

Gospel of Mark 19 Chapter 10, verses 1 – 31 – Discussions on Divorce, Children and Wealth:-

This block of teaching has much to say about living a life acceptable to, and in line with, the will of the Lord God.

Verses 1 – 12 - Discussion on the subject of Divorce - Note that early manuscripts of Mark's Gospel read "*They asked him if it was lawful . . .*". For clarification the words "*The Pharisees*" were used in later documents as in chapter 8, verse 11 etc. The question about divorce was put to the Lord Jesus to try and trap him into conflict with the Law. As so often he turns the question back onto the questioners. When the Pharisees are asked about the Law of Moses they did not give a full answer. Divorce was permitted for "*uncleanness*" or "*indecency*" - see Deuteronomy chapter 24, verse 1. For some it had been an excuse to put aside one wife so that they could marry another. (Sounds familiar?).

The Lord Jesus reasons that the permission was only given because of "*hardness of heart*". At the time of Moses, as now, people find it too hard to live according to the Law of God. The permission given by Moses was 'second best', an attempt to regulate what was being done anyway! Jesus then quotes from Genesis chapter 1, verse 27 and chapter 2, verse 24 - "*He made them male and female . . . For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh*". This is how God meant them to be.

Again the disciples question the difficulty of his teaching. In Matthew's Gospel chapter 19, verses 10 – 12 this teaching is expanded to include those who choose to remain single. A choice which is appropriate for those who are called to live that way.

Read Malachi chapter 2, verses 13 – 16. This teaching would be well known to the Pharisees and is very clear that the marriage covenant was sacred and that children, the visible result of the 'one flesh' union were to be 'Godly'. This gives a natural link to the following episode!

Verses 13 – 16 – The Blessing of Children – The events recorded in these verses most likely took place in the house (see verse 10). The Greek text implies that "*they kept bringing children*". The attitude of the disciples seems to be based on the idea that the Lord's time was too valuable to be wasted on children. Note that the Gospel of Mark is unique in its descriptions of the emotions of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here he is described as being "*indignant*". He commanded the disciples to "*Let the children come to me and stop forbidding them*". The trust and openness of children was needed to enter the kingdom of God. That these were very young children is shown by the fact that Jesus "*took them up in his arms and blessed them*".

See the Book of Numbers chapter 6, verses 22 – 27 for the blessing commanded to be used on the people of God.

Verses 17 – 31 – The Problem of the Riches of this World:- The encounter with the rich man took place as the Lord Jesus was "*setting out on his journey*". This was his last journey "*going up to Jerusalem*" (verse 32). This gives added emphasis to the call "*follow me*". This young ruler (see Matthew chapter 19, verse 22 and Luke chapter 18, verse 18 for details) thought that eternal life could be earned by doing good! The Lord Jesus put his finger on the one thing that was holding back this young man's faith – "*he had great possessions.*" The claim of the young man that he had kept the commandments from childhood was a claim to outward obedience. In his heart he was still covetous. He was hanging on to, and trusting in, his material possessions.

Again there is further teaching for the disciples. The idea that "*the eye of a needle*" represents a small gate through which a camel could only pass on its knees is not implied in the Greek. The word for "*needle*" refers specifically to a sewing needle. Jesus was not talking about what a man considers possible, but about what seems to be impossible. What man cannot do, the Lord God can!

The disciples had given up all possibility of advancement in worldly possessions in order to be with the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice that the abandoning of house and family does not include the abandoning of a wife! Again, if the two are "*one flesh*" then they should be united in their discipleship. See 1 Corinthians chapter 7, verses 10 – 17.

Always remember that these teachings were given as the Lord Jesus Christ set his face towards Jerusalem. The road ahead was leading to suffering and the cross. The disciples were called to walk with him on that road. They (and we) were not promised an easy life but the rewards promised are of friendship, fellowship and in the end eternal life!