

Episode #838 - Matthew 19 Part 3-The Rich Young Man

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. The Lord had been questioned about divorce by the Pharisees; some of whom thought a man was king of his house and could divorce his wife for any reason, others of whom insisted a man could only divorce his wife for certain, serious reasons. Yet the Lord narrows it down to one reason, sexual immorality, and insists that all other reasons force a woman to commit adultery, and if he remarries, he commits adultery as well!

III. Lawful Divorce. Matthew 19:1-12.

A. Verse 10. “Case” is the same Greek word as “reason” in verse 3. This could also mean a legal matter or accusation of crime. Men were not used to such a burden, though the women had to live with it!

B. Verse 11. The “saying” is the Greek *logos*, meaning an expression of truth. We had best use care, when this statement was made to those to whom Moses gave the law, if we then act like we are the ones to whom this was given! He did not use the word “men,” and some women of the time who were divorced and had no means of support might well HAVE to remarry, whatever the cause of divorce and whether the Lord said it was adultery or not. These literally could not receive it and live. So we had best also be careful about saying this is just about those who feel like receiving it!

C. Verse 12. To be made a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven’s sake means when that government called on them to be so. Some even today might make themselves eunuchs figuratively, we might call it celibate, for the sake of God’s rule. If this was indeed pleasing to Him, then their reward would be in the kingdom of the heavens. Yet this is making yourself celibate in the case of divorce. There is no value or reward in heaven’s government for a vow of celibacy such as the Catholic church has its monks and nuns take. The Bible typically supports marriage as the better option for those unmarried and single. Even in the case of divorce, as we have tried to point out, this should be not be considered a hard and fast rule about remarriage. “Able” is *dunamos*, has the power to. Again, some literally would have had trouble earning a living and having food without a marriage partner.

IV. Jesus Prays for Little Children. Matthew 19:13-15.

A. Verse 13. No doubt these were brought by their parents, though that is not stated. “Little children” is *paidion*, not an infant, but not yet an adult. Used at least between 1-12 years old, perhaps up to 19; not necessarily babies. In chapter 18, He set a little child among His disciples to teach them. What believing parents would not want the Lord to pray over their children? These disciples probably thought that this was a waste of the Lord’s time; He was too important for this. They had not learned the lesson of the little child from Matthew 18:1-3.

B. Verse 14. This was His lesson in Matthew 18:3. Children and those who become like children before God are those who enter the kingdom of the heavens. How quickly they had forgotten!

C. Verse 15. We do not read of Him praying, though He probably did this as well.

V. The Rich Young Man. Matthew 19:16-22.

- A. Verse 16. “Came” is *proserchomai* again; approached, as to a king. This is common in Matthew, much less so in the other gospels. Note: the modern Nestle text omits the “Good” before “Teacher,” (but Scrivener maintains it) though there is no question about it in Mark 10:17. He calls Him a Good Teacher, and then asks Him what good thing he can do to have life eonian. His implication is that the Lord has discovered this good thing and become good Himself, and if He will tell him the good thing to do, he can become good as well. But this is entirely wrong. The Lord is good because of Who He is, and no one can become good except by the imputation of His goodness through faith. Eternal life is eonian life, life which will flow out of God, and will make a person an outflowing one and a source of blessing to others. This life will be granted to men only in the kingdom of the heavens to come.
- B. Verse 17. The modern texts make this, “Why do you ask Me about the thing that good is?” This confusing and ungrammatical statement is supposed to be an improvement. Far better to note the proper reading in Mark and maintain the reading of the Received Text, as Scrivener has done.
1. Some use this against Christ’s deity, but He is not saying that He is not good. He is pointing out to this man that he called Him good. But how can He be good when only God is good? The correct answer is that He is good because He is God. Every word the Lord gives a person gives that person an opportunity for faith. We saw a woman whom the Lord called a dog, and when she took the dog’s place that was faith. The man could have had faith and acknowledged that he called Him good because He is God. But he failed to do so, and the next word would be much harder to have faith in.
 2. The Lord was indeed good because He is the One Who is God.
 3. “Want” is *theleis*, the word for “will” meaning “wish” or “desire.”
 4. “Life” = THE life, meaning the greater life of the kingdom, LIFE, if you will.
- C. Verse 18. We wonder why the *King James Version* did not choose to translate this word “murder” more often, rather than “thou shalt not kill,” which is confusing. This is all much simpler in the Greek. Not murder, not adulterize, not steal, not pseudo-witness. These are all from the ten commandments in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5.
- D. Verse 19. Honoring your father and mother is from the ten commandments as well. Loving your neighbor as yourself is from Leviticus 19:18. “Love” is the Greek *agapao*, God’s highest form of self-sacrificial love, love in action.
- E. Verse 20. “Young man” is the Greek *neaniskos*, meaning under 40. Once one reached 40 one was merely a “man,” no longer a “young” one. He said he “kept” these, the same word as the Lord used when He told him to keep the commandments. His “youth” means “boyhood,” from when he was much younger. It is good that the young man had a realization that he still lacked. He came to the Lord to find out what he lacked, which was also the right move.

VI. Conclusion: The Lord taught the good of being celibate for the sake of the kingdom of God, but we should not remove this idea from the context of divorce, as some do, since marriage in God’s sight is usually the good thing. The disciples thought the Lord was too busy to lay His hands on children and bless them, but He insisted they were quite wrong in their thinking. A rich young man came to the Lord seeking life in God’s eon, and the Lord had an important conversation with him. He had kept all the commandments, but he still lacked in faith. Do we have the faith we ought to have that is the only thing that can gain us entrance into eonian life?