

The Gospel of Mark 10

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Introduction:

This chapter records a few events from the Perea ministry of Jesus (expanded in Luke) and marks the end of His public ministry. In chapter 11 the story focuses on the events leading to the crucifixion and resurrection.

(10:1) Then Jesus left Capernaum and went down to the region of Judea and into the area east of the Jordan River. Once again crowds gathered around Him, and as usual He was teaching them.

MARK QUOTES JESUS ABOUT DIVORCE

We are focused here on what Jesus said *on this occasion*. If we discussed all of the Bible's teaching about divorce and remarriage, it would take more space than this entire 12 page lesson. We trust that what is written here will not be used to solve some of the real-world problems that arise about marriage and divorce in the church. Find out the full Word of God, not just this passage.

(2) Some Pharisees came and tried to trap Him with this question: "Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife?"

- The **Pharisees** were never looking for the truth but they were negative -- **trying to trap** Jesus instead. The Jews of the time of Jesus were divided over this issue because of Deuteronomy 24:1:

"Suppose a man marries a woman but she does not please him. Having discovered something wrong with her, he writes her a letter of divorce, hands it to her, and sends her away from his house. (2) When she leaves his house, she is free to marry another man.

The problem is in the statement about **discovering something wrong with her**. One school of thought understood this narrowly as referring to immoral behavior. The other school of thought applied this to just about anything. The question had raged for centuries, so it was a skillfully laid **trap** for Jesus. Whichever side He took, He would make enemies out of the other side, thus reducing the number of His followers.

(3) Jesus answered them with a question: "What did Moses say in the law about divorce?"

- **Jesus** took the discussion to the proper source of authority -- the Law of **Moses**. This keeps the question from being a match between existing views. Note that **Jesus** treated their question respectfully.
- The Pharisees did not answer **Jesus** directly, but came up with the answer they wanted:

(4) "Well, he permitted it," they replied. "He said a man can give his wife a written notice of divorce and send her away."

- There was no positive *command* for the critics could cite. **Permitting** something is different that *approving* it.
- The **written notice** was to protect her reputation.

(5) But Jesus responded, "He wrote this commandment only as a concession to your hard hearts."

- There was a **concession** to the hard hearts of men of Israel. But that was not in God's original plan. **Even the concession was a variant of the original plan, but God allowed it.**

Burton Coffman writes:

Christ here was not critical of Moses, nor was he setting the commandment of God over against Moses. Furthermore, he was not brushing aside the Scriptures. Moses' permission, under certain circumstances of divorce could not mean, nor did it ever mean, that God approved of divorce, except in the very limited context of its being, under some conditions, the

lesser of two evils. The same is true of divorce in all generations. It must never be viewed as something God approved; because from the beginning it was not so.

(6) But 'God made them male and female' from the beginning of creation. (7) 'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, (8) and the two are united into one.' Since they are no longer two but one, (9) let no one split apart what God has joined together."

- Jesus turns away from discussing divorce to examining the *roots* of marriage itself. It begins with the difference between man and women. God has made the distinction in their chromosomes and it is not possible for that to be changed.
- The next step is that a man is to leave his **father and mother** and be **joined to his wife**. They have become two bodies with one spirit and that spirit was not to be **split apart**.
- The sentences are prophetic because neither Adam nor Eve had any **father or mother**.
- **Don DeWalt** says:

Marriage has wrought an actual unity which is not to be broken. It is the union of one man and one woman, and the blending of life in sexual union establishes between that one man and that one woman a real unity. By

establishing such a relation the Creator showed his intention that a union thus formed should be irrevocable and inviolable, to be legitimately terminated only by death.



(10) Later, when He was alone with His disciples in the house, they brought up the subject again. (11) He told them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery against her.

- The issue of **marriage** and **divorce** was not clear to the **disciples** of Jesus so they asked **again** and He explained further.

(12) And if a woman divorces her husband and marries someone else, she commits adultery."

- It was unlikely in Israel that a **woman** would be taking legal action against her **husband**, but Mark included the statement from Jesus because he was writing to people without the Jewish heritage. This sentence is recorded only in the Mark account.
- Matthew adds that immorality is a reason for divorce. Matthew 19:9. Paul adds abandonment as grounds for divorce in 1 Corinthians 7:15.

PARENTS BROUGHT THEIR CHILDREN

(13) One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so He could touch and bless them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering Him.

- **McGarvey** says that it was customary for the president of the synagogue to pray over the children. While Jesus did not hold that role, He had become a prominent religious figure. This seeming intrusion annoyed the **disciples**. This is another case where **Jesus** sees a teaching opportunity.

(14) When Jesus saw what was happening, He was angry with His disciples. He said to them, "Let the children come to Me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children.

- Mark, probably reflecting Peter's eyewitness report, says that Jesus was **angry** with His **disciples** for discouraging the **children** and their parents because the **Kingdom of God** belongs to people who are like these children. God is looking for people with humility, people who are obedient, people who trust.
- It is clear that the children are not "totally depraved" as some teach. Instead, they were an example of some worthwhile attributes of a good life.
- Christ loved little children and the scene here is one of beauty, love and concern.

(15) I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it." (16) Then He took the children in His arms and placed His hands on their heads and blessed them.

- Jesus did confer the requested blessing on the **children**. The story that follows is a superb example of coming to Jesus like a child.
- It does not mean that **children** are in the **kingdom**.

When Jeremiah predicted the coming kingdom, all citizens knew the Lord (unlike little children):

"But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day," says the LORD. "I will put My instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be My people. And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, 'You should know the LORD.' For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know Me already," says the LORD. "And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins." (Jeremiah 31:33-34 NLT)

MAN OF WEALTH INQUIRES ABOUT ETERNAL LIFE

(17) As Jesus was starting out on His way to Jerusalem, a man came running up to Him, knelt down, and asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (18) "Why do you call Me good?" Jesus asked. "Only God is truly good."

- It was remarkable to call Jesus a **Good Teacher**. That term was not used to describe Israel's religious teachers. **Jesus** picked up on the description and said that it is only used to indicate Deity. Was the man acknowledging that **Jesus** was **God**?

(19) But to answer your question, you know the commandments: 'You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. You must not cheat anyone. Honor your father and mother.'" (20)

"Teacher," the man replied, "I've obeyed all these commandments since I was young."

- Jesus selected five of the Ten **Commandments** having to do with how we treat others and restated them. The inquirer said that he had **obeyed** them since his **youth**.

(21) Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him. "There is still one thing you haven't done," He told him. "Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me." (22) At this the man's face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

- The answer of the inquirer impressed **Jesus**. It says that **Jesus felt a genuine love for him**. Jesus could see one rule of life that was missing: *He loved money*. The problem was not that he *possessed* it, but that he *relied* on it. He was asked to make the bold move of **selling his possessions and giving the money to the poor**. In exchange for this move, Jesus offered him **treasure in heaven**. This he could not do.

WEALTH IS A HINDRANCE

(23) Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God!"

- The encounter with the man of wealth was in public. Jesus' comment was that it was difficult **for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God**. It looked to the **disciples** like there was no way to enter the **Kingdom**. **Jesus** explains:

(24) This amazed them. But Jesus said again, "Dear children, it is very hard to enter the Kingdom of God. (25) In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!"

- **The Kingdom of God** was in its preparation phase. Peter unlocked the door on Pentecost in Acts 2.
- **Mark L. Strauss** writes:

The *camel* was the largest land animal in the Middle East, and a *needle's eye* was the smallest hole imaginable.

Some commentators have tried to soften Jesus' words, claiming that there was a gate in Jerusalem known as the "Needle's Eye Gate," which a camel could get through only with great difficulty. But this is a myth. The earliest reference to such a gate comes from a commentary 1,000 years after the time of Christ!

- In Jewish thinking in the times of the New Testament, wealth was a sign of God's blessing, so wealth meant the approval of God. This led to a reaction from the disciples:

(26) The disciples were astounded. "Then who in the world can be saved?" they asked. (27) Jesus looked at them intently and said, "Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But not with God. Everything is possible with God."

- Jesus has just indicated that wealth was a drawback to entering the Kingdom, and not an asset. But God has a solution. We see wealthy people in God's favor such as Zaccheus, Joseph of Arimathea, John Mark's mother and Barnabas. **Everything is possible with God.**

WHAT THE DISCIPLES WILL GAIN

(28) Then Peter began to speak up. "We've given up everything to follow You," he said.

- **Peter** had been a successful businessman fishing on Galilee before he followed Jesus. He had acquired a prominent home in Capernaum. The foundations can still be seen today. This writer has been there.

(29) "Yes," Jesus replied, "and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or property, for My sake and for the Good News, (30) will receive now in return a hundred times as many houses,

brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and property -- along with persecution. And in the world to come that person will have eternal life.

- The selfless sharing of property and family among believers defies description. There may be **persecution** from unbelievers. The outcome of all of this is **eternal life** where the matters of earth are lost in the new-found joy of being with other saints for eternity.

(31) But many who are the greatest now will be least important then, and those who seem least important now will be the greatest then. "

- Nearly all roles in heaven are inverted from those on earth.

JESUS LEADS THE TRAVELERS TO JERUSALEM

(32) They were now on the way up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. The disciples were filled with awe, and the people following behind were overwhelmed with fear. Taking the twelve disciples aside, Jesus once more began to describe everything that was about to happen to Him.

- **Jesus** knew He would die at the hands of the Jerusalem rulers, but He still led the travelers. His **twelve disciples** were filled with **awe**. The rest of the pilgrims were filled with **fear**.

(33) "Listen," He said, "we're going up to Jerusalem, where the Son of Man will be betrayed to the leading priests and the teachers of religious law. They will sentence Him to die and hand Him over to the Romans. (34) They will mock Him, spit on Him, flog Him with a whip, and kill Him, but after three days He will rise again."

- **Going to Jerusalem** was a *climb*. It was indeed **up**. Leaving Jericho the 15 miles required a climb from 800 feet below sea level to 2,500 feet above sea level making 3,300 feet.
- Jesus repeated to His Disciples that He was headed to be **betrayed** to the Jewish officials. He would be sentenced to **death** and then actually put to **death** by the **Romans**. He also clearly described His coming **resurrection**.

(35) Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came over and spoke to Him. "Teacher," they said, "we want You to do us a favor." (36) "What is your request?" He asked. (37) They replied, "When You sit on Your glorious throne, we want to sit in places of honor next to You, one on Your right and the other on Your left."

- The two **sons of Zebedee** understood that Jesus was somehow headed for a ruling position and they wanted to sit on His right hand and left hand respectively.

(38) But Jesus said to them, "You don't know what you are asking! Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of suffering I am about to drink? Are you able to be baptized with the baptism of suffering I must be baptized with?"

- Were they able to handle the **suffering** that was coming to **Jesus**? He called it a **baptism of suffering**. He would be immersed in it.

(39) "Oh yes," they replied, "we are able!" Then Jesus told them, "You will indeed drink from My bitter cup and be baptized with My baptism of suffering. (40) But I have no right to say who will sit on My right or My left. God has prepared those places for the ones He has chosen."

- James and John agreed they could handle the **suffering**, but learned that the privilege of sitting next to **Jesus** was not His to assign, but was assigned by the Father in heaven.
- James was the first of the Twelve to lose his life for Jesus.

About that time King Herod Agrippa began to persecute some believers in the church. He had the apostle James (John's brother) killed with a sword.

(Acts 12:1-2 NLT)

John **suffered** on account of his testimony for **Jesus**:

I, John, am your brother and your partner in suffering and in God's Kingdom and in the patient endurance to

which Jesus calls us. I was exiled to the island of Patmos for preaching the word of God and for my testimony about Jesus. (Revelation 1:9 NLT)

THE LESSON OF LEADERSHIP

(41) When the ten other disciples heard what James and John had asked, they were indignant. (42) So Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. (43) But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, (44) and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else.

- The question by **James and John** generated some social problems among the remaining **disciples**. This created another teaching moment for **Jesus**. He explained that the route to **leadership** in His kingdom is to be a **servant**. In His next sentence, He shows the ultimate **leadership**: laying down one's life for the many:

(45) For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give His life as a ransom for many."

- Peter used wording like this in his own book:

God chose Him as your ransom long before the world began, but He has now revealed Him to you in these last days. (1 Peter 1:20 NLT)

BARTIMAEUS HAD HIS SIGHT RESTORED

(46) Then they reached Jericho, and as Jesus and His disciples left town, a large crowd followed Him. A blind beggar named Bartimaeus (son of Timaeus) was sitting beside the road.

- We are introduced to the story of a **blind beggar sitting beside the road**. He knew about **Jesus** already.



Jericho is among the oldest inhabited cities and lowest cities in elevation.

(47) When Bartimaeus heard that Jesus of Nazareth was nearby, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (48) "Be quiet!" many of the people yelled at him. But he only shouted louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

- **Bartimaeus** knew that **Jesus** was from the line of **David** and that He could heal.

(49) When Jesus heard him, He stopped and said, "Tell him to come here." So they called the blind man. "Cheer up," they said. "Come on, He's calling you!"

- **The blind man** had an opening with the Healer!

(50) Bartimaeus threw aside his coat, jumped up, and came to Jesus. (51) "What do you want Me to do for you?" Jesus asked. "My rabbi," the blind man said, "I want to see!"

- **Jesus** made him state what he wanted done: He wanted his **sight**. This demonstrates the man's faith in the power of **Jesus** to heal him.

(52) And Jesus said to him, "Go, for your faith has healed you." Instantly the man could see, and he followed Jesus down the road.

- As with all of the healings of **Jesus**, someone in the incident had to have **faith**. In this case, it was the person **healed**.

In the next chapter, the story continues the final trip to Jerusalem and death, followed by the glorious resurrection.