

Matthew 19:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

Analysis

Jesus' command 'If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me' exposes the man's true master—wealth. 'Perfect' means complete or mature, not sinless. The call to sell everything revealed whether he loved God supremely or trusted in riches. 'Treasure in heaven' contrasts with earthly wealth. 'Follow me' is the ultimate call—discipleship requires forsaking all competitors to Christ.

Historical Context

The rich young ruler claimed to have kept all commandments (v. 20), revealing spiritual blindness—no one keeps the law perfectly. Jesus' command exposed his idolatry—wealth was his functional god. His sorrowful departure (v. 22) showed he loved money more than eternal life. The issue wasn't wealth itself but divided loyalty.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What possession or pursuit competes with wholehearted following of Jesus?
2. How does Jesus' call to 'follow me' require relinquishing lesser treasures?

Interlinear Text

ἔφη	αὐτῷ	ὁ	Ἰησοῦς	Εἰ	θέλεις	τέλειος	εἶναι	ὑπάγε
said	unto him	G3588	Jesus	If	thou wilt	perfect	be	go
G5346	G846		G2424	G1487	G2309	G5046	G1511	G5217
πώλησόν	σου	τὰ	ὑπάρχοντα	καὶ	δός	πτωχοῖς	καὶ	
and sell	that thou	G3588	hast	and	give	to the poor	and	
G4453	G4675		G5224	G2532	G1325	G4434	G2532	
ἔξεις	θησαυρόν	ἐν	οὐρανῷ	καὶ	δεῦρο	ἀκολούθει		
thou shalt have	treasure	in	heaven	and	come	and follow		
G2192	G2344	G1722	G3772	G2532	G1204	G190		
μοι								
me								
G3427								

Additional Cross-References

Mark 10:21 (References Jesus): 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.

Luke 12:33 (Parallel theme): Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.

Luke 18:22 (References Jesus): Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

Acts 2:45 (Parallel theme): And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

Luke 14:33 (Parallel theme): So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

John 12:26 (Parallel theme): If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.

Luke 9:23 (Parallel theme): And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

Matthew 5:48 (Parallel theme): Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

John 10:27 (Parallel theme): My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

Matthew 19:28 (References Jesus): And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.