

The Gospel of *Mark*

The Servant Leadership of Jesus

The Servant's Journey to Jerusalem (10)

Chapter 10 includes several paradoxes that are unique Christian characteristics ^{2 Corinthians 12:10}.

Jesus Teaches on Divorce (10:1-12)

10:1 Jesus travelled from Capernaum into northern Judea, then east across the Jordan into Perea.

Perea (east of the Jordan River from the Arnon River north to the Kerith Ravine) and Galilee (west of the Jordan and the Sea of Galilee) were the two regions governed by Herod Antipas.

2-4 Once again, the Pharisees questioned Jesus ^{Mark 2:16-18, 24, 3:2, 7:5, 8:11} in hopes of accusing Him of a violation of the Law (Pentateuch). Jesus answered their question with a question involving the Law of Moses, and the Pharisees were forced to give their answer straight from Scripture ^{Deuteronomy 24:1-4}

Matthew's account said the Pharisees' question added "for any and every reason?" ^{Matthew 19:3}.

The Pharisees waited to question Jesus about divorce until He was within the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, perhaps because Herod had earlier imprisoned and beheaded John the Baptist for his statements about his and Herodias' unlawful divorce and remarriage ^{Mark 6:17-18, 27}.

The Greek word (*peirazō*) translated "tested" implies the intent to prove that Jesus was evil.

The section of Scripture in the Mosaic Law in question ^{Deuteronomy 24:1-4} simply recognized the reality of divorce, protected the rights and reputation of the wife and regulated remarriage.

Much like today, however, divorce was a controversial subject, with two main perspectives: (1) Rabbi Hillel taught leniency, allowing a man to divorce his wife for virtually any reason and (2) Rabbi Shammai's interpretation was strict, allowing divorce only in the case of immorality.

5-12 Knowing the intent of the Pharisees' question, Jesus explained that the Law concerning divorce was not the real issue. Jesus knew their "hearts were hard" ^{Psalm 95:8, Hebrews 3:15}, and they were not only looking to trap Jesus into saying something counter to the Law, but also to gain confirmation of a liberal interpretation of their rights to divorce. However, Jesus let them know that what was needed was a strict adherence to God's original definition of marriage ^{Genesis 2:24}. Being confused, the disciples privately asked Jesus for further clarification – to which Jesus responded by revealing: when a man or woman divorces ('unlawfully' is implied) and remarries, they are committing adultery.

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Jesus pointed them to the Creation story ^{Genesis 1:27, 2:24} as the key to God's plan for this issue.

Matthew ^{Matthew 19:9} adds “except for marital unfaithfulness” to Jesus' statement on divorce ^{v.11}.

Simply put, God's love for mankind ^{Genesis 5:2} is based on His unwavering commitment, and He expects no less from mankind when a man and a woman join together in marriage: the earthly relationship that best reflects the relationship between Jesus and His children ^{Ephesians 5:25-33}.

The overall governing principle on this issue is God's statement: “I hate divorce...” ^{Malachi 2:16}.

➤ The first of the paradoxical statements by Jesus is “the two shall become one flesh” ^{v.8}.

The Little Children and Jesus (10:13-16)

13-16 Parents brought their children to Jesus, but the disciples admonished them, as if Jesus did not have time for “kids”. Jesus became “indignant” at their response, and let them know that instead of being a nuisance, children are the model for Kingdom behavior. Jesus touched and blessed them.

Jewish parents commonly sought the blessing of prominent rabbis for their children, and their hope here was for Jesus to lay His hands on the children and to pray for them ^{Matthew 19:13}.

Jesus made two key points about the children: (1) His statements implied that God graciously extends salvation to those who are too young (or mentally impaired) to exercise faith and (2) in order for adults to receive salvation (“the kingdom of God”), they must come to God with a childlike ^{Matthew 18:3} dependence expressed through humility ^{James 4:10} and trust ^{Psalms 37:5-6}.

➤ The second paradox in this chapter is ‘Kingdom adults must be like children’ ^{v.14-15}.

The Rich Young Man (10:17-27)

17-19 After Jesus left the children, a man approached Jesus with humility (“on his knees” ^{Mark 1:40}); however, his question revealed a legalistic (“what must I do”) perception of salvation (“eternal life”). In response to the man calling Him “good”, Jesus pointed out that only God is good. Jesus was not denying His deity, but He wanted to see if the young man was willing to acknowledge His deity. Jesus then asked if he was aware of the 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th(?) and 5th commandments ^{Exodus 20:12-16}.

Matthew noted the man was young ^{Matthew 19:20} and Luke revealed he was a ruler ^{Luke 18:18}.

The Greek word for “good” (*agathōs*) also indicates benevolent, profitable and useful.

The apparent paraphrase of the 10th Law was unique to Mark's account ^{Matthew 19:18-19, Luke 18:20}.

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This man's question is the foundation of every human form of religion: "What must I do...?" However, Jesus posed the only essential, necessary, eternal question for all of mankind based on what He has done through His life, death and resurrection: "Who do you say I am?" ^{Luke 9:20}

20-22 The young man pridefully declared: "all these I have kept since I was a boy." Knowing the man did not understand, Jesus proposed he put all his worldly treasure aside and "follow" Him ^{Matthew 4:19}, but the man was unwilling to do what Jesus suggested ^{Luke 14:28} and left "very sad" ^{Luke 18:23}.

Jesus was not saying philanthropy or poverty were requirements for salvation, but He simply wanted to expose the condition of the young man's heart. The man put his love of and trust in worldly possessions ahead of his love of and obedience to God ^{Matthew 6:24}. Moreover, Jesus once again illustrated the man's superficial understanding of who Jesus was and is ^{John 14:6}.

Mark is the only Gospel noting Jesus' love for the man ^{v.21}. (Was Mark the man? ^{Mark 14:51-52})

23-27 To clarify the issue for His disciples, Jesus stated twice that wealth is often a barrier to a person entering into the Kingdom of God ^{Psalms 52:7, Mark 4:18-19, 1 Timothy 6:9-10}. Still thinking with a worldly perspective, the disciples wondered "Who then can be saved?", if the rich are not saved. Jesus next statement took their focus off of themselves and what they can "do" ^{v.17} to be saved, and refocused their thinking upon God and what He has already done and will do to bring anyone to salvation.

This teaching was confusing to the disciples, because they had grown up learning from the Rabbis that the possession of great wealth was an evidence of a special blessing from God.

Riches tend to promote a feeling of self-sufficiency and a false sense of security, leading those with riches to think they do not have need for divine resources ^{Luke 16:13, 1 Timothy 6:17-19}.

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." There are many interpretations of this statement by Jesus, but there is only one that seems to be credible. The Persians explained 'impossibility' by saying something would be more difficult to do than for an 'elephant' to go through the eye of a needle. The Jewish culture merely adapted the saying using the largest animal in Palestine: the camel.

Jesus Confirms the Disciples Rewards (10:28-31)

28-31 Referring to Jesus' directive to the young ruler, Peter declared he and the other disciples had left everything to follow Him. Jesus assured him their sacrifice would be greatly rewarded ^{Matthew 6:33}.

Jesus made it clear that the rewards for following Jesus are both earthly and heavenly.

➤ The third paradox Jesus taught was **"many who are first will be last, and the last first"** ^{v.31}.

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