In a special double issue (May/August 1993), Jerusalem Perspective presented a preview of the Jerusalem Synoptic Commentary. This preview highlighted the so-called “Rich Young Ruler” story. However, the story of a rich man who declined Yeshua’s invitation to become one of his disciples (Lk 18:18-30, and parallels) is perhaps only one segment of a much longer story. Lindsey believes that the rich man story was continued by 2 additional passages: Mt 13:44-46 and Lk 14:25-33.\(^1\) If Lindsey’s supposition is correct, the “Rich Young Ruler” episode is the opening incident in a story that originally included the Hidden Treasure and Priceless Pearl parables, and the Tower Builder and King Going to War similes. This conjectured complex of passages should properly be named, “Counting the Cost of Discipleship” or “The Cost of Being Yeshua’s Disciple.”

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1. Lindsey, JRL, 80. Elsewhere in this commentary, where credit is attributed to Lindsey but there is no reference to a published work, the reader can assume that the information was communicated to the author personally.
Mary and Martha story (Lindsey, JRL, 88-92),\(^2\) that one thing is to “put the Kingdom of Heaven above all else”—the very thing Yeshua challenged the rich man to do.

The Gk. word ἕν (one thing) in Yeshua’s statement to the rich man could be the translation of הָא (fem. form of “one”) or יָהָנָה (masc. form of “one”). Both Heb. words are sometimes used in the neuter sense, that is, in the sense of “one thing,” since Heb. has no distinct form for the neuter gender. We have used the fem. form, הָא, in HR. Cf. אַחַת שָׁאַלְתִּי מֵאֵת יְי (One thing I ask of the LORD) in Ps 27:4.

\(\text{L43} \) εἰθέλεις τέλειος εἶναι (Mt. 19:21). This is the 3rd in a series of unique Matthean readings: “the youth,” “What yet do I lack?” and “If you wish to be perfect.” Therefore, we suspect that these are changes that Matthew introduced.

Apparently, Matthew remembered the word τέλειος (perfect) from Mt 5:48, the only other place that the word appears in the Gospels, and used it here as a replacement for “There is still one thing you are lacking,” which he saw in Anth, and, in a slightly modified form, in Mark. “Perfect” seems to fit the Mt 5:43-48 context, in which Yeshua urges his disciples to be loving and merciful, like God. Lindsey suggests that in Mt 5:48 τέλειος probably represents תָּמִים (sincere, honest, morally blameless), rather than סְלֵם (complete),\(^3\) and Yeshua did not mean sinless perfection.

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3. These are the 2 possible translation equivalents: in LXX, τέλειος is 8xx the translation of the root נָתַן, and 7xx of the root שלם. Cf. Gen 6:9, “Noah was a righteous man, נָתַן in his age.”
It is unlikely that Yeshua used “perfect” in a discussion about Torah commandments. Matthew here seems to suggest that Yeshua demanded a higher perfection than the keeping of the commandments. It should be noted that Mt 19:21 was later seen as important Scriptural justification for Christian monasticism, a religious life that included the vow of poverty, the complete renunciation of personal property.

L44-46 ὑπάγε πώλησόν σου τὰ υπάρχοντα (Mt 19:21). At first glance, Matthew’s “go sell your belongings” appears to represent more idiomatic Heb. than Luke’s version, πάντα ὅσα ἔχεις πώλησον (all what things you have sell); ὑπάγε πώλησον (go sell) is the equivalent of מתחם (go sell), and is more elegant than מתחם alone. Furthermore, in Heb. the normal position of the verb is at the beginning of the clause (as here in Mt) rather than at its end (as in Mk and Lk).

However, when we compare the 3 synoptic versions of this clause, we find that ὑπάγε is not present in Lk’s parallel. The word ὑπάγε was probably introduced by Mark, and then copied from Mark by Matthew. Lindsey has pointed out that the verb ὑπάγειν is one of Mark’s stereotypic words (HTGM, 81). This casts doubts on its originality here. Furthermore, the expression that appears here in Lk, πάντα ὅσα ἔχεις (all what things you have), also appears in Mt 13:44 and 46 in the Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Priceless Pearl (L137, 142). This verbal contact caused Lindsey to conclude that the 2 parables were initially the direct continuation of the Rich Young Ruler story, since it is natural for a speaker, as he develops a teaching theme, to repeat an expression he used earlier. If it is true that these parables and the rich man episode were part of the same context, then it is probable that the expression πάντα ὅσα ἔχεις represents the Heb. ancestor text.
L45-47 πάντα ὅσα ἔχεις πώλησον καὶ διάδος πτωχοῖς (Sell everything you have and distribute it to the poor; Lk 18:22). Yeshua’s demand was probably not unique: there were streams within Jewish society that viewed poverty as an ideal. The Hasidim, for instance, believed that as long as one holds on to any wealth, one is apt to violate the higher meaning of the commandments; the only way to avoid such sin is to get rid of one’s wealth. Many people gave all of their wealth, or a large part of it, to the needy. This practice apparently became so common that the sages eventually ruled that one should give away no more than 20% of one’s wealth. Their objective was to prevent the donor from becoming destitute and constituting a burden to the community.

There is an example in rabbinic literature of someone who gave all his wealth to the poor: Yeshevav, a sage and scribe who lived at the end of the 1st cent. C.E. Rabban Gamaliel of Yavneh rebuked Yeshevav for his action: “Don't you know that the sages have ruled, ‘[One should distribute no more than] a fifth of his wealth as alms’?” The text reads, lit., “A fifth of his wealth for the mitzvah.” In “Jewish

5. Cf., for example, the tax collector Zacchaeus, who gave half of his possessions to the poor (Lk 19:8).
6. According to S. Safrai, Yeshevav was one of the Hasidim, or close to them.
7. Rabban Gamaliel became nasi, religious and political head of the Jewish people, about 80 C.E.
Palestinian Aram.” and mishnaic Heb., the word מִצְוָה (commandment) often was use in the sense of “alms, charity” (Jastrow, 823-24; Sokoloff, 325); and thus, in this context, “for the mitzvah” means “as alms.”

καὶ εἶξεις θησαυρὸν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς (and you will have treasure in heaven; Lk 18:22). Yeshua promised the rich man “treasure in heaven” for giving his wealth to the poor. Elsewhere Yeshua taught, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven....” (Mt 6:19-20). Although there is no mention of the poor in this 2nd passage, it too is probably a teaching about giving alms to the poor.

9. Luke’s equivalent is, “Sell your possessions and give alms” (Lk 12:33). This version seems to be FR’s paraphrase of a text like the one we see in Mt. In writing his revision, FR was probably influenced by the text in Anth from which Lk 18:22 is drawn.

10. It is not certain that Yeshua’s saying concerning the “good eye” and the “bad eye” (Mt 6:22-23) originally followed Mt 6:19-21. Therefore, it is not certain that Mt 6:22-23 was about giving alms to the poor: in Luke’s Gospel the 2 passages appear in different contexts (Lk 12:33-34; Lk 11:34-36). However, “good eye,” an idiom for “generosity,” is often associated with almsgiving in Jewish sources: “A generous man [lit., “good of eye”] will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor” (Prov 22:9; cf. Dt 15:7-11 [“bad eye”]). The Mishnah divides almsgivers into 4 types on the basis of whether the almsgiver possesses a “good” or “bad” eye (m. Avot 5:13). The Mishnah also teaches that one of the 3 characteristics of disciples of Abraham is a “good eye,” and that disciples who have this characteristic inherit the Garden of Eden, i.e., Paradise (m. Avot 5:19).
The following 3 examples from ancient Jewish literature illustrate the connection between giving to the poor and “storing treasure in heaven”:

Monobazus the king gave away all his wealth to the poor. His officials complained to him: “Your forefathers added to their wealth and to what their forefathers had accumulated, but you have squandered your wealth and the wealth of your forefathers.” He replied: “Certainly! My forefathers stored up on earth, but I have stored up in heaven...my forefathers stored up treasures that do not produce fruit, but I have stored up treasures that produce fruit...my forefathers accumulated mammon, but I have accumulated souls...my forefathers gathered in this world, but I have gathered for the World to Come....” (j. Peah 15b)

Monobazus became king of Adiabene, a small kingdom in northern Mesopotamia, in 55 C.E. A convert to Judaism, Monobazus is mentioned elsewhere in rabbinic literature (cf. m. Yom 3:10), and described in great detail by Josephus (Antiq 20:17-53, 75-96).

The Book of Tobit records Tobit’s exhortation to his son to be responsive to the poor:

Give alms from your possessions to all who live uprightly, and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it. Do not turn your face away from any poor man, and the face of God will not be turned away from you. If you have many possessions, make your gift from them in proportion; if few, do not be afraid to give

11. This story also appears with variations in t. Peah 4:18-19; b. BB 11a; Pesikta Rabbati 25 (ed. Friedmann, 126b).
according to the little you have. You will be laying up a good treasure for yourself against the day of necessity; for charity delivers from death [Prov 10:2] and keeps you from entering the darkness. (Tobit 4:7-10)

Ben Sira, another book of the Apocrypha, offers this advice:

Be patient with a man in humble circumstances, and do not make him wait for your alms. Help a poor man for the commandment’s sake, and because of his need do not send him away empty. Lose your silver for the sake of a brother or a friend, and do not let it rust under a stone and be lost. Lay up your treasure according to the commandments of the Most High, and it will profit you more than gold. Store up almsgiving in your treasury, and it will rescue you from all affliction; more than a mighty shield and more than a heavy spear, it will fight on your behalf against your enemy. (Ben Sira 29:8-13)

Paul’s charge to Timothy also contains a striking parallel to Yeshua’s teaching about wealth. Paul wrote of those who are rich in “this world,” of laying up treasure “as a good foundation for the future,” and of taking hold of “true life.”

People who want to be rich fall into temptation, into a trap, into many foolish and injurious desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil; through this craving some people have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee these things.... Command those who are rich in this world not to be haughty nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly offers us everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be
generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of true life. (1 Tim 6:9-11a, 17-19)\(^\text{12}\)

L50 καὶ δεῦρο ἀκολούθει μοι (and come follow me; Mt 19:21; Mk 10:21; Lk 18:22). It is very important to understand that “follow” in this context means, lit., “to walk after.” Yeshua, like contemporary sages, was on the move. Lacking modern methods of mass communication, sages had to carry their teachings to the people. Yeshua spent much of his time itinerating throughout the country, and those who wanted to learn from him were forced to follow him from place to place.\(^\text{13}\) Yeshua led the way along the dusty roads of the land, and his disciples followed behind, lit. being covered with the dust of his feet. As S. Safrai has pointed out, the correct understanding of Yose ben Yoezer’s saying, “Cover yourself with the dust of their [the sages’] feet” (m. Avot 1:4), is, “Attach yourself to a sage.”\(^\text{14}\)

Today, we often read another meaning into Yeshua’s words to the rich man. We assume that “follow Yeshua” means “become a believer in Yeshua.” Thus, we miss the point of the invitation

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12. In his interpretation of the Parable of the Sower, Yeshua also alluded to the danger of riches. Yeshua explained that the seed that do not bear fruit to maturity are those that are choked by the thorns of worries, riches and pleasures (Lk 8:14).


extended to this rich man: it was a call to join Yeshua’s traveling school of disciples. Accepting this call, of necessity, meant leaving family and property behind.

**L51-54** ὁ δὲ στυγνάσας ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ ἀπῆλθεν λυπούμενος (And being sad at the word he went away grieving; Mk 10:22). Mark’s text is “fresher,” more dramatic than Luke’s parallel: “And hearing these things he became very sad.” Matthew followed Mark in the use of “the word” and “went away.” According to Luke, the rich man did not necessarily leave. Perhaps he remained to hear the rest of Yeshua’s teaching.

**L57** ἰδὼν δὲ αὐτόν (Lk 18:24). The phrase ἰδὼν δὲ αὐτόν (and seeing him) has not been included in GR because the phrase seems to be a Gk. stylistic improvement. According to Lindsey, the word ἰδών is a Lukan editorial word: it is common in Lk but Lk never has Mt’s agreement in the use of the word in a non-Mk context (i.e., in DT), or his agreement against a Mk variant in TT, that is, the word never forms a Mt-Lk “minor agreement.”

15. The masc., sg., nom., aor. ptc. ἰδών appears 20xx in Lk: 11xx in unique Lk material (1:12; 7:13; 10:31, 32, 33; 13:12; 17:14, 15; 19:41; 22:58; 23:8); 8xx in TT material (5:8, 12, 20; 7:39; 8:28; 18:24, 43; 23:47); and once in DT material (11:38). It appears 11xx in Mt: 2xx in unique Mt material (2:16; 27:3); 6xx in TT material (8:18; 9:2, 22, 23, 36; 27:24); and 2xx in DT material (3:7; 5:1). It appears 4xx in Mk: 3xx in TT material (Mk 2:5, opposite Mt 9:2 and Lk 5:20; Mk 5:6, opposite Lk 8:28; Mk 15:39, opposite Lk 23:47); and once in a Mt-Mk pericope (Mk 11:13, opposite Mt 21:19).