

Notes for Matthew -Chapter 19 (Page 1 of 6)

Introduction - The Most Important Sentence in Chapter 19:

1. "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matt. 26:19 NIV)
 - a. If you can grasp the implications of that one sentence, the rest of the chapter is just further commentary and examples.
 - b. To live a happy, fulfilled life requires getting God involved in the process. The things we consider "impossible" are possible through God.
 - c. Is God "big enough" to handle your problems?

Chapter 19 Outline:

1. Jesus teaches on marriage and divorce (Verses 1-10).
2. Jesus teaches on those who choose to live a single life (Verses 11-12).
3. Jesus teaches He is for children too. Christianity is not for adults-only (Verses 13-14).
4. A rich young ruler asking Jesus what it takes to please God (Verses 15-26).
 - a. Jesus uses this opportunity to teach about God and money.
5. Jesus teaches on our rewards in heaven for following him (Verses (27-30)).
6. Remember these lessons are about goals (ideal relationships) that God desires for us.

Verses 1-2: When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan. ²Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

1. The first question is, "When Jesus had finished saying these things..." What things?
 - a. In the previous chapter, Jesus was teaching his disciples various lessons on forgiveness and who is the greatest in heaven.
 - b. At this point, it was time for Jesus to leave his home base around Galilee and southeast toward Jerusalem. This is the final trip toward Jerusalem. From this point onward, all the events lead up toward the cross.
2. Notice that Jesus is now going "toward the other side of the Jordan".
 - a. If you look at your bible maps, you are now outside of "modern-Israel-proper".
 - b. This is King Herod's jurisdiction, the one who had John the Baptist killed.
 - c. That locational fact will become important when we get to Verse 3.
3. Verse 2 says, "A large multitudes followed Jesus and he healed them there".
 - a. Can you just picture blind or crippled people following Jesus thinking, "When is this guy going to stop and help me?" ☺
 - b. There is a point of healing, but they (and we) had to wait on God's timing.

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?"

1. The religious leadership saw Jesus' getting popular. He was a threat to their religious power.
2. At this time in history, there were two Jewish "schools of thought" on divorce:
 - a. 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.
 - b. Another school of thought was the only legal ground for divorce is adultery.
 - c. Deuteronomy 24:1, it teaches that divorce is permitted if some "uncleanness" is found in a woman, than a man may divorce her. The debate is what does "uncleanness" mean?
3. The Pharisee's were hoping to make Jesus take a side on this debate and lose popularity.
4. I said earlier that this is Herod's jurisdiction. Herod had John the Baptist put to death because John criticized Herod for having an adulterous relationship with his sister-in-law.
 - a. 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.

Notes for Matthew -- Chapter 19 (Page 2 of 6)

Verses 4-6: "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."

1. Jesus began his response by ignoring the question and discussing marriage itself.
 - a. 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.
2. In Verse 4, Jesus says that, "(God) `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"
 - a. I could get into the whole topic here of homosexual marriage, but verses like this make it real clear what was God's intention on marriage. It is between a male and a female.
 - b. These verses state that God himself ordained the concept of marriage.
 - c. It was God's design for us to leave our parents and be joined to a wife.
 - d. Some people are called to be single. Jesus will discuss this in later verses.
 - e. The idea that God created us "male and female" is to state that each sex is different.
 - i. Men and women are "wired differently". Often, men can get along better with men (and women with women) because each sex thinks alike.
 - ii. God knew men and women would struggle to be together.
 - iii. The secret of a successful marriage is a God-centered marriage as opposed to an "each-other" centered marriage.
 - iv. 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.
3. Verse 6..." No longer two, but one....What God has joined together, let man not separate."
 - a. Let's think about the implications about "let man not separate".
 - b. When you become married, your wife or your husband becomes part of you.
 - c. Our frustrations over our desires versus our spouse's desires cause arguments and in the worse cases, divorces.
 - d. A Barna® survey shows that couples that pray together regularly have a low divorce rate!

Verses 7-9: "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."

1. Before I discuss divorce, notice the word "Moses" by both Jesus and the Pharisee's.
 - a. There are bible critics who claim that Moses himself didn't write the 1st 5 bible books.
 - b. Here's the rebuttal: Jesus attributes all five of these books to Moses throughout the Gospels. Therefore, if you believe Jesus is God, then you must believe Moses wrote the first five books of the bible.
2. 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."
 - a. God uses marriage and family as the ideal model of a relationship.
 - b. The word most-often used for love ("ag-ah'-pay" in Greek) means to totally give of yourself to the one you love.
 - c. The ideal marriage is to give of ourselves and put our spouses' needs above our own.
 - d. The ideal marriage is both partners trying to outdo each other in pleasing their partner.
 - e. That ideal marriage is a God-centered marriage where we rely upon his power for our marriage. This is why it is essential to pray for your marriage!

Notes for Matthew -- Chapter 19 (Page 3 of 6)

Verse 7-9 (cont): A discussion of divorce:

3. Because God desires that relationship between us and Him so much, God permits divorce in order to keep that God-us relationship alive.
 - a. God “doesn’t like” divorce, but it is not an unforgivable sin.
 - b. “I hate divorce,” says the LORD God of Israel” (Malachi 2:16a, NIV)
 - c. Divorce is not an unforgivable sin. To live a Godly (ideal) life discourages divorce. But if the “hardness of our hearts” leads to divorce, God still wants that relationship.
 - d. 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.
4. Jesus says in effect that divorce is only allowed in cases of adultery.
 - a. The bible never says that divorce is required in cases of adultery, only that it is permitted.
5. Paul also spends some time discussing the appropriateness of when a believer and a non-believer are to get divorced.
 - a. To paraphrase, Paul said that if a non-believer leaves the marriage of a believer, the believer could choose to accept that divorce.
 - b. 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 Chapter 7)
6. 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.

Verse 10: The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."

1. Picture a bunch of young men saying, “If we can only get divorced due to adultery, we’re better off not marrying in the first place. I can barely put up with her as she is!” ☺
2. 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.” It is only possible to have a healthy marriage through God.

Verses 11-12: 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."

1. Jesus is now talking about adult singles. He uses the term “eunuchs” who are life-long celibate.
2. Some eunuchs were physically castrated so they couldn’t have sexual intercourse.
3. Jesus is not saying that Christians need to make themselves into eunuchs for God’s sake. He is 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.
4. Jesus ends this section with, “The one who can accept this should accept it.”
 - a. If you have the “spiritual gift” to be single, you should accept it and not complain that you don’t have a spouse or children.

Verse 13-15: 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.

1. It is logical to now talk about the importance of children.
2. Gee, if Jesus were “hinting” that to really be spiritual we have to be celibate, then there would not be many children running around. ☺ Jesus is encouraging the family structure.

Notes for Matthew -- Chapter 19 (Page 4 of 6)

Verses 13-15 (cont.) "The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to children such as these"

3. Another aspect to be learned from these verses is about teaching children.
 - a. 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.
 - b. There is the (wrong) male chauvinist view that raising children is "women's work" and therefore someone like Jesus should not be bothered with children.
 - c. Jesus (again) 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.
 - d. Another idea from this statement is that many children die young. I believe heaven is full of those that died at a young age. My point is that they are not kids forever in heaven.

Vs. 16: Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"

1. From here to Verse 22 is the story of the "rich young ruler". (Ref.: Luke 18:18, Matthew 19:20, 22).
2. This guy approaches Jesus to ask in effect, "Is my life ok, or is there more I must do?"

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."

1. 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". ☺
 - a. 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 young ruler".
 - b. In verse 16, this ruler calls Jesus "teacher", or "Rabbi" in Hebrew.
 - c. He didn't approach Jesus as God, nor as the promised Messiah. That is why Jesus is questioning his motives.
2. The "rich young ruler" was asking if he could get into heaven by perfecting obeying The Law. Jesus is trying to teach the impossibility of that attitude.

Verses 18-19: "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."

1. 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.
2. 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.

Verse 20: "All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?"

1. If this man is so proud of his accomplishments, why is he hungry for more knowledge about salvation? Did he lack security in his beliefs? Was he trying to brag?
2. I suggest the right answer is keeping the law is not enough. He had power, money, and was "religious", yet somehow he knew, it wasn't enough.
3. 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.

Notes for Matthew -- Chapter 19 (Page 5 of 6)

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."

1. 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 "your in".
 - a. Remember Jesus said, "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)
2. To follow Jesus means to give up all we have.
 - a. 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. Jesus is now in charge of our lives.

Verse 22: When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

1. Mark's Gospel on this same story adds a wonderful comment:
"Jesus looked at him and loved him." (Mark 10:21, NIV)
2. Jesus had to teach him about the false-idea of "living perfectly" before he could persuade him to become a disciple.
3. 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.
4. 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.

Verses 23-24: 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."

1. The most important word in these two verses is "hard" for a rich person to get saved.
 - a. Notice Jesus does not say it is impossible, but just hard.
 - i. Lady Huntington was one of the richest ladies in England, said she was saved by the letter "M": "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (1st Cor. 1:26, NKJV).
 - b. Once one gets used to material blessings, it is hard to give those up.
2. 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.
3. It is important to state here that Jesus is not calling us to live a life of poverty.
 - a. The reason Jesus told this ruler "to sell all he has", is that was his stumbling block
 - b. 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!
4. Before I wrap this up, let's talk about the expression, "camel through the eye of a needle".
 - a. 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.
 - b. This idea is nonsense! Jesus is teaching the impossibility of salvation apart from Him!

Verses 25-26: 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."

1. There is a (wrong) view that if you are rich, then you must be blessed by God.
 - a. This is why the disciples may have been "astonished" by this statement.

Notes for Matthew -- Chapter 19 (Page 6 of 6)

Verse 25-26 (cont.)

2. The other view, (the one I hold) is that the disciples were contemplating the impossibility of being saved by keeping the 10 commandments and the other laws of the Bible.
 - a. It was difficult for a Jew to comprehend that they couldn't be saved by keeping the law.
 - b. 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. The same attitude prevails today!
3. Verse 26: Jesus statement, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."
 - a. 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."
 - b. Personally, I think God loves to work miracles in situations where all the human ways of resolving the problem are gone.
 - c. That way God, and God-only gets the glory for fixing the situation.

Verse 27: Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?"

1. Good question, Peter! Let's face it; Peter and the disciples did give up everything to follow Jesus.
2. The bible gives us assurance that it is "worth it" to give up all the world has to offer.

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.

1. You can picture the 12 disciples high-fiv'ing each other at that answer! ☺
 - a. What the disciples did not know yet is that each of them would be killed in brutal ways for following Jesus. The early church historians record that all of them died in horrible ways for the price of following Jesus. The disciples' reward in heaven is they will judge with Jesus the "works" of the entire nation of Israel.
2. When you get to the Book of Revelation, there are references to the "24 elders" and 24 thrones around God's throne. (Reference: Revelation 4:4, et.al.)
 - a. There is a view that many people hold (including myself) that the "24 elders" represents collectively, the church. Does it mean that 12 of the 24 seats belong to these 12 guys?
 - b. There are two ways to interpret Matthew 19:28, given the Revelation references:
 - i. The straightforward interpretation is that there are 24 thrones, 12 of which belong to the apostles, (with someone replacing Judas) judging Israel.
 - ii. The other view is in heaven, we exist in more than three dimensions. We can all occupy the same physical space. That's how the "church" could sit in 24 chairs.
 - iii. 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.

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.

1. This is a verse that is important to not take too literal. This verse does not say for example, that if you lost your mother you will receive 100 new mothers in this lifetime. ☺
2. 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.

Verse 30: But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

1. Heaven does not work on a "first come, first serve" basis.
2. Our rewards in heaven are based on our obedience, not "when we get there".