



Lesson 7

Chapter 19: Entering the Kingdom

A Question about Divorce (19:1-12)

Great multitudes of people followed Jesus from Galilee in the north to Judea in the south and he continued to heal those who came to him.

The Pharisees asked Jesus about divorce in order to test him. Remember, Herod had taken his brother's wife and John Baptist had lost his life protesting about it. Notice how Jesus went to the Old Testament for guidance. When we are faced with difficult moral questions we should also turn to the Bible. Jesus showed that what God set up originally (Genesis 2:24) was meant to last for life because when a man marries he:

- leaves his parents
- 'holds fast' to his wife
- becomes 'one flesh' with her
- has been joined by God to his wife
- must not allow anyone to separate them.

Jesus said that the only reason a man could divorce his wife was if she had been unfaithful, otherwise a man who divorced his wife and married another was committing adultery.

God intended marriage to last for life so that a man and his wife would always love and care for each other, working together to serve their Creator. This stable relationship provides the ideal situation in which to bring up children.

In his reply to the disciples' question Jesus knew that some men would remain unmarried because they were physically unable to have a marital relationship. However, there would also be some who would choose to remain unmarried so that they could give all of their time and energy working for the Lord. Jesus himself did not marry for this reason.

'What Good Deed must I do to have Eternal Life?' (19:16-26)

A rich young man came to Jesus. He asked Jesus what he should **do** to obtain eternal life. He did not understand that we cannot earn eternal life by the things we **do**. It is God's **gift** to those who live by faith, trying their best to please Him.

By comparing the other Gospel accounts of this incident we discover that the young man was a ruler (read Luke 18:18) and Jesus loved him (read Mark 10:21). When Jesus told him to keep the commandments, he asked which ones. Jesus listed them and the young man replied that he had kept all the commandments Jesus had mentioned. Jesus then dealt with the one he knew the man had not kept - "*You shall not covet*" (desire what belongs to someone else).

"And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, 'You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.'" (Mark 10:21)

The young man loved his riches too much so he turned away in sorrow, unable to make the commitment to follow Jesus.

His story does not mean that every disciple of Jesus is called to give up all his possessions. For example, shortly after this incident Jesus met another wealthy man, Zacchaeus (Luke 19: 1-9). Zacchaeus was not asked to sell all that he had, although he did give half of his possessions to the poor. Some people are able to use their wealth wisely while following Jesus; for others, who always want more, the safest course is to get rid of it.

The disciples found this teaching of Jesus very difficult, they were astonished and said - '*who then can be saved*'. Jesus replied:





“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”
(Matthew 19:26)

We know that it is impossible for us to **do** God's will perfectly to gain our salvation. It is God who made it possible by sending His Son to live and die for us.

“More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” (Romans 5:11)

Blessings on the faithful (19:27-29)

However, the Apostles still struggled with this teaching and Peter reminded Jesus of what they had given up to follow him. They had left their families and homes behind, so what would they have in the kingdom? Jesus told them they would have highly honoured places, ruling the tribes of Israel. Everyone who gives up things that keep him from following Jesus will receive far more, including everlasting life, when Jesus returns.

This is a great comfort to all disciples today. Sometimes we might regret that we gave up things which are against God's teaching in order to be a disciple. We should remind ourselves that this is only for a little while and that we shall be given gifts and honours greater than we can imagine in God's kingdom and these will last forever. It is our hope of being with Jesus in his kingdom which will keep us strong in our faith and commitment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: 'SON OF MAN' (19:28)

We know that Jesus was God's only begotten Son, born by the power of the Holy Spirit on Mary and God acknowledged him as His Son.

“A voice from heaven said, This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17)

However, Jesus rarely referred to himself as the Son of God (we only find him using this title in John's Gospel). Instead he frequently called himself the Son of Man as we read in this chapter.

“Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

This phrase is one that we meet many times in the Bible and it tells us of Jesus who never misused his position as the Son of God but always humbled himself to do God's will.

“...who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:6-8)