

Gospel of Matthew Chapter 19 - John Karmelich

1. The most important sentence to learn in this lesson is as follows:
 - a) "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matt. 19:26: NIV)
 - i) That is a quote of Verse 26 of Chapter 19, other than the "Jesus said" part.
 - ii) If you can grasp the implications of that one sentence, the rest of the chapter is just further commentary.
 - iii) To live a happy, fulfilled life requires getting God involved in the process. The things we consider "impossible" are possible through God.
 - a) No matter how bad the situation, no matter how impossible it may be to achieve a particular goal, anything can be done through God.
 - b) If you don't believe that, your concept of God is too small!
 - b) There, you are now done for the week, unless you want to get some more details. ☺
2. Chapter 19 is Jesus teaching on several lessons:
 - a) The first is about marriage in Verses 1-10.
 - b) The second is about those who stay single all their lives in Verses 11-12.
 - c) The third is about letting children come to Jesus in Verses 13-14.
 - i) A point being is that Jesus is not just for adults!
 - d) The fourth is about a rich young ruler asking Jesus what it takes to please God in Verses 15-26. Jesus uses this opportunity to teach his followers about God and money.
 - e) The final story is about the disciples' rewards in heaven for following Jesus.
 - f) In summary, we have the issues of marriage, raising children, God and money, and life after the resurrection all covered in thirty verses.
 - g) Each one of these could be a lesson unto itself.
 - i) In most of these little stories, we have somebody complaining about how difficult it is to live out that aspect (e.g., good marriage, dealing with money) and still be pleasing to God.
 - ii) The solution again, is Verse 19, where Jesus says, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."
3. Before I begin, it is time for some disclaimers. ☺
 - a) I by no means am a perfect person, and I have some faults as well as you.
 - i) I know this is difficult to believe, but it is true. ☺
 - b) My point is to read this chapter, and some of the implications behind Jesus teaching and to see them as goals to be obtained.
 - c) I've yet to meet a person who can live 100% of the time like Jesus wants us to live. If that person existed, they could get to heaven and tell Jesus "move over". ☺
 - d) Jesus teachings are goals for us to focus upon and keep our eyes upon.
 - i) When we fail, we simply confess that sin and get back on track.
 - e) Therefore, if I accidentally the pronoun "you" for an application, I should be using "we".
 - i) Further, if you read this and think, "my spouse should be reading this", stop and remember the verse about Jesus saying, "why do you criticize the speck of dust in your brother's eye when you have a beam of wood in your eye?" (Matt. 7:3)
 - f) With that said, let's jump into Verse 1.
4. Verse 1: When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan. ² Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.
 - a) The first question is, "When Jesus had finished saying these things..." What things?
 - i) In the previous chapter, Jesus was teaching his disciples various lessons on forgiveness and who is the greatest in heaven.
 - ii) At this point, it was time for Jesus to leave his home base around Galilee and southeast toward Jerusalem.

- b) This is the final trip toward Jerusalem. From this point onward, all the events lead up toward the cross.
 - c) Notice that Jesus is now going "toward the other side of the Jordan".
 - i) If you look at your bible maps, you are now outside of "modern-Israel-proper".
 - a) The west side of the Jordan is Israel. Jesus is now going to the east side.
 - b) This is King Herod's jurisdiction, the one who had John the Baptist killed.
 - (1) That will become important when we get to Verse 3.
 - d) The simple point of this verse is that Jesus felt it was time to move on from Galilee and now base his operations at a new point.
 - e) I liked the part about how large multitudes followed Jesus and he healed them there.
 - i) Jesus focused on his next phase of operations, which was getting to this new point.
 - ii) Then he could focus on those who needed healing.
 - iii) Can you just picture blind or crippled people following Jesus thinking, "When is this guy going to stop and help me?" ☺
 - iv) There is a point of healing, but we have to wait on God's timing.
5. Verse 3: Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"
- a) At this point in Jesus' ministry he was very popular among the common people.
 - b) The religious leadership saw him as a threat to their religious power.
 - c) At this time in history, there were two Jewish "schools of thought" on divorce.
 - i) The more popular view is that a man could divorce his wife for any reason. Something as simple as "burning my breakfast" would be considered a good enough reason for divorce.
 - ii) Another school of thought was the only legal grounds for divorce is adultery.
 - iii) In Deuteronomy 24:1, it teaches that divorce is permitted if some "uncleanness" is found in a woman, than a man may divorce her.
 - a) The debate is whether or not "uncleanness" meant adultery or some simple thing again, like burning a breakfast.
 - b) The point here is that you have two popular views in play.
 - iv) The Pharisee's were hoping to make Jesus take sides in a debate.
 - a) They were hoping his popularity would dwindle by making Jesus take one view or the other on this issue.
 - d) Remember I said earlier that this is Herod's jurisdiction.
 - i) Remember Herod had John the Baptist put to death because John criticized Herod for having an adulterous relationship with his sister-in-law. Herod's wife was still alive, and thus was adultery. (It was the sister-in-law, in her anger at John making for making the accusation, got John killed.)
 - ii) Therefore, there is a strong possibility that the Pharisee's wanted Jesus to comment on divorce here and now, in order to get Jesus in trouble in Herod's jurisdiction.
 - iii) If Jesus was teaching like John on divorce, maybe Herod would arrest him.
6. Verse 4: "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator `made them male and female,'⁵ and said, `For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh' ?⁶ So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."
- a) The Pharisee's asked if it was lawful to divorce a woman for any reason.
 - b) Jesus began his response by ignoring the question and moving on to the bigger issue of marriage itself.
 - i) Divorce happens out of frustration over a bad marriage.
 - ii) Adultery is often a symptom of a bigger problem in a bad marriage.
 - iii) Before Jesus can comment on the specifics of divorce, Jesus wants to get to the root-issue of how to deal with marriage in the first place.

- c) Before I get into the specifics of Jesus teaching on marriage, notice how Jesus handled the situation of a debatable issue.
 - i) Instead of going to the debate question itself, Jesus went one step higher to the root cause.
 - a) This is a good idea to remember when we have a family split or a church split on a particular debate issue.
 - b) A good application is the best way to solve the issue is to consider the root-cause of the problem. Often there is some deeper anger or deep rift in a group that is coming out in the form of this debate question.
 - c) I have watched debate issues die much more quietly if we keep our family-love or church-love perspective in focus before dealing with the particular issue of the day.
 - d) On a related idea, think back of all the fights you've had say, with your spouse, or parents. Often you remember the fights, but you can't remember the particular issue you were fighting over!
- d) Let's get back to the verses themselves. Jesus uses this question about when it is proper to divorce to teach about marriage itself.
 - i) Notice Jesus can use his enemies' tactics to teach us valuable lessons!
 - ii) Jesus is also putting down the Pharisee's in a way it is difficult for us to see.
 - a) Pharisees prided themselves in knowing their bibles extremely well.
 - b) They would memorize major sections on a word-by-word basis.
 - c) For Jesus to say, "have you never read" a particular passage is a dig.
 - d) Jesus point, as we will learn later, is that the Pharisees were focusing on the wrong scriptures. They were busy debating about divorce when they should be thinking more about the issue of marriage.
- e) In Verse 4, Jesus says that, "(He) `made them male and female" and in Verse 5, Jesus says that "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife"
 - i) I could get into the whole political topic here of homosexual marriage, but verses like this make it real clear what was God's intention on marriage.
 - a) These verses state that God himself ordained the concept of marriage.
 - b) Further, Verses 4-5 indicate that it was God's intention for males and females to marry each other.
 - ii) Remember also that all things were created through Jesus (ref: John 1:2, Col. 1:16).
 - a) That means that as Jesus was speaking, he was talking about how he created us "male and female".
 - b) It was God's design for us to leave our parents and be joined to a wife.
 - (1) Yes, some people are called to be single. Jesus will tackle that issue after he finishes this discourse on marriage.
 - (2) There are acceptable times for divorce, and we'll get to that issue in a few verses.
 - (3) First, we need to talk about marriage itself and God's ideal.
 - iii) The idea that God created us "male and female" is to state that we are different.
 - a) It is difficult for men and women to get along partially because we think differently and process information differently.
 - b) There is a popular Christian book out called, "Men Are Like Waffles-Women Are Like Spaghetti" by Bill and Pam Farrel.
 - (1) They explain why a man's brain (thought process) is like a waffle where each element of his life is in a separate box, and why a woman's brain is like spaghetti, where everything in her life touches everything else, and what these differences mean.

- (2) My point here is not to plug this book, but this book does give a great example of how men and women think differently.
 - c) Going back to the current debate issue of homosexual marriage, I can understand their argument about a "happy relationship" because men think-more alike and women think-more alike.
 - (1) Men can get along better with men than women because we think more alike. The problem is that is not what God intended.
 - (2) God knew men and women would struggle to be together.
 - (3) The first marital argument is in the Garden of Eden when they were busy blaming each other and Satan for the apple-incident. ☺
 - d) So if God knew it was a struggle for men and women to live together, why did he do this? Does God enjoy our arguments? Of course not!
 - e) This gets back to my premise of "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."
 - (1) The secret of a successful marriage is a God-centered marriage as opposed to an each other centered marriage.
 - (2) The only way a marriage can survive and have happiness is if God is the center of the marriage.
 - (3) Remember that God wants a relationship with us. Therefore he designed men and women differently, knowing there would be struggles, to keep us close to God. (If God's goal was to keep us close to Him, this idea is brilliant!)
 - f) With that in mind, let's look at Verse 6 again.
7. Verse 6: So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."
- a) When you become married, your wife or your husband becomes part of you.
 - b) Divorcing your spouse is like divorcing your right arm. Your spouse is as much a part of you as your right or left arm. You are one.
 - i) If you remember that the next time, you argue, I promise it won't be so bad! ☺
 - c) Let's think about the implications about "let man not separate".
 - i) Jesus is not talking about other people as much as the husband/wife themselves.
 - ii) Our frustrations over our desires versus our spouse's desires cause arguments and in the worse cases, divorces.
 - a) There are other issues, and we'll talk about them in a few pages.
 - iii) I remember reading a survey about American Christians who get divorced.
 - a) The rate is not that much different from the general public.
 - b) The exception, according to a survey by Barna (popular Christian pollster) is that couples that pray together regularly have a very low divorce rate!
8. Verse 7: "Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"⁸ Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning."⁹ I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."
- a) Remember that Jesus ignored the question and talked about marriage.
 - i) It is almost as if the Pharisees could care less about what Jesus just said.
 - ii) It would be as if they just said, "Yeah, yeah, we know all that, but what about the divorce issue?"
 - a) Their anxiety to get Jesus involved in the debate issue was so strong that Jesus word's about marriage is irrelevant to them.
 - iii) That is so sad when people are so angry or so hostile, they can no longer hear the logic of God's words because they want to focus on a particular argument.

- b) The bible verses the Pharisees were referring to are the first verses of Deuteronomy 24.
 - i) The first section of that chapter deals with divorce and re-marriage.
- c) Before I discuss divorce, notice the word "Moses" by both Jesus and the Pharisee's.
 - i) There are modern critics of the bible who claim that Moses himself never wrote the first five books of the bible.
 - ii) There is a very simple rebuttal:
 - a) Jesus quotes all five of these books.
 - b) Jesus attributes all five of these books to Moses throughout the Gospels.
 - c) Therefore, if you believe Jesus is God, then you must believe Moses wrote the first five books of the bible.
 - d) If you don't believe Jesus is God, you have much bigger problems than who wrote the first five books of the bible. ☺
- d) Now let's discuss Jesus word's about divorce itself. Jesus opened with "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard."
 - i) Jesus' point is that God desires a relationship with us.
 - ii) God uses marriage and family as the ideal model of a relationship.
 - a) The word most-often used for love ("ag-ah'-pay" in Greek) means to totally give of yourself to the one you love.
 - b) The ideal marriage is when we give of ourselves and put our spouses' needs above our own.
 - c) The ideal marriage is when both partners are busy trying to outdo each other in pleasing their partner.
 - d) That ideal is what God wants in our relationship with Him. The difference is we can't outdo God no matter how hard we try! If we live our life in service to God and do what God commands us to do, God will bless us far greater than we could ever do in our service to God.
 - e) Because God desires that relationship between us and Him so much, God permits divorce in order to keep that God-us relationship alive.
 - f) Divorce is not an unforgivable sin. That is Jesus point. It is discouraged and to live a Godly life prevents divorce. But if the "hardness of our hearts" leads to divorce, God still wants that relationship.
 - (1) That is why Jesus said, "Moses permitted you to divorce."
 - (2) When you go through Paul's letters, Paul lists several places where if one continues in "these sins", you are condemned to hell. Divorce is never listed on any of those lists.
 - (3) My point of this is there are situations where divorce is acceptable.
 - (4) One should use biblical wisdom in making that decision.
 - iii) The next issue is Jesus answering the question about divorce. Jesus says in effect that divorce is only allowed in cases of adultery.
 - a) By the way, nowhere in the bible does it say that divorce is required in cases of adultery, only that it is permitted.
 - b) If you recall, Paul also spends some time discussing the appropriateness of when a believer and a non-believer are to get divorced.
 - (1) To paraphrase, Paul said that if a non-believer leaves the marriage of a believer, the believer can choose to accept that divorce.
 - (2) Paul also says that if the non-believer does choose to stay in the marriage, the believer should stay for the sake of being a good witness to the non-believing spouse. (Ref: 1st Corinthians Chap. 7)
 - iv) People always ask about "what if my spouse is physically abusive or has some sort of drug addiction?"
 - a) I would argue for separation at this point, but not necessarily divorce.

- b) This is a long topic unto itself, but Jesus point as it relates to Matthew is to think about the root-purpose of marriage and the reasons for divorce. It is all about giving glory to God.
 - c) In difficult situations, I encourage good Christian counseling. Please go yourself if need be if your spouse is not interested.
- 9. Verse 10: The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."
 - a) Personally, I find this verse comical.
 - i) Picture a bunch of young men saying, "Gee, if we can only get divorced if our wives sleep with somebody else, we're better off not marrying in the first place. I can barely put up with her as she is!" ☺
 - b) We know that Peter was married. Jesus healed Peter's mother in law (Luke 4:38-39).
 - c) What Jesus is trying to get into their head is the idea of "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."
 - i) It is only possible to have a healthy marriage through God.
 - ii) Occasionally, you will hear of a "happy atheist" marriage. God does give some people great abilities to have self-discipline. I will argue that because no one is perfect, sooner or later, something will go wrong. God designed us with a need to worship something. If we ignore that need, the problems will arise in marriage and other aspects of our lives.
 - a) There is an old Jewish idiom that says, "The happiest people I know are the ones who I don't know very well".
 - b) The point is if you think another couple has their act together and appear very happy, get to know them better.
 - d) I'm going to end this marriage section with a cute story about two pastors.
 - i) Pastor #1 pastor was trying to counsel a man who was having marital problems.
 - ii) Pastor #2, who is a "crusty" older fellow, was passing by in the hallway.
 - iii) Pastor #1 says, Hey #2, this guy I'm talking to is trying to stay married without the help of the Holy Spirit.
 - iv) Pastor #2 replied, "That guy is an idiot!"
 - v) While this exchange lacks tact and diplomacy, it makes a good point.
 - vi) Trying to have a good marriage without prayer, without the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives, makes us "idiots" for trying to do it ourselves. God wants that relationship with Him. God wants us to work through Him to have a happy marriage.
- 10. Verse 11: Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. ¹² For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."
 - a) Jesus is now talking about people who never marry.
 - b) Peter just asked made the statement about "it is better not to marry", and these 2 verses are Jesus' comment on Peter's statement.
 - c) The specific topic of verses 12-13 is about "eunuchs".
 - i) Some eunuchs were physically castrated so they couldn't have sexual intercourse.
 - ii) Jesus is saying in effect "some eunuchs were born that way, and some were made that way and some choose still have the ability to have children, but choose to live that way."
 - iii) Jesus is talking about those who choose to live life-long celibacy.

- iv) Jesus is not saying that some Christians need to make themselves into eunuchs for God's sake. He is simply saying that some people have the "spiritual gift" of going through life without the desire to have a spouse. This verse is not a call to castrate yourself for God's sake.
 - d) For those who don't know, the practice of celibate Roman Catholic priests did not start when the church began.
 - i) This concept came centuries later. The Roman Catholic Church was concerned that priests would be more loyal to their children than to serving the church.
 - ii) There was a time when this church had a lot of wealth. The church was concerned about priests' children inheriting the wealth and thus they added this doctrine.
 - iii) At the time of this writing, there is a big scandal in the Roman Catholic Church about a church-wide scandal regarding priests molesting young boys.
 - iv) While this is a problem, I do not believe every priest, nor the majority of priests are guilty of this crime. My point is many priests do have the "spiritual gift" of being celibate all their life for the sake of being a good servant to Christ.
 - e) Jesus ends this section with, "The one who can accept this should accept it."
 - i) If one has this ability, one should accept it.
 - ii) It can be disheartening to realize one will never have children of their own. God promises great rewards for those who choose to make this decision.
11. Verse 13: Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. ¹⁴ Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."
¹⁵ When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.
- a) This is very similar to what Matthew just described in the last chapter.
 - i) In Chapter 18, we had the story of Jesus calling a little child to him and saying "unless you become as this child, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven".
 - b) In these verses, one chapter later, why do we have such a very similar story?
 - i) Remember Jesus just spent half a chapter talking about marriage.
 - ii) Jesus just spent a few verses talking about those who decide never to marry.
 - iii) It is logical to now talk about the importance of children.
 - a) Gee, if Jesus were "hinting" that to really be spiritual we have to be celibate, then there would not be many children running around. ☺
 - b) My point is one does not have to be celibate to serve God.
 - c) Jesus emphasizes here his love of children to remind us of the importance of children. If you see these verses in context of the surrounding verses, you can see Jesus is encouraging the family structure for having children.
 - c) Another aspect to be learned from these verses is about teaching children.
 - i) There is a view that religion is for adults only and you shouldn't teach a child to pray or learn about Jesus until they are older. Jesus is rebuking such thought.
 - ii) I say this because the disciples rebuked those who brought children to Jesus.
 - a) Maybe the disciples just wanted Jesus for themselves.
 - b) Maybe they thought Jesus didn't want to waste his time with children.
 - c) There is the male chauvinist view that raising children is "women's work" and therefore someone like Jesus should not be bothered with children.
 - d) Jesus rebukes all of these possibilities by the words of this text.
 - d) Jesus makes the statement, "the kingdom of heaven belongs to these (children)."
 - i) There is the idea that we need to trust Jesus the same way a child is fully dependant upon their parents for survival.

- ii) Another idea from this statement is that many children die young.
 - a) God judges all people fairly and I believe heaven is full of mature-souls who suffered and died at a young age. My point is that they are not kids forever in heaven.
12. Verse 16: Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"
- a) From here to Verse 22 is the story of the "rich young ruler".
 - i) Luke's account of the same story said he was a "ruler" (Luke 18:18).
 - ii) We know he is wealthy from the verses coming up.
 - iii) Verse 20 says he was young, thus we have the "rich young ruler".
 - b) This guy approaches Jesus to ask in effect, "Is my life is ok, or is there more I must do?"
 - c) There are a some unanswerable questions about this guy:
 - i) Was he Jewish? If he was, how was he a "ruler"?
 - ii) Was he part of the Roman government ruling system over Jerusalem?
 - iii) Was he a foreigner who became Jewish or knew about Judaism?
 - iv) We don't know, and any commentator who says otherwise doesn't know either.
 - d) Let's move on and we'll discuss this guy further.
13. Verse 17: "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments."
- a) It is interesting to think about the fact that this guy approached Jesus, honestly, and sincerely and it appears that Jesus' attitude is, "Hey kid, buzz off". ☺
 - i) If you only read a few of these verses, you almost get the impression that Jesus was trying to get rid of the guy.
 - ii) The truth is that Jesus was trying to work on his level. This is important.
 - iii) One thing I understand about God is that:
 - a) He works with us on our "level". He approaches us based on our understanding of God at whatever level we are at.
 - b) God does not ignore us because we are not more spiritually mature. God definitely wants to mature us and take us up to another level.
 - c) God always starts with the level we are at, and works from there.
 - iv) This is important to grasp as you read this story.
 - v) If you read Verse 17 by itself, it sounds like Jesus is denying he is God. This is not the case. Jesus is working at the level of understanding of this "rich ruler".
 - b) In verse 16, this ruler calls Jesus "teacher", or "Rabbi" in Hebrew.
 - i) He didn't approach Jesus as God, nor as the promised Messiah.
 - ii) Therefore, Jesus responds in Verse 17 with, "why do you ask me what is good?"
 - a) You see Jesus working at his level, trying to take him up a notch.
 - c) Notice Jesus does not say, "If you want to get into heaven, follow me".
 - i) Jesus will say that in a few verses, but first Jesus is trying to teach him a lesson.
 - ii) There is an old joke that goes, "there are 2 ways to get into heaven. One is to never sin, even once your whole life, then tell Jesus to move over, ☺ and the other is to accept Jesus as payment of your sins.
 - a) This guy was trying to complete "choice #1" of being perfect all his life.
 - b) It was important for Jesus to show the impossibility of "choice #1" and that is what Jesus goes on to do in the next few verses.
14. Verse 18: "Which ones?" the man inquired. Jesus replied, " `Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, ¹⁹ honor your father and mother,' and `love your neighbor as yourself.'
- a) Jesus gives the "second half" of the 10 commandments.
 - i) The 10 commandments are found in Exodus 20 and again in Deuteronomy 5.

- ii) The first 4 of the 10 commandments deal with our relationship with God.
 - iii) The last 6 deal with our relationship with other people.
 - iv) The only commandment listed above that is not part of the "10 commandments" is to "love your neighbor as yourself". That is a commandment in Leviticus 19:18.
- b) It is interesting to notice what commandment Jesus did not list:
- i) Jesus "accidentally" forgot to mention the part about "you shall not covet your neighbor's house, wife, servant, etc.". To covet means to desire to have what is not yours. Remember this was a rich young ruler. The implication of Jesus omission will become clear in the next few verses.
15. Verse 20: "All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?"
- a) The young man's response is in effect, "So far, so good." ☺
 - b) My first thought here is, "If this man is so proud of what he's accomplished, why is he hungry for more knowledge about salvation?"
 - i) Did he lack security in his ability to keep the law?
 - ii) Was he trying to "toot his own horn" in front of Jesus about his accomplishments?
 - iii) Was he just curious if he was doing the right thing?
 - c) I suggest the right answer is keeping the law is not enough.
 - i) Here is a guy who, by the world's standards had it all:
 - a) He was young, presumably in the prime of his life.
 - b) He had power, as it was listed he was a ruler.
 - c) He had money.
 - d) He was religious and good moral man. He kept the law.
 - e) Yet somehow, despite having all of this, he knew it wasn't enough.
 - f) He needed Jesus for validation. Is it enough or not?
 - g) Jesus response to him, and to us is no.
 - (1) We shall see that in the next few verses.
 - ii) My point is that we could meet someone who "has it all". Despite that, they still need Jesus. There is a need in every one of us for the assurance of salvation despite having everything the world has to offer. Even being "religious" won't give us that peace of knowing that we are forgiven and have eternal salvation.
16. Verse 21: Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."
- a) Jesus is now ready to take him up to the next level.
 - b) Remember the "two options" to get into heaven.
 - i) God is perfect. If you want to spend eternity with him, we have to be perfect.
 - ii) If God can let us into heaven for being 99.99% perfect, then God is not being perfect in his justice in dealing with sin.
 - iii) Therefore, the only way to get into heaven is to be 100% perfect your whole life, or to accept Jesus payment for our sins as he is 100% perfect.
 - iv) That is the idea Jesus is getting at with this rich young ruler.
 - c) Jesus is saying to the guy in effect, "OK, so far so good. You're pretty good so far. Tell you what, all you have to do now is sell everything and follow me and "you're in".
 - i) In case you don't remember, Jesus says the same thing to us a few chapters back:
 - a) "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. (Matthew 16:24b-25, NIV)
 - b) To follow Jesus means to give up all we have.
 - ii) Now Jesus may say after that, OK, keep your job, but do it to my glory. The point is all we have now belongs to Jesus. Jesus may keep us (financially, locationally, etc.) right where we're at or he may move us elsewhere. The point is Jesus is in charge of our lives from the moment you accept Him.

17. Verse 22: When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.
- a) Mark's Gospel on this same story adds a wonderful comment:
"Jesus looked at him and loved him." (Mark 10:21, NIV)
 - b) Jesus cared for this man and wanted to see him saved.
 - c) Jesus had to teach him about the false-idea of "living perfectly" before he could persuade him to follow Jesus.
 - d) To teach salvation, first we have to preach conviction. People need to understand that they cannot please God by their own efforts. It is only after people realize that they can't make it into heaven by their own efforts that we can teach about following Jesus.
 - e) This is what Jesus was trying to do here. Instead of agreeing to follow Jesus, he walked away, presumably because he wasn't willing to give up his lifestyle to follow Jesus.
18. Verse 23: Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ Again I tell you, 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."
- a) The most important word in these two verses is "hard" for a rich person to get saved.
 - i) Notice Jesus does not say it is impossible, but just hard.
 - ii) Riches can have a grip on your life, the same way a particular sin has.
 - iii) Once one gets used to material blessings, it is hard to give those up.
 - iv) My opening theme of "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" comes into play here." God can do what we can't.
 - b) Many people who have a lot of possessions don't have the mental strength to give it all up at once. A good prayer right here might be "Lord, this is a hard thing for me to accept. The bible tells me all that I have belongs to you. This one area of my life (fill in the blank) is very difficult for me to let go of. Help me, step by step to trust you with that thing and increase my faith to let it go.
 - c) It is important to state here that Jesus is not calling us to live a life of poverty.
 - i) If God has blessed you with financial resources, then God expects you to use them for His glory. That does not mean to sell everything and give it to the church. God expects you to take care of yourself financially and your family. God does not want you to be a financial burden to the church if you have the ability and talent to earn an income.
 - ii) The reason Jesus told this ruler "to sell all he has", is that was his stumbling block to follow Jesus. Jesus wants to work on the aspects of your life that you are not willing to turn over to His control.
 - iii) One of the 10 commandments is "do not steal". If God is against stealing, He must be in favor of owning things that can be stolen! Again, my simple point is that Jesus is not teaching that everyone has to sell all we have to be a Christian.
 - d) Before I wrap this up, let's talk about the expression, "camel through the eye of a needle".
 - i) There is a "legend" that this refers to a small door in the gate of a city. If one pushes hard enough, one can push a camel through that small door. Some commentators believe that the "hard" aspect of being saved with money is similar to the idea of pushing the camel through that small door!
 - ii) This idea is nonsense! Jesus is teaching of the impossibility of salvation apart from following Jesus himself. He was using the visual illustration of a camel through the eye of a sewing needle to show that impossibility.
19. Verse 25: When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?" ²⁶ Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."
- a) Well, there's my theme verse, right there. ☺ Think I should talk about it some more? ☺

- b) There is a view that if you are rich, then you must be blessed by God.
 - i) Many people looked at rich people as having some special blessing by God.
 - ii) This is why the disciples may have been "astonished" by this statement.
 - c) The other view, (the one I hold) is that the disciples were understanding the impossibility of being saved by keeping the 10 commandments and the other laws of the Bible.
 - i) To someone raised Jewish, you have to understand how difficult it is to comprehend the idea that salvation does not come from keeping the law.
 - ii) By the way, if you think that this is just a "Jewish problem", ask most Americans if they believe they are going to heaven, they will respond with "Yes, because my good deeds outweigh my bad deeds". Today, most Americans believe that being a "good person" is enough for salvation. Therefore, that same self-righteous attitude prevails today as much as it did in Jesus' time.
 - d) Now we have Jesus statement, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."
 - i) Over and above all the things I've talked about so far with this verse, one can use this verse when the world is falling apart around you.
 - ii) Just when you think, "this is it, I'm going to die" or "this is it, I'm going to lose my loved one", or "this is it, I'm going to go broke" or whatever, Remember this expression: "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."
 - a) Personally, I think God loves to work miracles in situations where all the human ways of resolving the problem are gone.
 - b) That way God, and God-only gets the glory for fixing the situation.
 - c) My point is to never, never give up on God no matter how bad the situation may look. Also remember that God's answer's to all prayers is either "yes", "no" or "later". We have to remember God is in charge and not us. God does work, but God works on His timing and not ours.
20. Verse 27: Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?"
- a) Good question, Peter! Let's face it; Peter and the disciples did do all of this.
 - i) They did give up their livelihood.
 - ii) They were probably outcasts from Judaism.
 - iii) It is a fair question to ask to Jesus.
 - iv) We need assurance that it is worth the price of giving up everything.
21. Verse 28: Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.
- a) You can picture the 12 disciples high-fiv'ing each other at that answer! ☺
 - b) What the disciples did not know yet is that each of them would be killed in brutal ways for following Jesus.
 - i) The early church historians record that all of them died in horrible ways for the price of following Jesus.
 - ii) The disciples' reward in heaven is they will judge with Jesus the "works" of the entire nation of Israel.
 - c) When you get to the Book of Revelation, there are references to the "24 elders" and 24 thrones around God's throne. (Ref: Revelation 4:4)
 - i) There is a view (that many people hold, including myself) that the "24 elders" represents collectively, the church.
 - a) Does it mean that 12 of the 24 seats belong to these 12 guys?
 - b) Are the other "12" seats reserved, for say, Gentile believers?

- ii) Revelation 21 speaks of a "New Jerusalem". It is a new city made in heaven that comes down and rests on earth. The foundation of this city had the names of the 12 apostles. (Revelation 21:12)
- iii) There are two ways to interpret this verse, given the Revelation references:
 - a) The straightforward interpretation is that there are 24 thrones, 12 of which belong to the apostles, (with someone replacing Judas) judging Israel.
 - b) Another way of reading all of these references is that we all collectively sit on those 24 thrones and part of our job is judging Israel.
 - c) I take the view that when we get to heaven, we exist in more than three dimensions. Somehow, we can all occupy the same physical space. That would explain how the "church" could sit in 24 chairs.
 - (1) It's just my opinion. We'll find out when we get there!
 - d) The 12 disciples represent the foundation of the church, of which we all belong. That fits the description of the "New Jerusalem" in Revelation 21.
 - e) We are all part of that church. Maybe the judgment on the 12 tribes of Israel is somehow done by the whole church.
 - (1) We don't know for sure. Again, We'll know when we get there. ☺
- d) Let's get back to Verse 28: Jesus says, I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things..."
 - i) Jesus is emphasizing that there is a next life and we are a part of it.
 - ii) If the details of our heavenly occupation are confusing, don't panic. ☺
 - iii) The important thing is that heaven does exist, and we will be there forever!
- 22. Verse 29: And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.
 - a) This is a verse that is it is important to not take too literal.
 - i) This verse does not say for example, that if you lost your mother because you are a Christian you will receive 100 new mothers in this lifetime. ☺
 - ii) Imagine if you received 100 new children if you lost one. First of all, that doesn't make up for the pain of the one you lost. Second, imagine raising 100 kids! ☺
 - b) Jesus point is that not only will we inherit eternal life but also what we gain as a Christian far outweighs whatever we might lose in giving up family members for Jesus' sake.
- 23. Verse 30: But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.
 - a) Jesus ends this little section with a reminder that heaven does not work on a "first come, first serve" basis. Our rewards in heaven have nothing to do based on when we get there, but on our obedience to God's commandments.
 - b) That is the simple reminder of this sentence.
 - c) You may have one of the top positions waiting for you in heaven, based on your obedience to Christ.
 - d) On that incentive, let's close in prayer:
- 24. Heavenly Father, we constantly need to remind ourselves that anything is possible if we keep our focus upon you. Guide us so that we may fully commit our ways toward you. Search our hearts for aspects of our lives that we still have not turned over. Help us to remember that out of gratitude for what you did for us, we in turn, out of that love, reflect it upon others. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.