drawn by God to salvation in Jesus?
- How can we pray for others to have a sense of urgency to find out more and meet the Savior?

Christ's Personal Call to 'Come'

(Jesus' invitation joyfully accepted)

*"And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house." So he made haste, came down, and **received Him joyfully**. But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner."
19:5-7*

- Do you have some place you remember being called by Jesus to Himself? I wonder how many times Zacchaeus came back to that special tree and remembered that special day and how it led to his personal relationship with Jesus.
- Do you have a special place where you first felt Christ calling you to Himself? Special places or memories of places can inspire and revive you later in your *walk through life* with the Savior. As you remember you will probably smile at how you *received Him joyfully* when He came to take up residence in your life forever. Christ comes to live *in the house*-- our body in this life; we go to live in His house in heaven when this life is over –
- Do you think He is enjoying being the *honored guest within you*?
- What can you do to make Him feel more at home?

Jesus' critics found fault with Him for fellowshiping with a (former) *sinner* they deemed unclean. Praise the Lord that Jesus is never ashamed of us no matter what anybody says (**Hebrews 2:11-12**). We, therefore, should never be ashamed of Him (**Mark 8:38**).

- Have you ever felt ashamed to be a disciple of Christ? Why?
- What did you do to change from being ashamed to being proud of Jesus in front of critics?

Zacchaeus' Proof of Possession

(Repentance, Rescue, Restoration)

*"Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "**Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.**" And Jesus said to him, "**Today salvation has come to this house because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.**"
19:8-10*

Some people say baptism proves you are saved. Some say it's when you witness, join a church, or do something else. The biblical proof of salvation is a radically changed life (**2 Corinthians 5:17-21**) that others clearly see.

- Discuss how the influence of Jesus upon Zacchaeus proved he was truly saved according to Christ.
- Did you experience a deep desire to make restitution of things you had done wrong before the Lord came into your life? (share something you did, someone you spoke to, etc.).
- How does the desire for restitution and actually doing it prove the Holy Spirit's presence within you has reactivated your conscience (**John 16:8-11, Ephesians 4:30-32**, etc.)?
- Talk about how the *mission statement* of Jesus (**v 10**) kept Him focused on the main purpose of His first coming.
- What is your *mission statement* of purpose for living? Is it biblical, Christ-centered, and eternally focused? Can you upgrade your *mission statement* to harmonize with the one that Christ in you has?

'You're Being Audited'

(Jesus' parable about eternal non-profit investments)

(Next Lord's Day – **19:11-27**)