

# The Gospel of Matthew 19

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## Introduction:

This coming section happened much later as seen by events in Mark, Luke and John. It has not been Matthew's purpose to provide a seamless record of events in Christ's life.

## JESUS ABOUT DIVORCE

**(1) When Jesus had finished saying these things, He left Galilee and went down to the region of Judea east of the Jordan River. (2) Large crowds followed Him there, and He healed their sick.**

- **Albert Barnes** says that there were many events recorded in Mark, Luke and John that are skipped over by Matthew. They did not fit the purpose of his gospel story.
- When **Jesus** had finished His teaching about greatness, He left the area. Without a doubt, His disciples accompanied His travels. Large **crowds** followed Jesus and He **healed their sick**. The presence of the crowds alerted the Pharisee.

**(3) Some Pharisees came and tried to trap Him with this question: "Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife for just any reason?"**

- **Trapping** was a favorite sport of these jealous religious teachers. Among the Jews there were two views about **divorce**. Some held that **divorce** could be for any cause and others held that **divorce** was only allowed after unfaithfulness to the marriage vows. The **trappers**

figured that the answer of Jesus would alienate Him from one group or the other, reducing His influence as a teacher. But **trapping** Jesus is not possible.

**(4) "Haven't you read the Scriptures?" Jesus replied. "They record that from the beginning 'God made them male and female.'**

- **Jesus** turned the Pharisees to the written **Scriptures** (Genesis 1:27). In the **beginning God made them male and female**. This was the origin of marriage and was God's ideal plan. In our current political environment many deny there are only two sexes but it is set by **God** and cannot be changed.

**(5) And He said, 'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.'**

- **A man leaves** his parents and is **joined to his wife** and they become **one** person. This was spoken before parents existed and was therefore prophetic, intended for all time.

**(6) Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together."**

- The original language is that God has glued them together. Jesus is quoting that no one *should* split them apart. He is not saying that it is impossible. The trappers went right to work.

**(7) "Then why did Moses say in the law that a man could give his wife a written notice of divorce and send her away?" they asked.**

- Here are the verses they were talking about:

**"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. When she leaves his house, she is free to marry another man. But if the second husband also turns against her and divorces her, or if he dies, the first husband may not marry her again, for she has been defiled. That would be detestable to the LORD. You must not bring guilt upon the land the LORD your God is giving you as a special possession.**

(Deuteronomy 24:1-4 NLT)

An angry man could **not** give his wife the boot and send her down the road. He had to **hire** a scribe to **write** out a document and then **hand it** to his wife. Only then is she free to marry and she can't return to her first husband. That is really detestable to the Lord.

**(8) Jesus replied, "Moses permitted divorce only as a concession to your hard hearts, but it was not what God had originally intended.**

- **Jesus** has established what God wanted by quoting Genesis 1:27. But His Prophet **Moses** *did* permit divorce. It was *not* **what God intended**, but it was the reality of their nation.
- The trappers now have **Jesus** in a spot where He seems to be contradicting **Moses**.

**(9) And I tell you this, whoever divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery -- unless his wife has been unfaithful. [And anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.]"**

- Jesus speaks with authority. He does not cite earlier sources such as Creation events or Moses. The trappers would not be fazed by His response because they were present to prove Him wrong. They were not there to learn from God or His Son.
- **Divorcing** a **wife** and **marrying** someone else is **adultery** (unless she has been **unfaithful**). This matches what Matthew quoted Jesus as saying earlier in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:31-32.
- The sense of committing adultery may be this: For a large number of Jewish wives, her only source of food and shelter were controlled by her husband. If he divorced her, she must turn to another man for that food and housing. These were needed every day.

**(10) Jesus' disciples then said to Him, "If this is the case, it is better not to marry!"**

- The **disciples** were trying to apply the words of **Jesus** to their own lives. **Marriage** looked difficult to them if there wasn't any quick and easy way out of the contract.

**(11) "Not everyone can accept this statement," Jesus said. "Only those whom God helps."**

- **God** provides special **help** to individuals who choose not to marry for the Kingdom's sake.
- **Barclay** has a great statement in favor of marriage:

Marriage should not narrow life; it should complete it. For both partners it must bring a new fullness, a new satisfaction, a new contentment into life. It is the union of two personalities in which the two complete each other. That does not mean that adjustments, and even sacrifices, have not to be made; but it does mean that the final relationship is fuller, more joyous, more satisfying than any life in singleness could be.

**(12) Some are born as eunuchs, some have been made eunuchs by others, and some choose not to marry for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Let anyone accept this who can."**

- The word **eunuch** generally refers to a man who has been castrated, meaning that his sexual organs have been surgically removed and/or disabled. In some ancient Eastern courts, male servants who tended royal women were castrated in order to avoid the possibility of sexual activity. Advisors and others close to kings were also made eunuchs, so they would not be corrupted by sex or distracted by a family. These are the most literal kind of eunuchs, those "made...by men." -- from [www.bibleref.com](http://www.bibleref.com)
- **Some are born** without reproductive capabilities. They have no interest in **marriage**. **Some** have had their reproductive organs removed as explained above. **Some** chose not to **marry** so they can be of greater service to the **Kingdom of Heaven**.
- The disciples were listening. Note that most of them did not **marry**. Peter was **married** or had been **married**.

Being **married** did not fit well with the constant travel and occasional jailing that were the lot of the Twelve.

### **PARENTS SCOLDED**

**(13) One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so He could lay His hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering Him.**

- The **parents** were more than likely the mothers. They had seen the hands of **Jesus** cure diseases and bring normal life back to the sick. Now they wanted the Healer from Heaven to **pray** for their **children**.
- The **disciples** saw this as a **bother** and **scolded** the **parents**, but **Jesus** tempered His **disciples**, teaching them a lesson.

**(14) But Jesus said, "Let the children come to Me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children." (15) And He placed His hands on their heads and blessed them before He left.**

- The **children** were not a bother but an illustration of the **Kingdom of Heaven** that **Jesus** is introducing. **Jesus** is a master at using passing events for teaching.
- Having healed many who were sick (Matthew 14:35-36), **Jesus blessed** these **children** so they might avoid the pain and sufferings that had come to others. Other illustrations:
  - Jesus taught His Twelve to pray a **blessing** on their hosts for giving them a home to live in temporarily. If things didn't work out, they could undo their **blessing** (Matthew 10:12-13.)

- The Apostle John said “**Peace be with you**” in 3<sup>rd</sup> John verse 15. That is a **blessing**.

A **blessing** is a prepackaged prayer for some future need.

## HOW TO ACHIEVE ETERNAL LIFE

**(16) Someone came to Jesus with this question: "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?"**

- Matthew has shown a connection between the Kingdom and *children* in verse 14. Now he has a story about the Kingdom and an *adult*. This man wanted to know **what good deed must he do to have eternal life**.

**(17) "Why ask Me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. But to answer your question -- if you want to receive eternal life, keep the commandments."**

- **Jesus** redirects the understanding of **good** away from Himself and to God. He is the **only ONE** who is **good**.
- The second part of Jesus' response is for the man inquiring to keep the **commandments**.

**(18) "Which ones?" the man asked. And Jesus replied: "You must not murder. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. (19) Honor your father and mother. Love your neighbor as yourself."**

- **Jesus** listed five commandments: murder, adultery, stealing, false witness and honor one's parents. He capped off the list with **Love your neighbor as yourself**.

**(20) "I've obeyed all these commandments," the young man replied. "What else must I do?"**

- **The young man replied** that he had done these. What else should he do? He must not have been content with his current condition and was looking for greater assurance.
- We know that no person keeps the law perfectly, but this man was counting on perfect obedience as his route to eternal life. Now Jesus will dismantle his view of perfectly keeping the law.

**(21) Jesus told him, "If you want to be perfect, go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me."**

- **Jesus** tests his degree of loving his neighbor. **Jesus** asks him to **sell** all of his **possessions** and **give the money to the poor**. The result will be that he **will have treasure in heaven**.
- Secondly the rich man was **to follow Jesus**. This meant a life of rejection, of struggles with the religious leaders who hated Jesus and His followers. He would be reduced to the difficult life the other followers were experiencing. He would have no servants.

**(22) But when the young man heard this, he went away sad, for he had many possessions.**

- The rich **young man** was looking for support and an emotional boost, but there was none. He left **sad**.



**(23) Then Jesus said to His disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is very hard for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.**

- As usual, **Jesus** made this disappointing story into a teaching event for His **disciples**.

**(24) I'll say it again -- 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!"**

- **William MacDonald** says,

He was using a figure of speech known as hyperbole—a statement made in intensified form to produce a vivid, unforgettable effect.

**(25) The disciples were astounded. "Then who in the world can be saved?" they asked.**

- It was current Jewish thinking that personal wealth was a proof of God's favor. Since this man was rich, his wealth stood as evidence that he had good standing with God. Jesus addresses this incorrect view of life and eternity.

**(26) Jesus looked at them intently and said, Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible."**

- **Jesus** wanted the attention of His men. He **looked at them intently**.
- **God** can provide solutions that are beyond our human capability

(27) Then Peter said to Him, "We've given up everything to follow You. What will we get?"

- **Peter** was checking out his eternal pay package.

(28) Jesus replied, "I assure you that when the world is made new and the Son of Man sits upon His glorious throne, you who have been My followers will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

- Translations differ sharply in this sentence. We prefer the **New American Standard:**

And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

- **Burton Coffman** describes this situation accurately:

This was not a reference to literal thrones but to spiritual thrones of eminence and authority in Christ's kingdom, from which they should exercise influence, not over fleshly Israel but over the spiritual Israel which is the church (Romans 9:6; Galatians 3:29).

Note that no preference was given Peter. There was not to be one throne, occupied by Peter and his successors, but twelve thrones, implying the equality of the Twelve.

The word of the apostles, that is, the New Testament, is the instrument through which they exercise the authority that Jesus granted them in this promise.

"Times of the regeneration" refers to the times of the new birth, namely, the time of the present dispensation when men are hearing the gospel, obeying it, and being born again.

.... Christ and the Twelve are NOW reigning in his kingdom. The reign will continue until all enemies have been put under foot (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). When death, the last enemy, is destroyed, Christ will not *initiate a reign* but *will end it*, delivering up the kingdom to the Father.

**Together, we are His house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus Himself.** (Ephesians 2:20 NLT)

**(29) And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or property, for My sake, will receive a hundred times as much in return and will inherit eternal life. (30) But many who are the greatest now will be least important then, and those who seem least important now will be the greatest then.**

- If Peter is asking about himself, the answer is marvelous. He (and anyone else) will receive a **hundred times** as much as they gave to up to follow Jesus plus **inheriting eternal life**.
- There will be a switch in importance with the least **important now** becoming **greatest then**.