



# Taking Jesus to the Car Lot

I [Jesus] tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>Mt 5:20</sup>

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable:

“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” <sup>Lk 18:9-14</sup>

Jesus speaking yet again: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” <sup>Mt 7:21-23</sup>

Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. Unlike David his father, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD. He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and also made cast idols for worshiping the Baals. He burned sacrifices in the Valley of Ben Hinnom and sacrificed his sons in the fire, following the detestable ways of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. He offered sacrifices and burned incense at the high places, on the hilltops and under every spreading tree. <sup>2Ch 28:1-4</sup>

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The above are examples of very religious people (except the tax collector, not considered religious by anyone – except God!) and God’s view of them. The Pharisees and teachers of the law were those virtually all religious people looked to as examples – thinking they were certainly very good (and pleasing to God), wishing they, themselves, could do as well as the Pharisees.

Those prophesying and driving out demons were the Pentecostals of their day – again very religious and the envy of many “spiritual” folks; who, of us, can say we have done what they did (drive out demons and perform many miracles)?

And Ahaz was certainly the most religious of all Israeli’s kings – far more religious than David! Yet, he was declared wicked and evil by God.

We could be baffled by these example or somehow confused into thinking maybe we shouldn't be religious – maybe being religious is in some way bad. But no place in the *Bible* is this said or intimated. Being religious is the inevitable consequence of a religious person – it isn't being religious that is wrong; religion as evidenced by the substance underlying it makes it good or bad. The Pharisees, teachers of the law, ancient Pentecostals and Ahaz were declared wicked because they did not take Jesus Christ to the car lot! They were great on Sunday and even Monday through Saturday they did everything (and a little more) than other people expected of them, but they didn't take Jesus to the car lot; they masked everything in religion, but they did this hoping, by doing so, God would be pleased with them and give them *what they wanted*. But to sincerely seek the will of God? No way!

We may get some flavor of what this means if we imagine a teenager going to a car lot to purchase a car and not taking his father. “But it’s my money – I have a part-time job and have saved up for it – I don’t need Dad’s help!” Or if he needs Dad’s money, a son might be forced to take the father, but only because he has to and he expects Dad to get him the car he wants (and keep his opinions to himself – what does he know?).

So what does taking Jesus to the car lot really mean? How does it “play out” in day-to-day life and practical decisions? Using a car as an example of the many decisions we have to make day in and day out – is God really interested in the car we purchase? Many would say: “Give me a break – I don’t think God gives any thought to what I drive – he is and should be busy with more important things!”

What this mindset misses is that God does not build us from big to little, but from little to big. Is He developing us so we can live with Him eternally? That is the big – our being prepared, here and now, is the little. Or, as Jesus said:

“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.” Lk 16:10

Why take Jesus to the car lot? Because the car we purchase can have significant effects on the rest of our life. We tend to foolishly isolate one decision from the rest of our life, not understanding why things are not going well – we often are not faithful with the little.

- We may purchase a vehicle that we cannot afford to pay for, insure or buy the gas necessary to run it – when we do this it will have an inevitable impact on the rest of my life.
  - Will more important needs or responsibilities go unmet?
  - Will we have to beg, borrow or steal for this vehicle, sacrifices another car may not have required?
  - Will we have to work more hours to pay for this vehicle? Our hours are in short supply already – another unnecessary demand on our time may not be wise.
- Does this vehicle simply feed my pride – which is probably already at too high (and dangerous) a level?
- Are we purchasing what we cannot share for fear someone might hurt our precious car – is the purchase making me more selfish?

Yes, there are “much” effects that can be impacted by the simple decision of buying a new car – we should take Jesus to the car lot! And the grocery store, clothing store, jewelry store . . . movies, watching TV, surfing the internet . . . gym . . . work . . . Just maybe He does have some idea what is best for us – understanding the inter-related impact *seemingly* totally unrelated issues have on the rest of our life – both now and eternally.

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**Take Jesus both before, during and while at the car lot!**