



Chapter 19

The Judean Ministry & Instructions of the King

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The King's withdrawal from the crowds was about to come to an end. But the attacks of the enemy would grow more intense, culminating in His arrest and crucifixion. The religious leaders had already tried to ensnare Him with questions about the Sabbath and signs, and they had failed. They tried again, this time with a most controversial issue of divorce.

In the movement in Matthew, our attention is now directed to the geography of the gospel. Jesus again enters Judea as He moves to Jerusalem for the last time before His crucifixion. There is definite intention in all that He does and says.

ESV Introduction: Valuing the Kingdom Community. The great Galilean ministry has now ended, and Jesus and his disciples begin the momentous journey to Jerusalem. Jesus explains the sanctity of marriage (19:3–12) and reveals the tragedy of the rich young man (19:16–22), in contrast to the gracious reward awaiting those who follow him (19:23–30). This leads to the parable of the vineyard workers (20:1–16). Jesus then gives his third prediction of his death (20:17–19) and sets an example for community sacrifice, suffering, and service (20:20–28). As he and his disciples begin their ascent to Jerusalem, Jesus mercifully heals two blind men in Jericho (20:29–34).

Matthew 19:1

And it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan;

[finished these sayings] The words of Matthew 17:24-18:35.

[coasts of Judaea] The border of Judea which was on the east of Jordan. He was on His way to Jerusalem through Jericho to suffer and die for the world (Matthew 20:17).

[beyond Jordan] By the side of Jordan, which is the border between Judea and Perea.

Beyond Jordan—Or, by the side of Jordan. Matthew begins here to give an account of Christ's journey (the only one he mentions) to Jerusalem, a little before the Passover, at which he was crucified. See Mark 10:1; Luke 9:51.

Jesus came from Galilee (which lay to the north of Judea) into the coasts of Judea; and from thence, in his way to Jerusalem, he went through Jericho, (Matthew 20:17, 29), which lay at the distance of sixty furlongs, or seven miles and a half from Jordan, to the western side of it.¹

¹ Adam Clarke's Commentary

Coasts of Judea beyond Jordan. Probably our Savior was then going from Galilee up to Jerusalem, to one of the great feasts of the Jews. *Samaria* was between Galilee and Jerusalem; and, choosing not to go through it, he crossed the Jordan, and passed down on the east side of it, through Perea, a region of country belonging to Judea, formerly a part of the tribes Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh.²

McGee: “When Jesus had finished these sayings”—what sayings? The ones we have been considering in chapters 16–18. Having finished what He wanted to say in Galilee, He moved south and came into the borders of Judea, beyond Jordan, meaning the east bank of the Jordan River. The movement is in a physical and geographical sense now. Up yonder in Caesarea Philippi He announced that He was going to Jerusalem to die. He moved down into Galilee, and He spent time in that area around the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum was His headquarters, and He even crossed over into Gadara. Now He is on the border of Judea.³

And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee—This marks a very solemn period in our Lord’s public ministry. So slightly is it touched here, and in the corresponding passage of Mark (Mk 10:1), that few readers probably note it as the Redeemer’s *Farewell to Galilee*, which however it was. See on the sublime statement of Luke (Lu 9:51), which relates to the same transition stage in the progress of our Lord’s work.⁴

Matthew 19:2

And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there.

Great multitudes followed him—Some to be instructed—some to be healed—some through curiosity—and some to ensnare him.

McGee: I want to put two words together and emphasize what has been emphasized before several times. One word is *multitudes* and the other word is *healed*. It was not just a few people that were healed; multitudes were healed. I am more and more impressed by this as time goes on. If you are going to be a faith healer, brother, you ought to go to the hospitals and empty them. That is what our Lord did when He passed by; if anyone wanted to be healed, they could be healed. Multitudes were healed!⁵

² Barnes’s Notes

³ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:102). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 19:1). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

⁵ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:102). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there—Mark says further (Mk 10:1), that “as He was wont, He taught them there.” What we now have on the subject of divorce is some of that teaching.⁶

Matthew 19:3

The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

There were two schools of thought:

Hillel - anything reason (like bad cooking!)

Shammai - only adultery.

This was a dispute among the sects of the Pharisees.

[tempting him] Trying to ensnare Him (Matthew 26:3, refs.).

Tempting him. This means, to get him, if possible, to express an opinion that should involve him in difficulty. There was the more art in this captious question which they proposed, as at that time the people were very much divided on the subject. A part, following the opinions of *Hillel*, said, that a man might divorce his wife for any offence, or any dislike he might have of her. Matthew 5:31. Others, of the school of *Shammai*, maintained, that divorce was unlawful, except in case of adultery. Whatever opinion, therefore, Christ expressed, they expected that he would involve himself in difficulty with one of their parties.⁷

[put away] Divorce (Matthew 5:31).

[every cause] This must be kept in mind in dealing with this question. The real issue here is divorce for "every cause," not divorce for fornication which was lawful (Deut. 24:1-4). This was the great controversy among the Jews at this time (note, "Mark 10:2). Rabbis had made void Deut. 24:1-4. They now permitted divorce on many frivolous grounds, such as careless seasoning of food, causing the husband to eat food which had not been tithed, going into the street with loose or uncombed hair, spinning in the street, loud talk or constant talking in the home, the husband's finding one more beautiful than his wife and many other things.

What made our Lord's situation at present so critical in respect to this question was: At this time there were two famous divinity and philosophical schools among the Jews, that of SHAMMAI, and that of HILLEL. On the question of divorce, the school of Shammai maintained, that a man could not legally put away his wife, except for whoredom. The school of Hillel taught that a man might put away his wife for a multitude of other causes, and when she did not find grace in his sight; i.e. when he saw any other woman that

⁶Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 19:2). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

⁷Barnes' Notes

pleased him better. See the case of Josephus, mentioned in the note on Matthew 5:31 (note), and Calmet's Comment, vol. i. part ii. p. 379. By answering the question, not from Shammai or Hillel, but from Moses, our blessed Lord defeated their malice, and confounded their devices.

John was put in prison and killed, at least in part, for his public opinions on marriage and divorce, so the Pharisees hoped to trap Jesus too. They were trying to trick Jesus by having him choose sides in a theological controversy. Two schools of thought represented two opposing views of divorce. One group supported divorce for almost any reason. The other believed that divorce could be allowed only for marital unfaithfulness. This conflict hinged on how each group interpreted Deut. 24:1-4. In his answer, however, Jesus focused on marriage rather than divorce. He pointed out that God intended marriage to be permanent and gave four reasons for the importance of marriage (Matthew 19:4-6).⁸

McGee: The Pharisees came to tempt or to *test* Him. They were after Him, trying to put Him in opposition to the Mosaic system. They brought a problem which is just as difficult today as it was then. "Is it lawful for a man to put away [divorce] his wife for every cause?" That is an equally live issue among Christians in our day.

Let me preface this a little by saying that God has given to all of mankind certain things for the welfare of the human family. For instance, He has given marriage for the protection of the home. Marriage is something which God has given to be a blessing to mankind whether saved or unsaved. Another example is that of capital punishment which God gave for the protection of a nation, to protect the lives of its citizens. Also God gave the Sabbath law for the protection of the individual, that he might have one day of rest. God gave these laws to protect the individual, the family, and the nation. These were general laws which He gave to all mankind. Later on, He made them specific for His chosen people.

Now let's look at this question concerning marriage. Here it is in the smaller context of the nation Israel, of course. And we look at it today in the light of the contemporary Christian. "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?"⁹

ESV: Pharisees . . . tested him. See note on 3:7. The religious leaders try to get Jesus to incriminate himself through misinterpreting the law. **divorce.** There was a significant debate between Pharisaical parties on the correct interpretation of Moses' divorce regulations (Deut. 24:1), as noted in this excerpt from the Mishnah, *Gittin* 9.10: "The school of Shammai says: A man may not divorce his wife unless he has found unchastity in her. . . . And the school of Hillel says: [He may divorce her] even if she spoiled a dish for him. . . . Rabbi Akiba says, [he may divorce her] even if he found another fairer than she" (see Mishnah, *Gittin* 9 for an example of a Jewish certificate of divorce and the terms required for remarriage; see also Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 4.253 for the phrase "whatsoever cause")

⁸ Life Application Notes

⁹ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:102). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Spurgeon: Here are these vipers again! What perseverance in malice! Little cared they for instruction, yet they assumed the air of inquirers. In truth, they were upon the catch, and were ready to dispute with him whatever he might say. The question is cunningly worded "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" The looser the terms of a question, the more likely is it to entangle the person interrogated. Their own consciences might have told them that the marriage bond is not to be severed for any and every reason that a man likes to mention. Yet it was a question much disputed at the time, whether a man could send away his wife at pleasure, or whether there must be some serious reason alleged. Whatever Jesus might say, the Pharisees meant to use his verdict against him.¹⁰

Matthew 19:4

And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female,

No evolution here, all design, purpose. This should settle the question of evolution.

Made them male and female—Merely through the design of matrimonial union, that the earth might be thus peopled. To answer a case of conscience, a man should act as Christ does here; pay no regard to that which the corruption of manners has introduced into Divine ordinances, but go back to the original will, purpose, and institution of God. Christ will never accommodate his morality to the times, nor to the inclinations of men. What was done at the beginning is what God judged most worthy of his glory, most profitable for man, and most suitable to nature.¹¹

And he answered and said, Instead of referring to the opinions of either party, Jesus called their attention to the original design of marriage, to the authority of Moses—an authority acknowledged by them both.

Have ye not read. Genesis 1:27, 2:21,22.

And said, For this cause, Genesis 2:24. That is, God at the beginning made but one man and one woman; their posterity should learn that the original intention of marriage was, that a man should have but one wife.

Shall leave father and mother. This means, shall bind himself more strongly to his wife than he was to his father or mother. The marriage connection is the most tender and endearing of all human relations; more tender than even that bond which unites us to a parent.

Spurgeon: In his reply, Jesus challenges their knowledge of the law: "Have ye not read?" It was a forcible mode of appealing to their own boasted acquaintance with the books of Moses. Our Lord honors Holy Scripture by drawing his argument therefrom. He

¹⁰ Spurgeon's Commentary on Matthew

¹¹ Adam Clarke's Commentary

chose specially to set his seal upon a part of the story of creation — that story which modern critics speak of as if it were fable or myth. He took his hearers back to the beginning when God made them male and female, and made them sons. "In the image of God created he him; male and female created he them " (Ge 1:27). The woman was taken out of man, and Adam truly said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" (Ge 2:23). By marriage this unity is set forth and embodied under divine sanction. This oneness is of the most real and vital kind: "They are no more twain, but one flesh." All other ties are feeble compared with this: even father and mother must stand second to the wife: "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and, shall cleave to his wife." Being divinely appointed, this union must not be broken by the caprice of men: "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Our Lord thus decides for the life-long perpetuity of the marriage bond, in opposition to those who allowed divorce for "every cause", which very frequently meant for no cause whatever, **And shall cleave to his wife**. The word *cleave* denotes a union of the firmest kind. It is, in the original, taken from *gluing*, and means so firmly to adhere together that nothing can separate them.¹²

They twain shall be one flesh. That is, they two, or that were two, shall be united *as one*-one in law, in feeling, in interest, and in affection. They shall no longer have separate interests, but shall act in all things *as if* they were *one*-animated by one soul and one wish. The argument of Jesus here is, that since they are so intimately united as to be one, and since in the beginning God made but one woman for one man, it follows that they cannot be separated but by the authority of God. Man may *not* put away his wife for every cause. What *God* has joined together, man may not put asunder. In this decision he *really* decided in favour of one of the parties; and it shows that when it was proper, Jesus answered questions, from whatever cause they might have been proposed, and however much difficulty it might involve him in. Our Lord, in this, also showed consummate wisdom. He answered the question, not from Hillel or Shammai, their teachers, but from Moses, and thus defeated their malice.¹³

McGee: The Lord Jesus took them back to the very beginning, back to God's ideal of marriage. The Mosaic Law had permitted divorce on a broad basis: "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house" (Deut. 24:1).

As far as the Mosaic Law was concerned, a divorce was not as bad as was marriage to a stranger. For instance, if the priest's daughter married a stranger, she was shut out from the nation Israel. However, as time went on, the Mosaic Law was made meaningless, and the granting of divorce was done on the flimsiest pretexts, such as burning the bread. As a result, there was a great deal of discussion relative to divorce in our Lord's day.¹⁴

¹² Spurgeon's Commentary on Matthew

¹³ Barnes' Notes

¹⁴ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:102). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Yashanet.com: As mentioned earlier, "man" was made in the image of God - which is male and female:

Genesis 1:27 - *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*

"Unity" is an important subject in the Scriptures. At this time, creation is not in a state of unity. This will return fully when the Kingdom is established. Until that time, those who follow God are to work toward the "repair" (*tikkun*) of creation, bringing healing and peace into the lives of all we meet (as well as in their personal relationships with God).

The commandments of God, given in the Torah, are geared toward *tikkun*, at both physical and spiritual levels. Divorce goes against this principle of *tikkun*, therefore it is not the will of God.

Matthew 19:5

And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

Quoted from Gen 2:24. Quoted 2x by Jesus and 2x by Paul.

(Gen 2:24) *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*

The concept of cleaving also involves the concept of leaving mother and father. God's intended plan was two by two. No polygamy, bigamy... Man and wife, singular. The intent was to be for their lifetime.

For this cause—Being created for this very purpose; that they might glorify their Maker in a matrimonial connection. A man shall leave (καταλειψαι, wholly give up) both father and mother—the matrimonial union being more intimate and binding than even paternal or filial affection;—and shall be closely united, προσκολληθησεται, shall be firmly cemented to his wife. A beautiful metaphor, which most forcibly intimates that nothing but death can separate them: as a well-glued board will break sooner in the whole wood, than in the glued joint. So also the Hebrew word דִּבְקָה *debak* implies.

And they twain shall be one flesh?—Not only meaning, that they should be considered as one body, but also as two souls in one body, with a complete union of interests, and an indissoluble partnership of life and fortune, comfort and support, desires and inclinations, joys and sorrows. Farther, it appears to me, that the words in Genesis 2:24, לְבָסָר אֶחָד *lebasar achad*, for one flesh, which our Lord literally translates, mean also, that children, compounded as it were of both, should be the product of the matrimonial connection. Thus, they two (man and woman) shall be for the producing of one flesh, the very same kind of human creature with themselves.¹⁵

[For this cause] Genesis 2:24, Ephesians 5:31

¹⁵ Adam Clarke's Commentary

shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?—Jesus here sends them back to the original constitution of man as one pair, a male and a female; to their marriage, as such, by divine appointment; and to the purpose of God, expressed by the sacred historian, that in all time one man and one woman should by marriage become one flesh—so to continue as long as both are in the flesh. This being *God's* constitution, let not *man* break it up by causeless divorces.¹⁶

ESV: What . . . God has joined together implies that marriage is not merely a human agreement but a relationship in which God changes the status of a man and a woman from being single (**they are no longer two**) to being married (**one flesh**). From the moment they are married, they are unified in a mysterious way that belongs to no other human relationship, having all the God-given rights and responsibilities of marriage that they did not have before. Being “one flesh” includes the sexual union of a husband and wife (see Gen. 2:24), but it is more than that because it means that they have left their parents' household (“a man shall leave his father and his mother,” Gen. 2:24) and have established a new family, such that their primary human loyalty is now to each other, before anyone else. **let not man separate**. Jesus avoids the Pharisaic argument about reasons for divorce and goes back to the beginning of creation to demonstrate God's intention for the institution of marriage. It is to be a permanent bond between a man and a woman that joins them into one new union that is consecrated by physical intercourse (Gen 2:24).

Matthew 19:6

Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

[joined together, let not man put asunder] Many today claim that all married people are not joined together by God, so they are free to marry the one God intended them to have. The fact is that God recognizes all legal marriages and will hold people responsible for their vows (Romans 13:1-10).¹⁷

What therefore God hath joined together—yoked together, as oxen in the plough, where each must pull equally, in order to bring it on. Among the ancients, when persons were newly married, they put a yoke upon their necks, or chains upon their arms, to show that they were to be one, closely united, and pulling equally together in all the concerns of life.

[What therefore] 1 Corinthians 7:10

McGee: This was God's original plan for man and woman before sin entered the human family. Divorce was not in God's original plan. Why? Because *sin* was not in God's

¹⁶Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 19:5). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

¹⁷ Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

original plan, and divorce is always a result of sin. Regardless of what you may say, there is sin in the relationship somewhere which causes divorce. So our Lord took them back to the original plan of God.¹⁸

Divorce (*apostasiou*, Gk.) is literally “to remove either spatially or from the center of a state or relationship” or “to break fellowship.” The biblical teaching on divorce can only be understood against the background of Jesus’ view of marriage. Marriage was a sacred concept to Jesus. The permanence of the contract of marital union is stressed by the fact that two people become one flesh. No one would contemplate severing even a limb, much less half of his torso. Yet, this is precisely the emotional and spiritual result of the fracturing of marriage. Furthermore, divorce is a device of men created to annul, as it were, the authority of God. Moses allowed divorce as a concession (an effort to protect ill-treated Hebrew wives), sin encouraged the practice (polygamy brought murder and revenge), and human nature coerced it (the hardness of hearts, cf. Deut 24:1-4). The Pharisees sought to trap Jesus on the divorce question (v. 3). The followers of Shammai were the conservatives in that they believed divorce should be granted only because of unchastity, adultery, or something scandalous. On the other hand, Hillel, the more liberal, argued for divorce for any reason, i.e., “if she finds no favor in your eyes.” Jesus refers to neither rabbi, nor does He directly refer to Moses. Rather, He goes back to the beginning, quoting the divinely inspired words of Adam (vv. 4-6), because the answer to this problematic issue does not lie in legal codes or traditional practices but in God’s design in creation (Gen 2:24). God does not condone the corruption of divine ordinances, nor does He accommodate or compromise His morality (v. 4). The Pharisees had made the “permission” of the Law a “command,” giving way to human stubbornness instead of divine plan and purpose. Why then does God reject divorce? (1) Marriage is a divine institution (v. 4). (2) Marriage is by express command (v. 5). (3) Marriage makes two people become one flesh (v. 6). (4) The first couple show unbroken unity of lives (v. 8). (5) There are evil consequences in separation (v. 9).¹⁹

Matthew 19:7

They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

Misquote. Moses did not command, Moses allowed. (Jesus authenticates that Deut is written by Moses!) This was a misquote of Deut 24:1-4. Moses did not command, Moses *allowed*. It is the interpretation of this phrase that divided the two schools of Rabbi Hillel and Rabbi Shammai, famous first-century Jewish scholars. Hillel took a very lax view and said that the husband could divorce his wife for almost any reason, while Shammai took the stricter view and said Moses was speaking only about sexual sin. No matter which side Jesus took, He would surely offend somebody.²⁰

¹⁸McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:103). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹⁹Believers Study Bible

²⁰Chuck Missler, Notes on Matthew, khouse.org

Why did Moses, To this they objected that *Moses* had allowed such divorces, Deuteronomy 24:1 and if he had allowed them, they inferred that they could not be unlawful. Matthew 5:31. "Why did Moses" Deuteronomy 24:1, Isaiah 1:1

Spurgeon: Every reader of the passage in the books of Moses which is here referred to will be struck with the Pharisees' unfair rendering of it. In (De 24:1,2), we read: "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife." Moses commanded nothing in this instance; but barely tolerated, and greatly limited a custom then in vogue. To set Moses against Moses is not a new device; but the Pharisees would hardly venture to set Moses against God, and make him command an alteration of a divine law ordained from the beginning; yet our Lord made them see that they would have to do this to maintain the theory of easy divorce. The fact is, that Moses found divorce in existence to an almost unlimited extent, and he wisely commenced its overthrow by curtailing the custom rather than by absolutely forbidding it at once. They were not allowed to send away a wife with a hasty word, but must make a deliberate, solemn ceremonial of it by preparing and giving a writing of divorcement; and this was only allowed in a special case: "because he hath found some uncleanness in her." Although many of the Pharisees spirited away this last limitation, and considered that the enactment in Deuteronomy sanctioned almost unlimited divorce, they were not unanimous in the matter, and were perpetually disputing over it. Hence there were many ways in which our Lord's decision could be turned against him, whatever it might be.

Matthew 19:8

He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

[hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives] Stating why Moses allowed divorce for fornication. Moses saw that if he did not permit divorce many women would suffer untold hardships from ungodly husbands.

[but from the beginning it was not so] and they will not be in the eternal kingdom when Christ reigns over the natural generations forever (Genesis 8:22; Genesis 9:12; Isaiah 59:20; Luke 1:32-33; Rev. 11:15; Rev. 22:4-5; Daniel 7:13-14).

He saith unto them, Jesus *admits* that this was allowed; but still he contends that this was not the *original design* of marriage. It was only a temporary expedient, growing out of a peculiar state of things, and not designed to be perpetual. It was on account of *the hardness of their hearts*. Moses found the custom in use. He found a hard-hearted and rebellious people. In this state of things he did not deem it prudent to forbid a practice so universal: but it might be regulated; and, instead of suffering the husband to divorce his wife *in a passion*, he required him, in order that he might take time to consider the matter,

and thus make it probable that divorces would be less frequent, to give her a writing; to sit down deliberately, to look at the matter, and probably also to bring the case before some *scribe* or learned man, to write a divorce in the legal form. Thus doing, there might be an opportunity for the matter to be reconciled, and the man to be persuaded not to divorce his wife. This, says our Saviour, was a permission growing out of a particular state of things, and designed to remedy a prevailing evil. But at first it was not so. God intended that marriage should be between one man and one woman, and that they were only to be separated by appointment of him who had formed the union.²¹

Hardness of your hearts. He speaks here of his hearers as a part of the nation. The hardness of *you Jews*; as when we say, *we fought with England*, and gained our independence; that is, we the American people, though it was done by our fathers, lie does not mean to say, therefore, that this was done on account of the people that he addressed, but of the *national* hardness of heart—the cruelty of the Jewish people as a people.

"Why did Moses" Deuteronomy 24:1, Isaiah 1:1

This law is found in Deut. 24:1-4. In Moses' day, as well as in Jesus' day, the practice of marriage fell far short of God's intention. The same is true today. Jesus said that Moses gave this law only because of the people's hard hearts—permanent marriage was God's intention. But because sinful human nature made divorce inevitable, Moses instituted some laws to help its victims. These were civil laws designed especially to protect the women who, in that culture, were quite vulnerable when living alone. Because of Moses' law, a man could no longer just throw his wife out—he had to write a formal letter of dismissal. This was a radical step toward civil rights, for it made men think twice about divorce. God designed marriage to be indissoluble. Instead of looking for reasons to leave each other, married couples should concentrate on how to stay together (Matthew 19:3-9).²²

McGee: Why did Moses permit it? Because of the hardness of their hearts. You see, marriage was given to mankind, and it is the tenderest and the sweetest of human relationships. There is nothing like it. And, actually, marriage was to represent the relationship between Christ and the church. Therefore, only believers can set forth this high and holy relationship. However, when they fail, and bitterness and hardness of heart enter in, then that marriage becomes a hollow sham, and it is just a mockery of marriage. My friend, marriage is either made in heaven or in hell—there is no third place to make it. When marriage is made in the wrong place, it is in trouble to begin with. Even Christians find that marriage becomes a very shaky proposition.

Because of the hardness of the human heart, God permitted divorce. God is merciful to us—oh, how merciful! But His ideal is never divorce. I recognize that we are living in a culture which is very lax in this area. There are multitudes of divorced folk who will be reading this book. Let me repeat that the background of divorce is always sin. But, after

²¹ Barnes' Notes

²² Life Application Notes

all, all of us are sinners. Since God can forgive murderers, He can also forgive divorced folk. But we need to recognize that the root cause of divorce is sin.

Now our Lord is going to give something new—²³

JNTC: 3–9 The only text in the Five Books of Moses dealing with divorce is Deuteronomy 24:1–4, and its discussion of grounds is perfunctory. Hillel and Shammai, who lived in the generation before Yeshua, took opposing sides in interpreting this passage.

“The School of Shammai say a man may not divorce his wife unless he has found unchastity in her, as it is said, ‘... because he has found in her *indecenty* in a matter.’ But the School of Hillel say he may divorce her even if she burns his food, as it is said, ‘... because he has found in her indecenty *in a matter.*’ ” (Mishna: Gittin 9:10)

Yeshua in v. 9 agrees with the strict-constructionist *Beit-Shammai*. But although *Beit-Hillel*'s lenient position became the halakhic norm, Rabbi El'azar, a member of *Beit-Hillel*, commented in the Gemara to this *mishna*, “When a man divorces his first wife, even the altar sheds tears,” citing Deuteronomy 24:13–14 as evidence (Gittin 90b). There is a Jewish tradition that in Messianic times the stricter rulings of *Beit-Shammai* will become the standard.

Yeshua in adducing Scripture harks back to **the beginning**, in Gan-Eden (vv. 4–5), to support his view that a marriage must not be dissolved for anything less than the most direct insult to its one-flesh integrity, **adultery**. Verse 9 may imply that divorce without remarriage is allowable for lesser reasons (see 5:31–32&NN). A second ground for divorce is given at 1C 7:12–16&N.²⁴

ESV: Because of your hardness of heart should not be understood to mean that only “hard-hearted” people would ever initiate a divorce. Rather, it means, “because there was hard-hearted rebellion against God among you, leading to serious defilement of marriages.” The presence of sin in the community meant that some marriages would be seriously defiled and irretrievably damaged, and God therefore provided divorce as a solution in those cases. **Moses allowed you to divorce**. The Pharisees had asked why Moses commanded divorce (v. 7), but Jesus corrects them, showing that divorce is not what God intended from the beginning, and that even when it is allowed, it is permitted only on very specific grounds but never required. See note on Deut. 24:1–4. **From the beginning it was not so** points back to God's original intent that marriage would be lifelong.

Yashanet.com: An interesting subject here, if divorce is wrong in God's sight, why did He allow for divorce in the Torah? (which is of course His revelation to us).

Although the Torah does not speak in favor of divorce, polygamy, slavery or war, it does set up "rules" for how to deal with these things. Why is this?

The answer lies in the principle that the Torah was given because of sin. The Torah is dealing with a sin situation that has been in effect for quite some time. Recognizing that

²³McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:103). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

²⁴Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 19:3). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

man has an evil inclination (called the *yetzer hara* in Hebrew), and is going to sin, the Torah on its most "basic level," keeps man "in check," so that he doesn't go too far from God's ways.

The Talmud says of this:

Kiddushin 21b - *The Torah is only speaking against the yetzer hara.*

God, who understands our weaknesses, knows that an outright "No" can provoke our desire to sin, hence the Torah commands "regulating" certain issues. However, continued study into the deeper meanings of the Torah will then show man that although God "allows" for these things, they are not reflective of His perfect character.

One of the things Messiah was/is promised to do (in Judaism) is to reveal these deeper meanings of the Torah so that God's people can better conform themselves to the image of God and work as His "partners" toward *tikkun*. We saw Yeshua do this in chapters 5 through 7 of this gospel. Here, He continues to do the same.

Spurgeon: Moses tolerated and circumscribed an evil custom which he knew that such a people would not relinquish after its having been established among them for so long a time. They could not bear a higher law, and so he treated them as persons diseased with hardness of heart, hoping to lead them back to an older and better state of things by possible stages. As impurity ceased, and as the spirit of true religion would influence the nation, the need for divorce, and even the least desire for it, would die out. There was no provision in paradise for Adam's putting away Eve; there was no desire for divorce in the golden age. The enactment of the Mosaic law of divorce was modern and temporary; and in the form into which a loose interpretation of Scripture had distorted it, it was not defensible.

Matthew 19:9

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

[Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery] Any man who divorces his wife for any cause except fornication commits adultery if he marries another. Any man marrying her that is divorced for her own fornication commits adultery. This was evidently an unpleasant answer to these scheming men who wished to be free to put away their wives for "every cause."

[fornication] Fornication in the Bible means: adultery of married or single people (Matthew 5:32; Matthew 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:2; 1 Cor. 10:8; 1 Thes. 4:3; Rev. 9:21); incest (1 Cor. 5:1; 1 Cor. 10:8); idolatry and adultery in honor of idol gods (2 Chron. 21:11; Isaiah 23:17; Ezekiel 16:15,26,29; Acts 15:20,29; Acts 21:25; Rev. 2:14-21; Rev. 14:8; Rev. 17:2-4; Rev. 18:3-9; Rev. 19:2); natural harlotry (John 8:41; 1 Cor. 6:13-18); spiritual harlotry (Ezekiel 16:15,26,29; Rev. 17:2-4; Rev. 18:3-9; Rev. 19:2); sodomy and male prostitution (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Hebrews 12:16; Jude 1:6-7; Romans 1:24-29; 2 Cor. 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephes. 5:3; Col. 3:5). Do all these scriptures

apply to single people only? If not, then fornication does not apply only to single people as some teach.

[adultery] Adultery is unlawful relationship between men and women, single or married. Out of 69 times that the sin is referred to in Scripture, only 2 passages speak of spiritual adultery (Jeremiah 3:3-12; Ezekiel 16:37). This term is not used in the broader sense of all forms of unchastity as is fornication (porneia (GSN-4202)). All adultery is fornication, but all fornication is not adultery.

Except it be for fornication—See on Matthew 5:32 (note). The decision of our Lord must be very unpleasant to these men: the reason why they wished to put away their wives was, that they might take others whom they liked better; but our Lord here declares that they could not be remarried while the divorced person was alive, and that those who did marry, during the life of the divorced, were adulterers; and heavy judgments were, denounced, in their law, against such: and as the question was not settled by the schools of Shammai and Hillel, so as to ground national practice on it therefore they were obliged to abide by the positive declaration of the law, as it was popularly understood, till these eminent schools had proved the word had another meaning. The grand subject of dispute between the two schools, mentioned above, was the word in Deuteronomy 24:1, When a man hath taken a wife—and she find no grace in his sight, because of some UNCLEANNES, *ערוות* *eruath*:—this the school of Shammai held to mean whoredom or adultery; but the school of Hillel maintained that it signified any corporeal defect, which rendered the person deformed, or any bad temper which made the husband's life uncomfortable. Any of the latter a good man might bear with; but it appears that Moses permitted the offended husband to put away the wife on these accounts, merely to save her from cruel usage.

In this discourse, our Lord shows that marriage, (except in one case), is indissoluble, and should be so:—

1st, By Divine institution, Matthew 19:4.

2dly, By express commandment, Matthew 19:5.

3dly, Because the married couple become one and the same person, Matthew 19:6.

4thly, By the example of the first pair, Matthew 19:8; and

5thly, Because of the evil consequent on separation, Matthew 19:9. The importance of this subject will, I hope, vindicate or excuse, the length of these notes.²⁵

And I say unto you. Emphasis should be laid here on the word *I*. This was the opinion of Jesus—this he proclaimed to be the law of his kingdom—this the command of God ever afterwards. Indulgence had been given by the laws of Moses; but that indulgence was to cease, and the marriage relation *to be brought back to its original intention*. Only one offence was to make divorce lawful. This is the law of God. And by the same law, all marriages which take place after divorce, where adultery is not the cause of divorce, are adulterous. Legislatures have no Sight to say that men may put away their wives for any

²⁵ Adam Clarke's Commentary

other cause; and where they do, and where there is marriage afterwards, by the law of God such marriages are adulterous.²⁶

McGee: Adultery breaks the marriage relationship and provides the *one* ground for divorce. Somebody says to me, “Yes, but here is this poor Christian woman, married to a drunkard!” Or a fine Christian man is married to a godless woman. What about that? Well, believers may *separate* on other grounds, which seems to be the whole point of 1 Corinthians 7, but divorce is permitted on only one basis, adultery.

Divorce was granted for the purpose of permitting the innocent party to remarry. This rule is applicable only to believers; God is not regulating the lives of unbelievers but is holding them to the message of the cross first. God wants the unbeliever to come to Christ. He is lost whether he is married, divorced, or single. It makes no difference until he accepts Christ. The important thing to note is that for *believers* He puts down one ground for divorce: adultery.

Now suppose there is a believer whose spouse got a divorce on another ground. What about the innocent party? Well, if there has been adultery there, and in most cases there has been, then the innocent party is permitted to remarry. I believe that is the whole thought in this particular case.²⁷

Two boundaries for legal action in marriage are clearly declared here: (1) Only when sexual immorality, which breaks the one-flesh concept in the design of marriage, is involved can divorce be permissible. The Greek word used here, *porneia*, refers to all forms of sexual immorality. Jesus did not teach that the innocent party must divorce the unfaithful one. The purpose in this permission clause is not to encourage divorce for this reason but to forbid it for other reasons. Even when permissible, dissolution is apart from divine intention and ideal. The binding nature of marriage does not depend upon human wills or upon acts of persons but upon the original character of the divinely appointed institution of marriage. Consider, for example, Hosea’s response to his adulterous wife (cf. Hos 3:1-3). (2) Anyone who marries a divorcee is guilty of adultery also.²⁸

ESV: Every phrase in this verse is important for understanding Jesus' teaching on divorce. **whoever divorces his wife.** “Divorces” is Greek *apoluō*, which always means “divorce” in contexts concerning marriage. Some commentators have claimed that *apoluō* means “separates from, sends away” in this verse (implying separation but not divorce), but this is not persuasive because (a) this word has not been shown to include the sense of “separate” in any other contexts concerning marriage and (b) the same word clearly means “divorce” in the Pharisees' question in v. 3 (the current dispute among Jewish rabbis was about divorce, not separation), and therefore it should be understood to have the same meaning in Jesus' response to their question in vv. 8 and 9. **except for sexual immorality** (Gk. *porneia*). (1) This implies that divorce and remarriage on the grounds of sexual immorality are not prohibited and thus *do not* constitute adultery. This is the one exception Jesus makes to the requirement that marriage be lifelong, for sexual

²⁶ Barnes' Notes

²⁷ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:103). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

²⁸ Believer's Study Bible

immorality grievously defiles and indeed corrupts the “one flesh” union (v. 5). (2) The parallel passages in Mark 10:11–12 and Luke 16:18 omit “except for sexual immorality,” but that was probably because everyone, whatever their position in Jewish disputes over divorce (see note on Matt. 19:3), assumed that divorce was allowed in the case of adultery (i.e., the question of divorce because of adultery was not at issue in the immediate context in Mark 10 and Luke 16). But Matthew includes this fuller account of Jesus' words, with the exception clause, perhaps to prevent any possible misunderstanding in other contexts, and perhaps to explicitly situate Jesus' teaching within the context of the Jewish debates, for the benefit of his Jewish-Christian audience. (Also note that Matthew sometimes includes clarifying exceptions not included by Mark and Luke; e.g., Mark 8:12 quotes Jesus saying “no sign will be given to this generation,” whereas Matt. 16:4 says “no sign will be given to [this generation] *except the sign of Jonah.*”) (3) Some have claimed that *porneia* in this context refers to a very narrow, specific kind of sexual immorality, either sexual relations among close relatives or sexual immorality discovered during the betrothal period. Those who hold this position then argue that divorce in any other case is always prohibited, or else if divorce is allowed, remarriage is never allowed. But *porneia* had a broader range of meaning in ordinary usage, referring to any sexual intercourse that was contrary to the moral standards of Scripture, and nothing in this context would indicate that this should be understood in such a restricted sense (see note on 5:31–32). **and marries another, commits adultery.** (1) If a divorce is obtained for any reason other than (“except for”) sexual immorality, then the second marriage begins with adultery. Jesus is prohibiting divorce for the many trivial reasons that were used so frequently in the first century, leading to widespread injustice, especially for women whose husbands suddenly divorced them. (2) “And marries another” implies that the second marriage, though it begins with adultery, is still a marriage. Once a second marriage has occurred, it would be further sin to break it up. The second marriage should not be thought of as continually living in adultery, for the man and woman are now married to each other, not to anyone else. (3) If the exception (“sexual immorality”) occurs, then the implication is that remarriage to “another” does not constitute adultery and is therefore permissible. (4) Divorce, it must be remembered, is *permitted* but *not required* in the case of sexual immorality. Since God's intention is that marriage should be for life (19:4–8), this provides good reason to make every reasonable effort to achieve restoration and forgiveness in marriage before taking steps to dissolve a marriage through divorce. This makes Jesus' teaching fundamentally different from all of first-century Judaism, which *required* divorce in the case of adultery. (On the question of divorce and desertion, see 1 Cor. 7:15 and note.)²⁹

Spurgeon: Fornication makes the guilty person a fit subject for just and lawful divorce; for it is a virtual disannulling of the marriage bond. In a case of fornication, upon clear proof, the tie can be loosed; but in no other case. Any other sort of divorce is by the law of God null and void, and it involves the persons who act upon it in the crime of adultery. Whoso marrieth her who is put away doth commit adultery; since she is not really divorced, but remains the wife of her former husband. Our King tolerates none of those enactments which, in certain countries, trifle with the bonds of matrimony. Nations may

²⁹ ESV Study Bible

make what laws they dare, but they cannot alter facts: persons once married are, in the sight of God, married for life, with the one exception of proven fornication.

Matthew 19:10

His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with *his* wife, it is not good to marry.

The divorce that Moses permitted in Deuteronomy 24 *actually severed the original marriage relationship*. God permitted the woman to marry again, and her second marriage was not considered adulterous. The second man she married was called a “husband” and not an adulterer. This explains how the woman of Samaria could have had five *husbands*, and yet be living with a man not her husband (Jn 4:16-18). Apparently all five of those marriages had been legal and Scriptural.³⁰

It is not good to marry—That is, if a man have not the liberty to put away his wife when she is displeasing to him. God had said, Genesis 2:18, It is not good for man to be alone, i.e. unmarried. The disciples seem to say, that if the husband have not the power to divorce his wife when she is displeasing to him, it is not good for him to marry. Here was a flat contradiction to the decision of the Creator. There are difficulties and trials in all states; but let marriage and celibacy be weighed fairly, and I am persuaded the former will be found to have fewer than the latter. However, before we enter into an engagement which nothing but death can dissolve, we had need to act cautiously, carefully consulting the will and word of God. Where an unbridled passion, or a base love of money, lead the way, marriage is sure to be miserable.³¹

His disciples say, The disciples were full of Jewish notions. They thought that the privilege of divorcing a wife when there was a quarrelsome disposition, or anything else that rendered the marriage unhappy, was a great privilege; and that in such cases to be always *bound* to live with a wife was a great calamity. They said, therefore, that if such *was the case* in such the condition on which men married-it was better not to marry. "to marry" Proverbs 19:13, 31:9,19³²

McGee: The disciples are saying, “Well, in that case it would be better to stay single.” Well, you would avoid a lot of trouble—there is no question about that.³³

Spurgeon: They had come to look upon the ease of slipping the marriage-knot as a sort of relief; and on marriage itself, without the power of escaping from it by divorce, as an evil thing, or at least as very likely to prove so. Better not marry if you marry for life: this seemed to be their notion. Even his disciples, looking at the risks of unhappy married

³⁰ Chuck Missler, Notes on Matthew, khouse.org

³¹ Adam Clarke's Commentary

³² Barnes' Notes

³³ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:103). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

life, concluded that it were better to remain single. They said, "It is good not to marry;" and there was a measure of truth in their declaration.

Matthew 19:11

But he said unto them, *All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.*

[All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given] This is not applicable to all men for some do not have wives as He further explained in Matthew 19:12. Neither the single nor married state is condemned.

All men cannot receive this saying. The minds of men are not prepared for this. *This saying* evidently means what the disciples had just said, that it was *good for a man not to marry*. It might be good in certain circumstances, in times of persecution and trial, or for the sake of lab outing in the cause of religion, without the care and burden of a family. It might be good for many to live as some of the apostles did, without marriage, but it was not given to all men, 1 Corinthians 7:1,7,9. To be married, or unmarried, might be lawful according to circumstances, 1 Corinthians 7:26.³⁴

Matthew 19:12

For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from *their* mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive *it*.

This is not an invitation to celibacy. It is simply an indication that some people have the gift of desire to be celibate.

Marriage as a mystical union (Cf. Eph 5:31,32).

Basis for Marriage:

- 1) Biological
- 2) Psychological
- 3) Sociological
- 4) Supernatural

God uses the marriage relationship to communicate His precious truths, namely the relationship between Christ and the Church. Eph 5.

Adam as a "type" of Christ (Gen 3; 1 Tim 2:14).

Fornication before wedlock (Deut 22:13, 14, 20, 21).

[eunuchs] An emasculated man, usually one castrated before puberty.

Three Classes of Eunuchs:

³⁴ Barnes' Notes

1. Those born impotent who are incapable of marriage (Matthew 19:12; Deut. 23:1)
2. Those made eunuchs by men to be chamberlains and to care for harems and apartments of queens and princesses (Matthew 19:12; 2 Kings 20:18; Jeremiah 29:2; Jeremiah 34:19; Jeremiah 41:16; Isaiah 56:4; Acts 8:27-39)
3. Those who make themselves eunuchs surgically for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:12)³⁵

[able to receive it, let him receive it] Let the man who is capable of embracing this way of life receive it.

Jesus proceeds to state that there were some who were able to receive that saying, and to remain in an married state. Some were so born; some made such by the cruelty of men; and some who voluntarily abstained from marriage *for the kingdom of heaven's sake*-that is, that they might devote themselves entirely to the proper business of religion. Perhaps he refers here to the ESSENES, a sect of the Jews Matthew 3:7 who held that marriage was unsuitable to their condition, who had no children of their own, but perpetuated their sect by adopting the poor children of others. Eunuchs were employed chiefly in attending on the females, or in the harem. They rose often to distinction, and hold important offices in the state. Hence the *word* sometimes denotes such an officer of state, Acts 8:27. (*) "kingdom of heaven's sake" 1 Corinthians 7:32³⁶

Although divorce was relatively easy in Old Testament times (Matthew 19:7), it is not what God originally intended. Couples should decide against divorce from the start and build their marriage on mutual commitment. There are also many good reasons for not marrying, one being to have more time to work for God's kingdom. Don't assume that God wants everyone to marry. For many it may be better if they don't. Be sure that you prayerfully seek God's will before you plunge into the lifelong commitment of marriage.³⁷

Some have physical limitations that prevent their marrying, while others choose not to marry because, in their particular situation, they can serve God better as single people. Jesus was not teaching us to avoid marriage because it is inconvenient or takes away our freedom. That would be selfishness. A good reason to remain single is to use the time and freedom to serve God. Paul elaborates on this in 1 Cor. 7.³⁸

McGee: "There are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb." There are some men and some women who do not need to marry. They get along very well by themselves, but that's not for everybody.

"And there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men." Some churches make a rule that folk in certain positions are not to marry. They have no right to do that.

"And there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." I know a person who went to the mission field, and before she left, I

³⁵ Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

³⁶ Barnes' Notes

³⁷ Life Application Notes

³⁸ Life Application Notes

talked to her. I said, “Look, your chances are nil for getting married out there.” She said, “I have thought that through, and I am willing to make that sacrifice.” She made it voluntarily.

Somebody says, “Do you think that the preacher ought to get married? Or do you think the priest should be married?” May I say to you, this is a place where God puts down a principle. He says that it is up to the individual. We have to make that decision for ourselves.³⁹

JNTC: Judaism has always considered marriage both normal and desirable—“The unmarried person lives without joy, without blessing and without good An unmarried man is not fully a man” (Talmud: Yevamot 62b–63a). On the other hand, some branches of Christianity came to grant abnormally high status to celibacy (on this phenomenon see 1C 7:1–40&NN). Depending on the calling and preferences of the individual, Yeshua allows that either the married or the single life can be one of service to God and humanity; and he takes care to minimize needless guilt on the part of those making the choice.⁴⁰

Yashanet.com: More than likely, the term "eunuch" is an incorrect translation. The word for "eunuch" in the Aramaic manuscripts of this passage is M'HAIMNA, which can also mean "believer," or "faithful one." This would make better sense.

ESV: After hearing Jesus nullify most of the currently popular grounds for divorce, the disciples overreact and say, **it is better not to marry** (than to run the risk of a lifelong unhappy marriage). **This saying** is best understood as referring to that statement (“it is better not to marry”). Jesus explains that what they have said is true, but **only for those to whom it is given**, namely, for **eunuchs**. This would include those without the capacity for sexual relations, either through a birth defect, castration, or a voluntary life of abstinence. Celibacy is an acceptable alternative to marriage (cf. 1 Cor. 7:6–9; and note on 1 Cor. 7:6–7).

Spurgeon: Some have but feeble desires concerning marriage, and they were so born. They will find it good to remain as they are. Others subdue the desires of nature, for holy and laudable reasons, for the kingdom of heaven's sake; but this is not for all, nor for many. It is optional with individuals to marry or not: if they marry, nature commends, but grace is silent; if they forbear for Christ's sake, grace commends, and nature does not forbid. Enforced celibacy is the seed-bed of sins. "Marriage is honorable in all" Violations of purity are abominable in the sight of the Lord. In this matter we need guidance and grace if we follow the usual way; and if we elect the less frequented road, we shall need grace and guidance even more. As to a resolve to persevere in a single life: He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

³⁹McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:104). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴⁰Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 19:10). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

Matthew 19:13

Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put *his* hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.

[that he should put his hands on them, and pray] It was common among Jews to take the children to godly men for blessings and prayers.

[disciples rebuked them] Again the disciples interfered in the busy life of Jesus (Matthew 15:23; Matthew 16:22; Luke 9:49-50,53-56).

That he should put his hands—It was a common custom among the Jews to lay their hands on the heads of those whom they blessed, or for whom they prayed. This seems to have been done by way of dedication or consecration to God—the person being considered as the sacred property of God ever after. Often God added a testimony of his approbation, by communicating some extraordinary influence of the Holy Spirit. This rite has been long practiced among Christians, when persons are appointed to any sacred office. But this consecration of children to God seems to have grown out of use. It is no wonder that the great mass of children are so wicked, when so few, are put under the care of Christ by humble, praying, believing parents. Let every parent that fears God bring up his children in that fear; and, by baptism, let each be dedicated to the holy trinity. Whatever is solemnly consecrated to God abides under his protection and blessing.⁴¹

Then were there brought unto him little children. See also Mark 10:13-16, Luke 18:16-17. Probably these were brought by some of his followers, who desired not only to devote themselves to Jesus, but all that they had—their children as well as themselves. All the Jews were accustomed to devote their children to God by circumcision. Luke says, they were *infants*. They were undoubtedly those who were not old enough to come by choice, but their coming was an act of the parents.

Put his hands on them, and pray. It was customary among the Jews, when blessings were sought for others in prayer, to lay the hands on the head of the person prayed for, implying a kind of consecration to God. See Genesis 48:14, Matthew 9:18. They had also much confidence in the prayers of pious men; believing that those blessed by a saint or a prophet would be happy. See Numbers 22:6, Luke 2:28.

The disciples rebuked them. That is, reproved them, or told them it was improper. This they did, probably, either

- (1.) because they thought they were too young; or,
- (2.) because they thought they would be troublesome to their Master.

Spurgeon: From questions of marriage to the subject of children was an easy and natural step, and providence so arranged events that our Lord was led to proceed from the one to the other.

⁴¹ Adam Clarke's Commentary

We see how gentle was our King in the fact that anyone thought of bringing boys and girls to him. Their friends brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and bestow a blessing; and also lift up his hands to God, and pray for them. This was a very natural desire on the part of devout parents, and it showed much faith in our Lord's condescension. We feel sure that the mothers brought them, for still holy women are doing the same. The disciples, jealous for their Lord's honor, bade the mothers and nurses forbear. They judged that it was too childish an act on the mothers' part, and it was treating the great Teacher too familiarly. Were not the disciples the more childish of the two in imagining that their Lord would be unkind to babes?

Matthew 19:14

But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

[Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me] Permit or allow and do not hinder.

[for of such is the kingdom of heaven] Children under the age of accountability are saved (Matthew 18:1-10; Matthew 19:14). Exact accountable age is not known.

But Jesus said, Suffer little children, Mark adds, *he was much displeased* at what the disciples said. It was a thing highly gratifying to him, and which he earnestly sought, that children should be brought to him; and a case where it was very improper that they should interfere.

Of such is the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven evidently means, here, the church. Mark 3:2. In Mark and Luke, it is said he immediately added, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter therein." Whosoever shall not be humble, unambitious, and docile, shall not be a true follower of Christ, or a member of his kingdom. *Of such as these*-that is, of persons with such tempers as these-is the church to be composed. He does not say *of those* infants, but of such persons as resembled them, or were like them in temper, was the kingdom of heaven made up. It was proper, therefore, that he should pray for them; it was proper that they who possessed such a temper should be brought to him. The *disposition* itself-the humility, the teachableness, the want of ambition-was an ornament anywhere, and little children should therefore be brought to him. It is probable-it is greatly to be hoped-that all infants will be saved. No contrary doctrine is taught in the sacred Scriptures. But it does not appear to be the design of this passage to teach that all infants will be saved. It means simply, that they should be suffered to be brought to him as amiable, lovely, and uncorrupted by the world, and having traits of mind *resembling* those among real Christians. (*) "???" Mark 10:14, Luke 18:16 (*) "such is" Matthew 18:3⁴²

⁴² Barnes' Notes

Matthew 19:15

And he laid *his* hands on them, and departed thence.

[laid his hands on them, and departed thence] An outward form of blessing in both testaments (Mark 16:18). Mark says, *he blessed them*. That is, he pronounced or sought a blessing on them.

The disciples must have forgotten what Jesus had said about children (Matthew 18:4-6). Jesus wanted little children to come because he loves them and because they have the kind of attitude needed to approach God. He didn't mean that heaven is only for children, but that people need childlike attitudes of trust in God. The receptiveness of little children was a great contrast to the stubbornness of the religious leaders who let their education and sophistication stand in the way of the simple faith needed to believe in Jesus.

McGee: This passage is ample basis for the salvation of children who die in infancy. It is a fact that no child will reject Jesus if He is presented to the child on a Bible basis. This is one reason why we should get the gospel message to them. Someone might say, "Wait a minute—then everyone could be saved if we reach them as children." No, this is not true because they reach the age of accountability later. The reason for trying to get the gospel into the hearts of children is so that when they reach the age of accountability they will make a decision for Christ. It is *important* that this be followed through. Do not rest on the fact that your child made a decision when he was two, three, four, five, six, seven or eight years old, etc. My daughter made a decision for Christ when she was seven. Ever since that time I have asked her many times if she has really trusted the Lord as Savior. One day she said, "Daddy, why do you keep asking me that question?" I told her I just wanted to make sure. Actually, the decision will be made at the age of accountability. You say to me, "When is that age?" I don't know. I just know that it is important to get the gospel to our children. Instead of standing on a street corner and arguing about it, let's get it to them and then follow through when they reach the age of accountability by doing everything in our power to get them to trust Christ.

It is interesting that our Lord, having spoken about the issue of divorce, immediately begins to talk about children. The children are all important in any divorce. A woman once came to me wanting a divorce because she no longer loved her husband. She said, "Because of all the things he is doing, I no longer love him, and I have heard you say that when there is no love, there is no relationship. So I want to get a divorce." It is true that when there is no love there is no relationship, and that is tragic, but that is not the basis for divorce. I said to this woman, "You tell me that you don't love your husband, but do you love your children?" She said, "Of course I do, but what has that got to do with it?" I told her that it has everything to do with it. "You are to stay with him as long as you can if you love those children." My friend, the fact that our Lord said, "Let the little children come unto Me," ought to make any couple, especially a Christian couple, make every effort to hold their marriage together. A large percentage of children and young folk who are in trouble with the law come from broken homes. You would be surprised to learn the number of little ones who have been turned away from Christ because of the divorced

parents. It is very significant that Jesus ties together the subject of divorce and His loving concern for little children.⁴³

Many parents were bringing children . . . to Jesus for Him to place His hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples felt this was a waste of Jesus' time. They began rebuking those bringing their children. Apparently the disciples had already forgotten what Jesus said earlier about the worth of children and the seriousness of causing them to fall (cf. 18:1-14). Jesus rebuked the disciples, telling them to let the little children come and not hinder them. The kingdom of heaven is not limited to adults who might be considered to be worth more than children. Anyone who comes to the Lord in faith is a worthy subject for the kingdom. This implies (19:15) that Jesus had time for all the children, for He did not depart from the region till He had blessed them all.⁴⁴

Matthew 19:16

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

Verses 16-30. This account is found also in Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30.

[**Master**] *didaskalos*, Greek 1320, *did-as'-kal-os*; from Greek 1321 (*didasko*); an *instructor* (genitive or special) :- doctor, master, teacher.

One came. This was a *young* man, Matthew 19:20. He was a *ruler*, (Luke;) probably a ruler in a synagogue, or of the great council of the nation; a place to which he was chosen on account of his unblemished character, and promising talents. He came *running*, (Mark;) evincing great earnestness and anxiety. He fell upon his knees, (Mark;) not to worship him, but to pay the customary respectful salutation; exhibiting the highest regard for Jesus as an extraordinary religious Teacher.

Good Master. The word *good* here means, doubtless, *most excellent*; referring not so much to the MORAL *character* of Jesus as to his *character as a religious Teacher*. It was probably a title which the Jews were in the habit of applying to their religious teachers. The word *Master* here means *Teacher*.

What good thing shall I do. He had attempted to keep all the commandments. He had been taught by his Jewish teachers that men were to be saved by *doing* something, or by their works; and he supposed that this was to be the way under every system of religion. He had lived externally a blameless life; but yet he was not at peace: he was anxious, and he came to ascertain what, in the view of Jesus, was to be done, that his righteousness

⁴³McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:104). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

cf. *confer*, compare

⁴⁴Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:64). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

might be complete. To *have eternal life* means, to be saved. The happiness of heaven is called *life*, in opposition to the pains of hell, called death, or an eternal dying, Revelation 2:2, 20:14. The one is real *life*, answering the purposes of *living*-living to the honour of God, and in eternal happiness; the other is a failure of the great ends of existence-prolonged, eternal suffering-of which temporal *death* is but the feeble image.
(*) "what good" Mark 10:17, Luke 10:25, 18:18⁴⁵

ESV: a man came up to him. Verses 16–22 have been called the story of the “rich young ruler” since he is rich (v. 22), young (v. 20), and a ruler (cf. Luke 18:18). He may have been a religious lay leader, quite possibly a Pharisee (because of the diligence he displays in following the law). After addressing Jesus as **Teacher**, a title of respect, he asks **what good deed** he must do **to have eternal life**. “Eternal life” is virtually synonymous with expressions such as “entering the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:20) and being “saved” (19:25–26); it is the first occurrence of this expression in Matthew (cf. v. 29; 25:46). In the parallel accounts (Mark 10:17–22; Luke 18:18–23), the wording of the question and answer differs somewhat, but there is no contradiction, and it seems to be a case of different Gospels reporting different parts of the same conversation.

Matthew 19:17

And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

Why callest thou me good? Why do you give to me a title that belongs only to God? *You* suppose me to be only a man. Yet you give me an appellation that belongs only to God. It is improper to use titles in this manner. As you Jews use them, they are unmeaning. And though the title may apply to me, yet you did not *intend* to use it in the sense in which it is proper, as denoting infinite perfection, or Divinity; but you *intended* to use it as a complimentary or a flattering title, applied to me as if I were a mere man—a title which belongs only to God. The *intention*, the *habit* of using mere titles, and applying *as compliment* terms belonging only to God, is wrong, Christ did not *intend* here to disclaim *Divinity*, or to say anything about *his own character*; but simply to reprove the intention and habit of the young man—a most severe reproof of a foolish habit of compliment and flattery, and seeking pompous title. ⁴⁶

Keep the commandments. That is, do what God has commanded. He, in the next verses, informs him what he meant by the commandments.

In response to the young man’s question about how to have eternal life, Jesus told him to keep God’s Ten Commandments. Jesus then listed six of them, all referring to relationships with others. When the young man replied that he had kept the commandments, Jesus told him that he must do something more—sell everything and give the money to the poor. Jesus’ statement exposed the man’s weakness. In reality, his

⁴⁵ Barnes’ Notes

⁴⁶ Barnes’ Notes

wealth was his god, his idol, and he would not give it up. Thus he violated the first and greatest commandment (Exodus 20:3; Matthew 22:36-40).⁴⁷

McGee: Notice how this young man approaches the Lord Jesus. He addresses Him as Good Master. He is willing to concede that He is good, and probably the enemies of Jesus would not have gone that far.

“Why callest thou me good?” I am sure you can see what our Lord was after. When He said, “There is none good but one, that is, God,” He was saying in effect, “If you see that I am good, it is because I am God.” He is directing his thinking so that he might accept Him as the Christ, the Son of God. Then the Lord Jesus flashed on this young man’s life the commandments that have to do with a man’s relationship to his fellowman.⁴⁸

Why do you call Me good may be rephrased as “Why are you asking me concerning what is good?” The only One who can ultimately answer the question about goodness is God. The fact that Jesus went on to answer the question is a quiet claim to deity.⁴⁹

Yashanet.com: Many attempts have been made to explain away Yeshua's direct answer. He did not say "accept me into your heart," or some similar statement. He made it clear that obedience to Torah was key. However, we know from both the Tenakh and the "New Testament," that once cannot "earn" their way into heaven by keeping the commandments outside of faith. God wants us to put our entire trust in Him first, then to learn and walk in His ways. The two are inseparable.

Spurgeon: Our Lord cared not for empty compliments, and so he asks, "Why callest thou me good?" Many modern heretics praise Jesus, and their commendations are such an insult to his glorious person that he might well say, "Why callest thou me good? "Did this man really mean it? If so, the Lord Jesus would let him know by a hint that he to whom he spake was more than man. The argument is clear: either Jesus was good, or he ought not to have called him good; but as there is none good but God, Jesus who is good must be God.

As for the question of having eternal life through a good work, Jesus answers him on his own ground. Life by the law comes only by keeping its commands: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." No one has ever fulfilled them so as to be good: did this young man think that he could do so? Yet, on the ground of law, if he would deserve eternal life as a reward, he must be as good as God, and keep the commandments to perfection. Thus the rugged way of works was set before him; not that he might attempt to win eternal life thereby, but that he might perceive his own shortcomings, and so feel his weakness as to look for salvation by some other method.

⁴⁷ Life Application Notes

⁴⁸ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:105). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴⁹ The Nelson Study Bible

Matthew 19:18

He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

Thou shalt do no murder, etc.—But some say these commandments are not binding on us. Vain, deceived men! Can a murderer, an adulterer, a thief, and a liar enter into eternal life? No. The God of purity and justice has forbidden it. But we are not to keep these commandments in order to purchase eternal life. Right. Neither Jesus Christ, nor his genuine messengers, say you are. To save your souls, Christ must save you from your sins, and enable you to walk before him in newness of life.⁵⁰

Matthew 19:19

Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

JNTC: Yeshua names the sixth through ninth and fifth of the Ten Commandments (see 5:21N). These deal with interpersonal relationships, as does “**Love your neighbor as yourself,**” which subsumes the others (Ro 13:8–10).⁵¹

Matthew 19:20

The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

McGee: This young man could say that he had kept these commandments, and yet he recognized a lack in his life. The commandments which our Lord gave him compose the last section of the Decalogue which has to do with a man’s relationship to man. The first of the Ten Commandments have to do with man’s relationship to God. Our Lord did not use those because He was leading this young man along in his thinking. However, now the Lord directs his thinking to his relationship to God—⁵²

Spurgeon: Perhaps he spoke the truth, as he understood the law. He had maintained an excellent moral character from his early boyhood. He felt that in act and deed he had kept all those commands without a fault of any consequence. He was no braggart, but could honestly claim to have led a commendable life. He was, no doubt, a very exemplary person, and so amiable that Jesus looked on him very lovingly. We know some who are like him, and may be described "as touching the law, blameless." But he was not all he thought himself to be: he did not love his neighbor as himself, as he would soon be made to see. "What lack I yet?" is an enquiry few would dare to put. He felt that

⁵⁰ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

⁵¹ Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 19:18). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

⁵² McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:105). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

if there was anything lacking in him, he was altogether ignorant as to what it could be. His self esteem needed no increasing.

Matthew 19:21

Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go *and* sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come *and* follow me.

Discipleship: costs all that one has! To live for others. Phil 3:7,8; Luke 14:33 (26, 27)

To be perfect, you must renounce the world which you love, the legal righteousness wherein you trust, give to the poor, and follow Me.

Mark says, (Mark 10:21) *Jesus beholding him loved him*. He was pleased with his amiableness, his correct character, his frankness, and ingenuousness. Jesus, as a man, was capable of all the emotions of most tender friendship. As a man, we may suppose that his disposition was tender and affectionate, mild and calm. Hence he loved with peculiar affection the disciple John, eminently endowed with these qualities. And hence he *was pleased* with the same traits in this young man. Still, with all this amiableness, there is reason to think he was not a Christian; and that the love of *mere amiable qualities* was all the affection that was ever bestowed on him by the Saviour.

If thou wilt be perfect. The word *perfect* means *complete* in all its parts--finished, having no part wanting. Thus a watch is perfect; or complete, when it has all its proper wheels, and hands, and movements in order. Job was said to be perfect, Job 1:1; not that he was sinless, for he is afterwards reprov'd by God himself, Job 38:1-40:4 but because his piety was proportioned, and had a completeness of parts, he was a pious father, a pious magistrate, a pious neighbour, a pious citizen. His religion was not confined to one thing, but extended to all. *Perfect* means, sometimes, the *filling up*, or *carrying out*, or expression of a principle of action. Thus, 1 John 2:5, "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God *perfected*." That is, the keeping of the commandments of God is the proper *expression, carrying out, or completion*, of the love of God. This is its meaning here. If thou wilt be *perfect*, complete, finished if thou wilt show the *proper expression* of this keeping of the commandments-go, etc. Make the obedience complete.⁵³

Go and sell that thou hast, The young man declared that he had kept the law. That law required, among other things, that he should love his neighbour as himself. It required also that he should love the Lord his God supremely; that is, more than all other objects. If he *had* that true love to God and man; if he loved his Maker and fellow-creatures more than he did his property, he would be willing to give up his wealth to the service of God and of man. Jesus commanded him to do this, therefore, to *test* his character, and to show him that he had not kept the law as he pretended; and thus to show him that he needed a better righteousness than his own.⁵⁴

⁵³ Barnes' Notes

⁵⁴ Barnes' Notes

Follow me. To follow Jesus, *then* meant to be a personal attendant on his ministry; to go about with him from place to place, as well as to imitate and obey him. *Now* it means, 1st. to obey his commandments 2nd. to imitate his example, and to live like him.

McGee: “If thou wilt be perfect,” meaning *complete*. Following Jesus would have led him to see that he was not keeping the first commandments which have to do with a man’s relationship to God. The Lord Jesus was on His way to the cross. If this man followed Jesus, it would be to the foot of a cross. Something, however, was preventing him from going after the Lord. His riches were his stumbling block. For you and for me it might be something entirely different.⁵⁵

Jesus does not teach that salvation is ever achieved by divesting oneself of all possessions, even for charitable purposes. However, this youthful inquirer had one concern that was far greater than his desire to have life eternal. His possessions occupied the position of primary devotion in his life. Until he could persuade himself to be willing to seek God regardless of the cost (cf. 6:33), he could never discover eternal life. Therefore, Jesus suggested the selling of his possessions.⁵⁶

ESV: If you would be perfect. Jesus knows the man's wealth has become his means to personal identity, power, and a sense of meaning in life—that it has become the idolatrous god of his life (cf. note on v. 17). Jesus' strategy is to turn this man from focusing on external conformity to the law to examining his heart, revealing his ruling god. **give to the poor.** The man had no doubt given some money to the poor, as the giving of alms was considered a pious duty, especially among the Pharisees. But Jesus calls him to give everything away, exchanging the god of wealth for the eternal **treasure** found in following Jesus as the one true God. Jesus' ultimate answer to the question posed in v. 16 (“What . . . must I do to have eternal life?”) is to **follow** him.

Matthew 19:22

But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

Went away sorrowful—Men undergo great agony of mind while they are in suspense between the love of the world and the love of their souls. When the first absolutely predominates, then they enjoy a factitious rest through a false peace: when the latter has the upper hand, then they possess true tranquillity of mind, through that peace of God that passeth knowledge.

⁵⁵ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:105). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵⁶ Believer’ Study Bible

He had great possessions—And what were these in comparison of peace of conscience, and mental rest? Besides, he had unequivocal proof that these contributed nothing to his comfort, for he is now miserable even while he possesses them! And so will every soul be, who puts worldly goods in the place of the supreme God.⁵⁷

We cannot love God with all our hearts and yet keep our money to ourselves. Loving him totally means using our money in ways that please him.

McGee: It was his money that was keeping him from the Lord Jesus Christ. In our day there are many things that are keeping folk away from the Lord Jesus. Riches are only one thing; there are multitudes of other things. Actually, church membership is keeping many people from Christ because it puts them into a little cellophane bag that protects them from facing their sins. They feel secure because they have been through the ceremonies or have made their confession, and yet they may be as unconverted as any pagan in the darkest spot on topside of the earth. Today, is there something that is separating *you* from Christ? Is there anything in the way that is keeping you from Him?⁵⁸

16-22. A man who was **young** (v. 20), wealthy (v. 22) and a ruler (Luke 18:18; perhaps of the Sanhedrin) came and asked Jesus, Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life? This ruler was not asking how he could earn salvation. Instead, he wondered how he could be assured of entering Messiah’s kingdom. He wanted to know what “good thing” (work) would demonstrate that he was righteous and therefore qualified for the kingdom. Jesus replied, There is only One who is good, namely, God. Perfection is required (Matt. 5:48; cf. 19:21); therefore one must be as good as God. He must have God’s righteousness, which comes through faith in Him (Rom. 4:5). Perhaps Jesus then waited for a response from the ruler to see if he would affirm his belief that Jesus is God, that Jesus, being one with the Father, is good (*agathos*, “intrinsically good”).

When the man did not reply, Jesus indicated that life (i.e., life in God’s kingdom) can be entered only if one gives *evidence* that he is righteous. Since the official standard of righteousness was the Law of Moses, Jesus told the man to obey the commandments. The ruler was perceptive for he immediately asked, Which ones? Other standards of righteousness were being promoted by the Pharisees, who had added to Moses’ commandments far beyond God’s intention. The young man was in effect asking Jesus, “Must I keep all the Pharisees’ commandments?” Jesus replied by repeating several of the commandments from the second table of the Law, the 5th through the 9th commandments forbidding murder . . . adultery, stealing, giving false testimony, and also the positive command to honor one’s parents (Ex. 20:12-16). Jesus did not mention the 10th commandment (Ex. 20:17) concerning coveting, but He did add the summary statement, Love your neighbor as yourself (cf. Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:39; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8).

⁵⁷ Adam Clarke’s Commentary

⁵⁸ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:105). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

v. verse

cf. *confer*, compare

i.e. *id est*, that is

The young man affirmed he had kept all these things, but he still sensed a lack (Matt. 19:20). Whether he had truly kept these commands, only God knows. The young man believed he had and yet he knew something was missing in his life. Jesus put His finger on his problem when He told him to go, sell all his possessions and give to the poor, and he would then have treasure in heaven. Such mercy toward the poor would demonstrate inner righteousness. If he were righteous (based on faith in Jesus as God), he should have given his wealth to the poor and followed Jesus. But instead, the man . . . went away sad (*lypoumenos*, “grieved or sad to the point of distress”; cf. 14:9; 18:31) for he had great wealth. His unwillingness to relinquish his wealth showed he did not love his neighbor as himself. Thus he had not kept all the commandments, and he lacked salvation. Nothing more was written about this young man; probably he never left all and followed Jesus. He loved his money more than God, and thus he violated even the first commandment (Ex. 20:3).⁵⁹

Matthew 19:23

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

[hardly] With difficulty they can be saved.

Shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. Shall with difficulty be saved. He has much to struggle with; and it will require the greatest of human efforts to break away from his temptations, and idols, and secure his salvation. (*) "That a rich man" 1 Timothy 6:9,10

Matthew 19:24

And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

A camel—Instead of *καμηλον*, camel, six MSS. read *καμιλον*, cable, a mere gloss inserted by some who did not know that the other was a proverb common enough among the people of the east.

There is an expression similar to this in the Koran. “The impious, who in his arrogance shall accuse our doctrine of falsity, shall find the gates of heaven shut: nor shall he enter there till a camel shall pass through the eye of a needle. It is thus that we shall recompense the wicked.” AL KORAN. Surat vii. ver. 37.

It was also a mode of expression common among the Jews, and signified a thing impossible.

It is easier for a camel, This was a *proverb* in common use among the Jews, and still common among the Arabians. To denote that a thing was *impossible*, or *exceedingly*

⁵⁹Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:64). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

difficult, they said *camel* or an *elephant* might as soon walk through a needle's eye. In the use of such proverbs, it is not necessary to understand them *literally*, but only to denote the extreme difficulty of the case.⁶⁰

Here Jesus clearly uses hyperbole. His words reflect an ancient figure of speech for the impossible: a very large animal passing through a needle's eye. (A needle's eye in Jesus' day meant what it means today; the idea that it was simply a name for a small gate in Jerusalem is based on a gate from the medieval period and sheds no light on Jesus' teaching in the first century.)

Mainstream Judaism never denied the rich a place in the kingdom of God; many of its benefactors and leaders were rich. Jesus allows that the rich may, by God's mercy, enter in, but only by giving their wealth to the poor.⁶¹

A rich man. This rather means one who *loves* his riches, and makes an idol of them; or one who *supremely* desires to be rich. Mark says, "them that trust in riches." While he has this feeling, it is literally *impossible* that he should be a Christian. For religion is the love of God, rather than the world; the love of Jesus and his cause, more than gold. Still a man may have much *property*, and not have this feeling. He *may* have great wealth, and love God more; as a poor man may have little, and love that little more than God. The difficulties in the way of salvation for a rich man are,

1st. that riches engross the affections.

2nd. Men consider wealth as the *chief good*; and when this is obtained, think they have gained all.

3rd. They are proud of their wealth, and unwilling to be numbered with the poor and despised followers of Jesus.

4th. Riches engross the *time*, and fill the mind with cares and anxieties, and leave little for God.

5th. They often produce luxury, dissipation, and vice.

6th. It is difficult to obtain wealth without sin, or without avarice, and covetousness, and fraud, and oppression, 1 Timothy 6:9,10,17; James 5:1-6, Luke 12:16-21, 16:19-31. Still Jesus says, Matthew 19:26 all these may be overcome. God can give grace to do it. Though to *men* it may appear impossible, yet it is easy for God.⁶²

⁶⁰ Barnes' Notes

hyperbole **Hyperbole.** A rhetorical exaggeration, a figure of speech often used by Jewish wisdom teachers to underline their point. The point of Jesus' hyperbolic illustrations is generally to grab the hearer's attention and force that hearer to take his point seriously.

kingdom ***Kingdom.** This term means "rule," "reign" or "authority" (not a king's people or land, as connotations of the English term could imply). Jewish people recognized that God rules the universe now, but they prayed for the day when he would rule the world unchallenged by idolatry and disobedience. The coming of this future aspect of God's reign was generally associated with the Messiah and the resurrection of the dead. Because Jesus came and will come again, Christians believe that the kingdom has been inaugurated but awaits consummation or completion. "Kingdom of heaven" is another way (Matthew's usual way) of saying "kingdom of God." "Heaven" was a standard Jewish way of saying "God" (as in Lk 15:21).

⁶¹ Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Mt 19:23). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

⁶² Barnes' Notes

McGee: Many people miss the humor that our Lord sometimes used, and this passage is an example of it. There are some people who hold to the ridiculous explanation that there was a gate in Jerusalem called “The Eye of the Needle,” that a camel had to kneel to pass through it, and that therefore the Lord was saying that a man had to become humble to enter the kingdom of heaven. Well, that misses the point altogether. Our Lord is talking about a real camel and a real needle with an eye. My friend, let me ask you a very plain question: Is it possible for a real camel to go through the eye of a real needle? I think you know the answer—he won’t make it! It is impossible. But would it be possible for God to put a camel through a needle’s eye? Well, God is not in that business, but He could do it. And only *God* can regenerate a man. That is the point our Lord is making here. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

Many people today think they are going to be saved by who they are or by what they have. You are truly saved when you find out that you are a sinner, a beggar in God’s sight, with nothing to offer Him for your salvation. As long as a person feels he can *do* something or *pay* God for salvation, he can no more be saved than a camel can be put through the eye of a needle.⁶³

To enter “the kingdom of God” (v. 24), i.e., “the kingdom of heaven” (v. 23), is as impossible by human means as it is for a camel to go through a needle’s eye. Jesus consciously uses hyperbole (exaggeration) to stress His point (cf. Luke 18:25, note). He intends to show the miraculous nature of salvation for a rich man who must turn his affections from his possessions to the Savior. Thereby he is prepared for entrance into the future kingdom of God (v. 28).

ESV: camel. The largest land animal in Palestine. **the eye of a needle.** The smallest opening found in the home. Jesus paints a picture of something impossible in order to illustrate that even the seemingly impossible is possible with God. There is no evidence for the popular interpretation that there was a gate in Jerusalem called “the eye of the needle,” which camels had to stoop to their knees to enter. Such an interpretation would miss the point: it is not merely *difficult* for the wealthy to be saved; without God’s grace it is *impossible* (cf. v. 26).

Matthew 19:25

When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?

Matthew 19:26

But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, **With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.**

⁶³McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:105). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

[With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible] It is impossible for man to save either the rich or the poor, but God can save and has saved both classes in all ages.

[with God all things are possible] To the rich salvation is possible but difficult due to the fact that it is hard for them to keep their hearts off riches (Col. 3:1; 1 Tim. 6:9-10,17; 1 John 2:15).

The disciples were astonished. They thought that if anyone could be saved, it would be the rich, whom their culture considered especially blessed by God.

McGee: This is the explanation. As far as any person is concerned—regardless of who you are—you are a candidate for salvation if you recognize that you have nothing to offer God but come to Him like a beggar with empty hands. When you come to Him like that, He can save you. With *God* all things are possible.⁶⁴

Matthew 19:27

Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?

To forsake all, without following Christ, is the virtue of a philosopher. To follow Christ in profession, without forsaking all, is the state of the generality of Christians. But to follow Christ and forsake all, is the perfection of a Christian.

we have left all: The instruction Jesus gave to the rich man was precisely what Peter and the other disciples had done (4:18–22). The natural question then was **what shall we have?** Rather than upbraid Peter for what may seem like a selfish request, Jesus assured him that the life investment he and the other disciples had made (16:24–28) would have dividends “a hundredfold” (v. 29).⁶⁵

Matthew 19:28

And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

McGee: It is easy for us to think that Simon Peter is betraying a very selfish streak here. Did our Lord rebuke him? Our Lord did *not* rebuke him. Instead, He told him what a

⁶⁴ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:106). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶⁵ The Nelson Study Bible

great reward would be his. Likewise, I believe that today, we as Christians ought to be working for a reward.⁶⁶

JNTC: The *Tanakh* speaks of a **regenerated world** at Isaiah 1:25–2:5, 11:1–16, 65:17; Jeremiah 23:3–8, 30:1–31:40; Micah 4:1–5:3; Zechariah 12:1–14:21; Psalms 2, 22, 89; Daniel 7–12. Note also Ro 8:19–23, Rv 21:1–22:5. Rabbinic literature speaks of the *olam haba* (“world” or “age to come”) and describes its time and character in such places in the Talmud as Sanhedrin 96–99.

You ... will also sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. An important New Testament verse confirming God’s promises to national Israel, e.g., Isaiah 1:26, “And I will restore your judges as at first.” See also Ezekiel 48, Isaiah 9:5–6(6–7). This verse gives a rationale for choosing twelve emissaries (10:2–4) and maintaining that number (Ac 1:15–26); also compare Rv 21:10–14.⁶⁷

[regeneration] Greek: palingenesia (GSN-3824), renewing again. Used only here and in Titus 3:5. It refers to “the restitution of all things.”

[when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory] Christ will begin to sit on the throne of His glory at the second coming (Matthew 24:29-31; Matthew 25:31-46).

[thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel] Not only will the apostles have thrones over Israel (Luke 22:30), but all saints will reign with Christ (Rev. 20:4-6).

Verily I say unto you. Jesus in this verse declares the reward which *they* would have. They were not to look for it *now*, but in a future period.

In the regeneration. This word occurs but once elsewhere in the New Testament, Titus 3:5. It literally means a new birth, or being born again. Applied to a man, it denotes the great change when the heart is renewed, or when the sinner begins to be a Christian. This is its meaning clearly in *Titus*. But this meaning cannot be applied here. Christ was not born again, and in no proper sense could it be said that they *had followed him in the new birth*. The word also means any great changes, or restoration of things to a former state, or to a better state. In this sense it is probably used here. It refers to that great revolution; that restoration of order in the universe; that universal *new birth* when the dead shall rise, and all human things shall be changed, and a new order of things shall start up out of the ruins of the old, when the Son of man shall come to judgment. The passage, then, should be read, “Ye which have followed me shall, as a reward in the great day of the resurrection of the dead, and of forming the new and eternal order of things—the day of judgment, the *regeneration*—be signally honoured and blessed.”⁶⁸

⁶⁶McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:106). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶⁷Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 19:28). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

⁶⁸Barnes’ Notes

When the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory. That is, to judge the world. *Throne of glory*, means *glorious throne*, or a splendid throne. It is not to be taken literally, but is used to denote his character as a King and Judge, and to signify the great dignity and majesty which will be displayed by him. See Matthew 24:30, 26:64; Acts 1:11, 17:31.

Sit upon twelve thrones. This is figurative. To sit on a throne denotes power and honour; and means here that they should be distinguished above others, and be more highly honoured and rewarded.

Judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus will be the Judge of quick and dead. He only is qualified for it; and the Father hath given all judgment to the Son, John 5:22. To *judge*, denotes rank, authority, power. The ancient *judges* of Israel were men of distinguished courage, patriotism, honour, and valour. Hence the word comes to denote, *not so much an actual exercise of the power of passing judgment*, as the *honour* attached to the office. And as earthly kings have those around them dignified with honours and office, counsellors and judges, so Christ says his apostles shall occupy the same *relative* station in the great day. They shall be honoured by him, and by all, *as* apostles; as having in the face of persecution left all; as having laid the foundations of his church, and endured all the maddened persecutions of the world.

The twelve tribes of Israel. This was the number of the ancient tribes. By *this name* the people of God were denoted. By *this name* Jesus here denotes *his redeemed people*. See also James 1:1, where Christians are called the twelve tribes. Here it also means not the *Jews*, not the *world*, not the *wicked*, not that the apostles are to pronounce sentence on the enemies of God; but *the people of God*, the redeemed. Among them Jesus says his apostles shall be *honoured* in the day of judgment, as earthly kings place in posts of office and honour the counsellors and judges of those who have signally served them. Comp. 1 Corinthians 6:2.

(*) "ye shall also" Matthew 20:21, Luke 22:28-30, 1 Corinthians 6:2,3, Revelation 2:26

The word "regeneration" (*palingenesia*, Gk.) is used in Titus 3:5 of personal regeneration or New Birth. The only other occurrence in the N.T. is this one, which promises cosmic regeneration. The idea, however, is certainly found elsewhere in the N.T. (Rom 8:21, 22). The time of the regeneration mentioned here is evidently the millennial restoration period prior to the forming of the new heaven and new earth in the eternal state (cf. Rev 20:1-6). The key to that identification is the position accorded to the disciples of "judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Therefore, the prophecy must be millennial. Verse 29 further declares a hundredfold reward, in addition to everlasting life, as the benefit given to the disciples.

Matthew 19:29

And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

Forsaken houses, In the days of Jesus, those who followed him were obliged generally to forsake houses and home, and to attend him. In our times it is not often required that we should *literally* leave them, except when the life is devoted to him among the heathen; but it is always required that we love them *less* than we do him; that we give up all that is inconsistent with religion, and be ready to give up all when he demands it.

For my name's sake. From attachment to me. Mark adds, "and the gospel's;" that is, from obedience to the requirements of the gospel, and love for the service of the gospel.

Shall receive an hundredfold. Mark says, "an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters," etc. *An hundredfold* means a hundred times as much. This is not to be understood *literally*, but that he will give what will be worth a hundred times as much, in the peace, and joy, and rewards of religion. It is also literally true, that no man's *temporal interest* is injured by the love of God. Marks adds, "with persecutions." These are not promised as a part of the reward; but amidst their trials and persecutions, they should find reward and peace.⁶⁹

(*) "And every one" Mark 10:29,30, Luke 18:29,30, 1 Corinthians 2:9

Matthew 19:30

But many *that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.*

This verse should have been connected with the following chapter. The parable there spoken is expressly to illustrate this sentiment. See its meaning, Matthew 20:16.

Those who have faithfully focused on Jesus will be startled by the impact that their lives have had on others. While those keeping score may be in for some unpleasant surprises. **[the last shall be first, and the first last]** The same as, "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be abased" (Matthew 20:15; Matthew 19:30; Matthew 23:12; Luke 14:11). This is the point illustrated by the parable and any interpretation of the details such as making the vineyard the world or the church, the laborers different classes of Christians, the hours different ages, the penny salvation, etc. is all out of harmony with Scripture. Nor does this mean that the Jews will be last and the Gentiles first.

Jesus turned the world's values upside down. Consider the most powerful or well-known people in our world—how many got where they are by being humble, self-effacing, and gentle? Not many! But in the life to come, the last will be first—if they got in last place by choosing to follow Jesus. Don't forfeit eternal rewards for temporary benefits. Be

⁶⁹ Barnes' Notes

willing to make sacrifices now for greater rewards later. Be willing to accept human disapproval, while knowing that you have God's approval.⁷⁰

McGee: There is to be a reward for the saved ones who have sacrificed for Jesus' sake. Many an unknown saint, of whom the world has not heard, will be given first place in His presence someday. In that day I believe that many outstanding Christian leaders who receive wide acclaim in this life will be ignored while many unknown saints of God will be rewarded. What a glorious, wonderful picture this presents to us!⁷¹

Spurgeon: Thus our Lord sums up his deliverance as to rich men, and gives us the aphorism now before us, which he has already illustrated, and means to repeat further on in the sixteenth verse of the next chapter. Our King is here seen arranging human positions as they appear from his throne. To his eye, many first are last, and many last are first; and he will in his kingdom place men according to the divine order.

Barnes Remarks on Matthew 19

(1.) We should not throw ourselves *unnecessarily* in the way of the enemies of religion, Matthew 19:1. Jesus, to avoid the Samaritans, crossed the Jordan, and took a more distant route to Jerusalem. If *duty* calls us in the way of the enemies of religion, we should go. If we can do them good, we should go. If our presence will only provoke them to anger and bitterness, then we should turn aside. Comp. Matthew 10:23.

(2.) Men will seek every occasion to ensnare Christians, Matthew 19:3. Questions will be proposed with great art, and with an appearance of sincerity, only for the purpose of leading them into difficulty. Cunning men know well how to propose such questions, and triumph much when they have perplexed believers. This is often the boast of men of some standing, who think they accomplish the great purposes of their existence, if they can confound other men; and think it signal triumph if they can make others as miserable as themselves.

(3.) We should not refuse to answer such persons with mildness, when the Bible has settled the question, Matthew 19:4-6. Jesus answered a captious question, proposed on purpose to ensnare him. We may often do much to confound the enemies of religion, and to recommend it, when without passion we hear their inquiries, and deliberately inform them that the question has been settled by God. We had better however, far better, say nothing in reply, than to answer in anger, or to show that we are irritated. All the object of the enemy is gained, if he can make us mad.

(4.) Men will search and pervert the Bible for authority to indulge their sins, and to perplex Christians, Matthew 19:7. No device is more common than to produce a passage of Scripture, known to be misquoted or perverted, yet plausible, for the purpose of perplexing Christians. In such cases, the best way is often to say nothing. If unanswered,

⁷⁰ Life Application Notes

⁷¹ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:106). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

men will be ashamed of it; if answered, they gain their point, and are ready for debate and abuse.

(5.) We learn from this chapter that there is no union so intimate as the marriage connexion, Matthew 19:6. Nothing is so tender and endearing as this union appointed by God for the welfare of man.

(6.) This union should not be entered into slightly or rashly. It involves all the happiness of this life, and *much* of that to come. The union demands,

- (1.) congeniality of feeling and disposition;
- (2.) of rank or standing in life;
- (3.) of temper;
- (4.) similarity of acquirements;
- (5.) of age;
- (6.) of talent;
- (7.) intimate acquaintance. It should also be a union on religious feelings and opinions:

(1.) Because religion is more important than anything else.

(2.) Because it will give more happiness in the married life than anything else.

(3.) Because where one only is pious, there is danger that religion will be obscured and blighted.

(4.) Because no prospect is so painful as that of eternal separation.

(5.) Because it is heathenish, brutal, and mad, to partake the gifts of God in a family, and offer no thanksgiving; and inexpressibly wicked to live from day to day as if there were no God, no heaven, no hell.

(6.) Because death is near, and nothing will soothe the pangs of parting but the hope of meeting in the resurrection of the just.

(7.) No human legislature has a right to declare divorces, except in one single case, Matthew 19:9. If they do, they are accessories to the crime that may follow, and presume to legislate where *God* has legislated before them.

(8.) Those *thus* divorced, or pretended to be divorced, and marrying again, are, by the declaration of Jesus Christ, living in adultery, Matthew 19:9. It is no excuse to say that the law of the land divorced them. The law had no such right. If all the legislatures of the world were to say that it was lawful for a man to steal, and commit murder, it would not make it so; and in spite of human permission, God would hold a man answerable for theft and murder. So also of adultery.

(9.) The marriage union demands *kindness and love*, Matthew 19:6. Husband and wife are one, Love to each other is love to a second self. Hatred, and anger, and quarrels, are against ourselves. And the evils and quarrels in married life will descend on ourselves, and be gall and wormwood in our own cup.

(10.) Infants may be brought to Jesus to receive his blessing, Matthew 19:13-15. While on earth, Jesus admitted them to his presence, and blessed them with his prayers. If they might be brought *then*, they may be brought *now*. Their souls are as precious; their dangers are as great; their salvation is as important. A parent should require the most indubitable evidence that Jesus will *not* receive his offspring, and will be displeased if the offering is made, to deter him from this inestimable privilege.

(11.) If children *may* be brought, they *should* be brought. It is the solemn duty of a parent to seize upon all possible means of benefiting his children, and of presenting them to God, to implore his blessing. In family prayer, and in the sanctuary, the ordinance of baptism, the blessing of the Redeemer should be sought early and constantly on their precious and immortal souls.

(12.) Earnestness and deep anxiety are proper in seeking salvation, Matthew 19:16. The young man came running; he kneeled. It was not form and ceremony; it was life and reality. Religion is a great subject. Salvation is beyond the power of utterance in importance. Eternity is near; and damnation thunders along the path of the guilty. The sinner must be saved soon, or die for ever. He cannot be too earnest. He cannot press with too great haste to Jesus. He should come running, and kneeling, and humbled, and lifting the agonizing cry, "What shall I do to be saved?"

(13.) He should come young, Matthew 19:20. He cannot come too young. God has the *first* claim on our affections. He made us; he keeps us; he provides for us; and it is right that we should give our first affections to him. No one who has become a Christian ever yet felt that he had become one too young. No young person that given his heart to the Redeemer ever yet regretted it. They may give up the gay world to do it; they may leave the circles of the dance and the song; they may be exposed to contempt and persecution, but no matter. He who becomes a true Christian, no matter of what age or rank, blesses God that he was inclined to do it, and the time never can come when for one moment he will regret it. Why, then, will not the young give their hearts to the Saviour, and do that which they know they never can for one moment regret?

(14.) It is no dishonour for those who hold offices, and who are men of rank, to inquire on the subject of religion, Luke 18:18. Men of rank often suppose that it is only the *weak*, and *credulous*, and *ignorant*, that ever feel any anxiety about religion. Never was a greater mistake. It has been only profligate, and weak, and ignorant men, that have been thoughtless. Two-thirds of all the profound investigations of the world have been on this very subject. The wisest and best of the heathens have devoted their lives to inquire about God, and their own destiny. So in Christian lands. Were Bacon, Newton, Locke, Milton, Hale, and Boerhaave men of weak minds? Yet their deepest thoughts and most anxious inquiries were on this very subject. So in our own land. Were Washington, Ames, Henry, Jay, and Rush men of weak minds? Yet they were profound believers in revelation. And yet young men of rank, and wealth, and learning, often think they show great independence in refusing to think of what occupied the profound attention of these men, and fancy they are great only by refusing to tread in their steps. Never was a greater or more foolish mistake. If anything demands attention, it is surely the inquiry whether we are to be happy for ever, or wretched; whether there is a God and Saviour; or whether we are "in a forsaken and fatherless world."

(15.) It is as important for the *rich* to seek religion as the poor. They will as certainly die; they as much need religion. Without it, they *cannot* be happy, Riches will drive away no pain on a death-bed; they will not go with us; they will not save us.

(16.) It is of *special* importance that wealthy young persons should be Christians. They are exposed to many dangers. The world-the gay and flattering world-will lead them astray. Fond of fashion, dress, and amusement, they are exposed to a thousand follies, from which nothing but religion can secure them. Besides, they may do much

good; and God will hold them answerable for all the good they *might* have done with their wealth.

(17.) The amiable, the lovely, the moral, need also an interest in Christ. If amiable, we should suppose they would be ready to embrace the Saviour. None was ever so moral, so lovely, so pure, as he. If we really *loved* amiableness, then we should come to him. We should love him. But alas! how many amiable young persons turn away from him, and refuse to follow him! Can they be really lovers of that which is pure and lovely? If so, then why turn away from the Lamb of God ?

(18.) The amiable and the lovely need a better righteousness than their own. With all this, they may make an idol of the world; they may be proud, sensual, selfish, prayerless, and thoughtless about dying. Externally they appear lovely; but oh, how far is the heart from God!

(19.) Inquirers about religion depend on their own works, Matthew 19:16 They are not willing to trust to Jesus for salvation; and they ask what they shall do. This is always the case. And it is only when they find that they can do nothing-that they are poor, and helpless, and wretched-that they cast themselves on the mercy of God, and find peace.

(20.) Compliments and flattering titles are evil, Matthew 19:17. They ascribe something to others which we know they do not possess. Often beauty is praised, where we know there is no beauty; accomplishment where there is no accomplishment; talent, where there is no talent. Such praises are *falsehood*. We know them to be such. We intend to deceive by them; and we know that they will produce pride and vanity. Often they are used for the purpose of destruction. If a man praises us too much, we should look to our purse, or our virtue. We should feel that we are in danger, and the next thing will be a dreadful blow, the heavier for all this flattery. They that use compliments much, expect them from others; are galled and vexed when they are *not* obtained, and are in danger when they are.

(21.) If we are to be saved, we must do just what God commands us, Matthew 19:17,18. This is all we have to do. We are not to invent anything of our own. God has marked out the course, and we must follow it.

(22.) We are easily deceived about keeping the law, Matthew 19:17. We often *think* we observe it, when it is only the outward form that we have kept. The law is spiritual; and God requires the heart.

(23.) Riches are a blessing, if used aright; if not, they are deceitful, dangerous, ruinous, Matthew 19:23,24. Thousands have lost their souls by the love of riches. None have ever been saved by them.

(24.) It is our duty to forsake all for Christ, Matthew 19:27-29. Be it little or much, it is all the same to him. It is the *heart* that he looks at; and we may as well show our love by giving up a fishing boat and net, as by a palace or a crown. If done in either case, it will be accepted.

(25.) Religion has its own rewards, Matthew 19:28,29. It gives more than it takes. It more than compensates for all that we surrender. It gives peace, joy, comfort in trial and in death, and heaven beyond. This is the testimony of all Christians of all denominations; of all that *have* lived, and of all that do live, that they never knew true peace till they found it in the gospel. The testimony of so many must be true. They have tried the world in all its forms of gaiety, folly, and vice, and they come and say with one voice, here only

is true peace. On any other subject they would be believed. Their testimony here must be true.

(26.) Those eminent for usefulness here, will be received to distinguished honours and rewards in heaven, Matthew 19:28. They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as stars in the firmament for ever, Daniel 12:3.⁷²

⁷² Barnes' Notes