

The Rich Young Ruler

[Luke 18:18-23](#)

[Luke 18:18-23 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁸“A ruler questioned Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

¹⁹ And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.”

²⁰“You know the commandments, ‘DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.’”

²¹ And he said, “All these things I have kept from *my* youth.”

²² When Jesus heard *this*, He said to him, “One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

²³ But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.”

Three of the four gospels contain an account of the young man who asked Jesus a very important question: “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” ([Luke 18:18](#)). A ruler with great wealth, he considered himself a moral man because he had kept the Lord’s commandments.

However, he was operating under the false assumption that good works bring salvation. He seemed to be asking Jesus what else he had to do to secure his place in heaven—besides all the good things that he had already accomplished.

This is what I refer to as the “**great deception**”—the false belief that eternal life can be earned through our own efforts. If we give credence to this lie, then we do not understand the problem of our sin and how it separates us from God. Scripture tells us that we have inherited a sinful nature from the first man ([Romans 5:12](#)).

[Romans 5:12 \(NASB\)](#)

¹²“Therefore, just as through one man, sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.”

Ever since that time, humanity has been in rebellion against the Lord and under His judgment. There is nothing we can do to pay for our sins.

If this were the end of the story, we would be a people without hope for today or the future. But the good news is that the heavenly Father recognized our plight and mercifully provided the way to heaven ([John 14:6](#)).

[John 14:6 \(NASB\)](#)

⁶“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

When God made us in His image, He created us to live forever. So, though our earthly bodies will perish, our spirits will never die. The question about eternal life is important, as we’ll spend eternity either with God in heaven or in an insufferable state, separated permanently from Him ([Matthew 25:34, 41](#)).

[Matthew 25:34 \(NASB\)](#)

³⁴“Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”

[Matthew 25:41 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴¹“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.’”