

The Gospel of Mark

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Chapter Ten

Mark 10:1-9

*And rising up, He *went from there to the region of Judea, and beyond the Jordan; and crowds *gathered around Him again, and, according to His custom, He once more began to teach them. (2) And some Pharisees came up to Him, testing Him, and began to question Him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife. (3) And He answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?" (4) And they said, "Moses permitted a man TO WRITE A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY." (5) But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. (6) "But from the beginning of creation, God MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE. (7) "FOR THIS CAUSE A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, (8) AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH; consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. (9) "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."*

Jesus is now finished with His ministry in Galilee and is moving closer to Jerusalem for the final chapter in His total ministry. He had been teaching primarily His disciples but now He is again teaching the crowds. The translation of verse two regarding testing is certainly correct for they were not seeking an answer from Jesus but testing Him so that they could condemn Him. It is probably noteworthy that Jesus is now in the territory ruled by Herod Antipas since he had John the Baptist beheaded over his marriage to Herodias. Perhaps the Pharisees hoped that they could trick Jesus into an answer that would cause Herod to similarly behead Jesus. The Jews allowed divorce but the question is over the legal grounds for a divorce with the crucial text being: *"When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house, (Deut 24:1)* The question among the Jews was: "What was the indecency found in her?" There were basically two schools of thought on this question. The more strict school of Shammai taught that such had to be some morally indecent act like adultery. The more liberal school of Hillel interpreted the phrase to mean anything that the husband found distasteful even like burning his food. The real question before Jesus was then: "What was His interpretation of this phrase?" Jesus replied in what seems to be a rather normal way for Him by asking a question rather than directly answering their question. Jesus knew that Moses was their ultimate authority so He asked them to state his command regarding this topic.

This question about divorce still exists today as people try to exegete the Scripture but actually most eisegete it. The permission by Moses was an accommodation for human weakness in a society that disregarded the laws of God. Jesus correctly interpreted the situation by stating that Moses allowed such a write of divorce because of the hardness of their heart. Being hard of heart means that they did not have a new heart given by God to those He changed into His true

children. God hates divorce and never intended for such to be allowed but only those with a new heart could understand:

- Ezek 36:26-27 *"Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷"And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.*
- Mal 2:16 *"For I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the LORD of hosts. "So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."*

Jesus then referred to the original creation statement to show them the plan of God. The rabbis misunderstood God's gracious provision of allowing divorce for His approval of such. Since such a provision was only for those whose hearts were still hard, the provision is only for those of the world and not for God's people. Today many churches still make an improper interpretation (eisegesis) of these verses.

Jesus then states the clear principle of oneness before God of people who have been united in marriage. Since the union is done by God, nobody can undo it. The evil action of divorce could not be more clearly stated since it is an act against a creation act of God.

Mark 10:10-12

*And in the house the disciples began questioning Him about this again. (11) And He *said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; (12) and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery."*

Mark does not inform us of the Jewish response to this statement by Jesus but rather he tells us that the disciples were indeed puzzled by it and asked Jesus for clarification. Jesus then states His clarification such that nobody should be able to not understand. A husband who divorces his wife and then marries another woman is committing adultery against his first wife because the divorce is not recognized by God. Jesus then raised the status of women by putting them into the same quandary as man. Jewish law did not allow a woman to divorce her husband but Jesus states that if she would do so and then married another man then she would also be committing adultery against her first husband. Marriage is a permanent relationship between a man and a woman and God does not allow a divorce. Anyone who then divorces his wife or if a woman divorces her husband is then is sinning. Of course God can forgive any sin so if someone is reading this who has divorced then the person must repent and ask for God's forgiveness. Matthew does not include Mark 10:12 since he is writing to Jews and seemingly did not want to further exasperate the situation.

The relationship to the church and marriage is given by Paul. When two become one, the oneness is forever:

Eph 5:25-33 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, (26) so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, (27) that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. (28) So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He

who loves his own wife loves himself; (29) for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, (30) because we are members of His body. (31) FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. (32) This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. (33) Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband."

The following verse of Matthew has often been used improperly by some churches to allow divorce: "*And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife except for immorality^{G4202}, and marries another woman commits adultery.*" (Matt 19:9) The Greek word translated "immorality" is *porneia*, which is fornication, not adultery as some Bible translations have used. Of course fornication involves sexual relations outside of marriage so the meaning is that if a husband determines that his wife was not a virgin then the husband may divorce his wife and marry another woman without such being called adultery. Jesus is not saying that divorce is allowed but that the marriage is not to be consummated. The other concept used by some denominations to allow divorce involves desertion using 1 Cor 7:10-16. But these verses only state that a believer may leave the marriage relationship but no mention of divorce is made in those verses. Paul is just stating that a Christian is free to leave the abusive person but the marriage remains. The goal is reconciliation as both people realize that they are still married before God. If more churches enforced the Biblical concept of "once married/always married" then people would be more dedicated to marriage.

Mark 10:13-16

And they were bringing children to Him so that He might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. (14) But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, "Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. (15) "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all." (16) And He took them in His arms and began blessing them, laying His hands upon them.

We do not know why Mark included this event here except perhaps it fits with his previous discussion on marriage. It is not known who brought the children to Jesus but they do not seem to be His disciples. The disciples rebuked those who brought the children and only Mark records that Jesus was indignant to them for this action. Perhaps the disciples did not want to interrupt the teaching of Jesus on weightier issues that required adult interaction. But Jesus said that the status of the children represented those required by people to enter the kingdom of God. All such people need to be open and receptive to ideas and concepts out of their common attitude to properly receive the KOG. A contrast could be made to the Pharisees who had such preconceived concepts of the KOG that they could not recognize it in the presence of Jesus. Jesus presents a spiritual KOG as opposed to a worldly kingdom as expected by the Pharisees. All who can receive the KOG must not come with preunderstandings but be willing to accept it as offered by Jesus. From verse 16 we know that the children were young since He took them into His arms. What a blessing they received from Jesus!

Mark 10:17-22

And as He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and began asking Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (18) And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. (19) "You know the commandments, 'DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, Do not defraud, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'" (20) And he said to Him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up." (21) And looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." (22) But at these words his face fell, and he went away grieved, for he was one who owned much property.

I have divided this section into three sections (17-22, 23-27, and 28-31). It is likely that these statements did not happen at the same time but that Mark brought them all together since they make an important point when viewed together. The main point being that nobody can buy or earn his way into being a disciple of Jesus Christ. In this first section Jesus addresses the person who thinks he has lived a righteous life worthy of being a disciple of Jesus. Jesus first addresses the comment of the man that He is a good person. Jesus wanted the man to know that only God is good when His standards are involved in the classification. However, Jesus is not saying that He is not good for He is God and, of course, is therefore good. The man does not reply to this comment so he must not understand that Jesus is the Son of God and only thinks of Him as a great teacher. Luke calls the man a ruler (Luke 18:18) and Matthew states that he is young (Matt 19:20), but Mark does not identify him. The man thinks that eternal life is earned but Jesus has already stated that it is a gift of God (v. 15). Jesus then reminds the man of six basic commandments from the second table of the Law (Exod 20:12-17). The command to not defraud is only found in Mark and seems to be a substitute for coveting since fraud is a consequence of coveting something. It was a firm Jewish teaching that one who kept the law would live:

Deut 30:15-16 "See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; (16) in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it."

The man replied confidently that he had kept the law, probably meaning from age 13 when every Jewish boy became *bar miswah* ("son of the commandment") as stated by: "*And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast*" (Luke 2:42). Paul also had this same concept for righteousness before being born again (Phil 3:6 "*as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.*") The fact that the law required an inner obedience to which no person could comply was not a concept he understood.

Jesus recognized the sincerity of the man and replied with love but not acceptance. Jesus also knew that the man's security rested on his wealth so He addressed that anchor the man must overthrow. This command of Jesus must not be considered a universal command for everyone to become a child of God for what must be removed from each person's life is whatever keeps him from a total attachment to Jesus. The promise from Jesus that the result of removing such an attachment will result in treasures in heaven that is a gift of God removes any thought that one can buy such treasures by giving all that one possesses to the poor.

The observers state that the man's face fell so he was totally in despair as he learned that he was too attached to his wealth and all that such brought him. His religion totally failed him from becoming a disciple of this person that he viewed as a great teacher. We do not know what happened to the man except that he went away grieved as would anyone who refused to do what was required to follow Jesus. We see other such excuses such as: "*Another of the disciples said to Him, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father."* (22) *But Jesus *said to him, "Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead."* (Matt 8:21-22) It is not likely that the man's father had already died but that the man wanted to stay with his earthly family until they died. Jesus then recognized the spiritual death of this disciple and told him to let the spiritually dead bury their dead. The Matthew statement stresses that family relationships must not be more important than the spiritual as also emphasized at the Cross by Jesus:

Matt 12:48-50 But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" (49) And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! (50) "For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."

Mark 10:23-27

*And Jesus, looking around, *said to His disciples, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!" (24) And the disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus *answered again and *said to them, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! (25) "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." (26) And they were even more astonished and said to Him, "Then who can be saved?" (27) Looking upon them, Jesus *said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God."*

Jesus, because of His Jewish background agreed with the disciples concerning their amazement that it is difficult for wealthy people to enter the KOG. The Jewish teaching was that the righteous were blessed with riches but Jesus revealed that anyone who has been blessed with riches faces a hurdle to enter the KOG. In fact, Jesus revealed that it is very difficult to enter the KOG. Some people have said that there was a small entrance in the wall to the city of Jerusalem where camels could enter if they would kneel to get through. However there is no evidence to back up this conjecture and it actually detracts from the point of Jesus that since it is impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, it is similarly impossible for a rich man to enter the KOG. The disciples certainly understood the meaning behind the statements of Jesus and they then asked Him "Who can be saved?"

Jesus then made it completely clear that entrance into the KOG is impossible unless such is done by God. There is nothing anyone can do to gain entrance into the KOG so that not even someone who has received some earthly blessings has a better chance of entering it than does a beggar with no earthly blessings at all. The words "salvation", "eternal life", and "entrance into the kingdom" are all used synonymously.

Mark 10:28-31

Peter began to say to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You." (29) Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, (30) but

that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life. (31) "But many who are first, will be last; and the last, first."

In contrast to the rich man who was not willing to give up his wealth, Peter states that they have left behind everything to follow Jesus. Matthew elaborates a bit on Peter's comment as I bolded: "*Then Peter said to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; **what then will there be for us?**"*" (Matt 19:27) The disciples were then still thinking in terms of material blessings rather than spiritual blessings. Since Matthew wrote for the Jews, perhaps he indicated from Peter's additional comment that they still expected worldly blessings to naturally occur for those who were righteous. Jesus replied that those who really are His disciples will receive three results: 1. A hundred times as much as they gave up in the present age, 2. Persecutions, and 3. Eternal life in the age to come. The worldly blessings described by Jesus become possible because of the rich interactions with fellow Christians as we read about in various places:

- Act 4:32 *And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.*
- Rom 15:27 *Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things.*
- Phil 4:3 *Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*
- Phil 4:15 *You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;*
- 1Tim 4:3 *men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.*

The promise by Jesus is that all of His disciples will receive a full and difficult life on earth and eternal life with God in the age to come. Verse 31 appears in other contexts also (Matt 20:16; Luke 13:30) and has many applications. Becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ is not to be viewed as coming with some rewards of earthly applications. There will be some on earth who have worldly titles but in eternity will have none. Similarly there will be some Christians on earth who have no worldly titles and they will have heavenly titles. Discipleship involves suffering and service and must be entered with total devotion to serving Jesus Christ with no expectation of rewards. Matthew inserts a parable of the laborers in the vineyard to illustrate the point (Matt 20:1-16).

Mark 10:32-34

And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful. And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him, (33) saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and will deliver Him to the

Gentiles. (34) "And they will mock Him and spit upon Him, and scourge Him, and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again."

They then resumed their trip south to Jerusalem. Mark states that they were going up to Jerusalem for it is elevated. Jesus was taking the lead and the disciples were amazed at His haste to go to what they had been told would be His goal as stated in: *"For the Lord GOD helps Me, Therefore, I am not disgraced; Therefore, I have set My face like flint, And I know that I will not be ashamed."* (Isaiah 50:7) The ones following them were probably pilgrims going to the feast and they had perhaps heard about the fate awaiting Jesus and were fearful. Jesus then took aside His twelve and began to explain again what would happen to Him. Mark then records the third prediction of Jesus concerning His Passion (8:31; 9:31). This prediction is more detailed than the others and contains six points: 1. His betrayal, 2. His sentence to death, 3. His being handed over to the Gentiles, 4. He will be mocked, spit on, and flogged, 5. He will be executed, and 6. He will be resurrected three days after His death. Mark does not record the reaction of the disciples but Luke states: *"But the disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said."* (Luke 18:34). Luke thus elaborates that they did not understand because the meaning was hidden from them. It was not until after Pentecost that the Holy Spirit would illuminate them with proper understanding.

Mark 10:35-40

*And James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, *came up to Him, saying to Him, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You." (36) And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" (37) And they said to Him, "Grant that we may sit in Your glory, one on Your right, and one on Your left." (38) But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking for. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" (39) And they said to Him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized. (40) "But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."*

This event parallels 9:30-37 and reveals how spiritually dense were even two of the best-known disciples. The request seems utterly preposterous and certainly would not have been included in some man-made discussion but it serves to illustrate how spiritual things can only be understood by those who are spiritual (1 Cor 2:14). It seems that they were sure that Jesus was about to reveal His messianic claims and they wanted to be included in that status. They had no understanding of the true nature of the Messiah. Jesus told them that they did not know what they were requesting. Nobody but Jesus could drink the cup that He was about to drink for only He could take upon Himself the sins of His people and suffer the wrath of God for that sin. They defiantly said that they were able and Jesus told them that they would indeed similarly drink the drink and be baptized with the baptism with which He was to be baptized. Jesus then told them that only the Father had the right to place people in particular places in heaven. They could not have understood any of this.

Mark 10:41-45

*And hearing this, the ten began to feel indignant with James and John. (42) And calling them to Himself, Jesus *said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. (43) "But it is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; (44) and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. (45) "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

The remaining ten disciples also reacted in a human manner as they showed their jealousy of James and John who dared to ask for preferential treatment in the Kingdom. Jesus had to then remind them that kingdom living was not like worldly living. Jesus states that He is the example of proper living in the kingdom as He came to serve and to give His life a ransom for many (note He did not say for all). The word translated “ransom” is *lytron* that means “the price of release” and is often used in Greek writings to mean the payment for release of a slave. It also relates to the suffering servant passage of Isaiah 53 and particularly “*All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.*” (Isa 53:6) Jesus is stating the meaning of His substitutionary death in that what will fall upon Him takes the place of what should fall on us – the wrath of God for our sins (Matt 6:36).

Mark 10:46-52

*And they *came to Jericho. And as He was going out from Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road. (47) And when he heard that it was Jesus the Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (48) And many were sternly telling him to be quiet, but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" (49) And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him here." And they *called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage, arise! He is calling for you." (50) And casting aside his cloak, he jumped up, and came to Jesus. (51) And answering him, Jesus said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" And the blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, I want to regain my sight!" (52) And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he regained his sight and began following Him on the road.*

This is the last healing ministry of Jesus reported by Mark. Jericho is about 15 miles southeast of Jerusalem. Mark reports that Jesus was on His way out of the city as does Matthew, but Matthew writes about two blind men:

*Matt 20:29-34 "As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him. (30) And two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" (31) The crowd sternly told them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" (32) And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" (33) They *said to Him, "Lord, we want our eyes to be opened." (34) Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him."*

Only Mark names the blind man. Bartimaeus kept calling Him Son of David, which demonstrated an understanding of the Messianic mission of Jesus and Jesus did not correct the man. As the crowd tried to silence Bartimaeus, he became even louder in his shouts to Jesus. After Jesus addressed the man, the crowd’s response changed as they encouraged him to come to

Jesus. The cloak was probably on the ground to collect coins given him but he cast it aside to get up to come to Jesus. This man demonstrated his willingness to give away all that he had to follow Jesus in contradiction to the attitude of the rich young ruler. Thus he showed that he had faith from God. Jesus then asked the man what He could do for him and he showed his faith by asking for his sight to be regained. Apparently his blindness was not from birth but from some illness or accident. Jesus only told the man that his faith had healed him and he immediately regained his sight and began following Jesus on the road. He is now about to engage the spiritually blind Jewish leaders.