**The First and the Last**

**Matthew 19:28-20:34**

# The Passage

! one section from **19**:27 - **20**:34.

* **common** thread of **Ruling** (**19:28** thrones, **20:21** sit at His right hand in Kingdom, **20:30-31** Son of David)

Notice then the Structure:

* **Promise of Ruling**, with the Lesson that Last will be First, and First Last (19:30,20:16);
* **Practice of Ruling** 20:17-28

*So the last will be first, and the first last*: used variously e.g Luk 13:30 to press different points. The most useful conclusion: **Things will not be as we expect**! (cf 20:10 and 22a)

**A Riddle**: Forces us to pay attention and dig deep. And I have been forced to this week, and to think much about Heaven.

## APP

What one imagines [expects] of the New World, informs our behaviour in this one. Leaving all to follow Christ brings more than hope of salvation; Also brings entrance into New Life now - which is ultimately completed in Heaven....

* (2 Cor 3) Daily transforming NOW in glory; ... (1 John 3) THEN Being like Him

... **If we know what we will be in Heaven** - What God's destiny is for us - , I guarantee **we'll be able to be it here too**!

# the Promise of Ruling (19:28-20:16)

(*interpreting* "Judge" as 'ruling'; as in the book of Judges. Part of their role necessitated judging, but the point was : they were the ones in authority, to be accountable, righteous - Ruling.)

* the Promise: \*They will enjoy the most INCREDIBLE honour and privilege to sit with Christ\*! (28b)
* // >>> **But** : **this privilege is not reserved for a few**!

## Proof

Some believe: Ruling is a Heavenly **Reward** based on Earthly **performance**. They may even turn to Matt 25 for the parable of the talents to show that those who invested the talents well were "*set over* - to Rule" - much. But note: whether they produced most or not, all ruled: see the words of reward (25:21,23) - exactly the same! I understand by this that there are only 2 options in that parable: **Ruling** in Heaven or **being Cast out** into the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth - the description of hell.

* + **2Tim 2:12** if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us

[proof in the text]

* **1. Note parallel :**
  + **(28)** you who have followed :// in the new world judging
  + & **(29)** everyone who has left :// in the new world, Eternal Life (cf Mark 10)
  + we think because there are 2 different phrases, that "the apostles judging" and "everyone receiving eternal life" are mutually exclusive - but it doesn't have to be.
* **2. Note: These promises** are [footnoted/ **qualified** ] in 9:30 - for our attention, even repeated in 20:16, "*But many who are first will be last, and the last first*" - and then Jesus explains..., by the parable of the vineyard workers.
  + **Q: When are the first last, and the last first?** ... When they're **equal**! That's the answer to the riddle!
  + It's not what we expected...:
  + **Q:** **What are the workers paid according to?** ... According to being, not doing... For **being** a labourer in the vineyard, not for **amount of** labour.
  + i.e. **The Reward is Equal for all**: see **20:12**,

"These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat!"

* + - **The first** lot started work "early" - 6am? **The last** were found at 5pm, and paid a day's wage one hour later.
  + Jesus is qualifying the promise of ruling (in 19:28-30); **The apostles, and *everyone* after them, from the 1st to 11th hour, receiving Honour and Ruling**!
* [**APP**: *Call to* ***Unsearchable Riches*** *of God toward us through Christ* - who saved us not according to what we've done, but what Christ has done for us! No distinction - Religious or Irreligious, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, but are justified freely through the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ - Received through Faith... Your history doesn't matter [some would follow Christ in 33AD, some only began this week// some would surrender to Christ in childhood, some only moments before passing away before a paramedic] - God comes to us even at 11th hour and calls us into His vineyard with full reward!]
* **// Now**, as we've seen, Leaving all to follow Christ brings more than hope of salvation; It brings entrance into **New Life : A New Life that begins to Rule**! All believers...
  + 1 Cor 6:2,3 *Or do you not know that the saints will judge the [new] world? ... Do you not know that we are to judge angels?* ***How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life****!*
  + You say, How are we already **Ruling** in **this** life: "*If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed*", John 8:36. No longer dominated by **personal sin** and **carnage** it brings into our lives - **reigning** in righteousness, in the **heart**, and **injecting** it into the community around us - salt and light, influencing, sanctifying and burning in a dark and eroding world.

The apostles who followed were offered thrones, **and then others would follow**. And at the end of the day, the last to arrive, who'd not even laboured as the apostles, would reign too.

**This is the Position of every Believer**. In my digging through the riddle I couldn't find any scripture to indicate that any believer won't reign in Heaven. In fact, only the contrary.

## APP:

Apostle Peter and Jared both ruling, with Jesus!

Even now:

5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, [God] made us alive **together with Christ**-- by grace you have been saved-- 6 and **raised us up with him** and **seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ** Jesus,

Does it make you feel different about life in the Now? The GRACE of Christ! **Read 20:15**, "...*GENEROSITY*".

Things with God are not as we expect; **20:16**, *So the last will be first and the first last*.

# The Practice of Ruling

Thus, **19:28**-20:16 = The **Promise** of Ruling; Then: **20**:17-28 = The **Practice** of Ruling

**APP**: How do you imagine Heaven, and what you'll be doing? \

... chs19-20 are all about **Ruling** (cf Rich Young Ruler!). **Salome**, the mother of James and John, had a vivid imagination of what Ruling in Heaven would be like. ! John tells us she was Mary's sister... **So in v20**, *the mother of the sons of Zebedee* was Jesus' **aunt**! Perhaps being the aunt, she felt she'd have some authority... some sway with Jesus - the right to exercise a bit of parental ***rule***for the sake of her sons. Jesus had offered thrones, so she and her sons had a family favour to ask: **Read v20-21**

And I love this answer in 22a,

Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking!"

Their imagination of Ruling is wrong.

**Things with God are not as we expect**. "*the last will be first, and the first last*".

* Watch the Son of Man - the King of the Kingdom of Heaven - prepare them about Ruling: **Read v17-19**.

**When the others** heard what James and John had requested, they were "***indignant***" - in other words, they also didn't understand. They were still thinking like the ungodly (**Read 25**). The human race without Christ see authority as the means to have others serve them. To the ungodly, Ruling in Heaven means commanding and receiving honour from others. But the Ruling God designed is the means / to serve others (**Read 26-27**)

The Apostles' Ruling would mean drinking the cup of sacrifice which Jesus drank

**Php 2:5**

Have this mind **in yourselves**, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

* If this is the King we've left all to follow,...
* If the Son of Man on His Glorious **throne** is a **servant**, then how not also those on their **thrones** next to Him?
* READ **20:28**

**APP:**

How will we be **ruling** in Heaven? I believe: By **serving**. (Isaiah's New Earth, ch65: '*my servants'*)

Heaven will be dense with service! Assisting, labouring with, others-centric, and in that serving Christ. The things we do in this world, which we consider mundane, even unspiritual - work - will be divine and fully like Christ.

***Ruling in this world*** means getting dirty and uncomfortable, into the mess and trouble of others.

*"Many who are first will be last"*: Those First to Hope in Christ will be longer in the world and will bear *(12) The burden of the day and the scorching heat*". (cf **1 Cor 4:9**, *9 For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men.)*

*"Many who are first will be last"*: **(v27)** *Whoever would be FIRST among you must be your servant*.

Already you **Rule** with Christ. Will you **Serve** with Him too?

Will you **Love**; and **Give to Bless**; in the Hope that they too will find the Love of Christ for them? Because even the last to come to His Vineyard will Rule with Him.

## A story of 2 Souls

There were 2 souls, the scrapings of the Barrel of Life. So insignificant and irrelevant to anyone living in the city. And beyond their small existence, blind and waiting in the market place, day in and day out, there was something much bigger, First on everyone's agenda : Jesus was passing through to Jerusalem.

But although the world considered them a nuisance, they knew the King was a Servant of Compassion.

"***Lord, have mercy*** - Son of David - Ruler of the Kingdom (32): *And stopping, Jesus called them and said "What do you want me to do for you?" ... "Lord let our eyes be opened!" And Jesus, in pity, touched their eyes, and immediately they recovered their sight, and followed Him"*

The **Last** *became as* the First,

**Because** : the **FIRST** *became as* LAST.

**APP:** We have the Promise of Ruling, Let us learn the Practice of Ruling.

In fact, whenever you serve with Christ, you're Ruling with Christ.