

Matthew 19

In this paragraph, Jesus is asked by the Pharisees (insincerely, see verse 3) about marriage, divorce, and remarriage, a topic He had discussed at 5:31-32. Related to the theme of interpersonal relationships, children are brought to Him to be blessed (19:13-15), and a wealthy man asks what he needs to do to have eternal life (19:16-22), which leads His apostles to question what reward they might receive since they have left everything to follow Him (19:23-30). That question leads into a parable which opens chapter twenty.

TRANSLATION - 19:1-12:

1 And it happened when Jesus finished these words, He departed from Galilee and He came into the region of Judea, on the other side of Jordan. **2** And there followed Him many crowds and He healed them there.

3 And there came to Him Pharisees, testing Him and saying, “Is it authorized for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?”

4 And after answering, He said, “Have you not read that the One creating from the beginning, male and female He made them? **5** And He said, ‘On account of this, a man will leave the father and the mother and he will become attached to his wife, and they will be, the two, for one flesh. **6** So that no longer are they two but one flesh. What, therefore, God paired, man must not separate.”

7 They said to Him, “Why therefore did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce and to divorce [her]?”

8 And He said to them, “Because Moses from your hard heart permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it has not been thus. **9** But I say to you that whoever may divorce his wife except for fornication and may marry another commits adultery.”

10 [His] disciples said to Him, “If thus it is the case of the man with the wife, it is not profitable to marry.”

11 But He said to them, “Not all accept [this] word, but to those it has been given. **12** For there are eunuchs being from the womb of the mother born thus, and there are eunuchs being made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs making themselves eunuchs on account of the kingdom of heaven. The one being able to accept [this], let him accept [it].”

GREEK WORDS:

“To finish” (ver. 1) is used 28 times in the NT; first, at 7:28. “To follow” (ver. 2) was seen at 4:20, 22, 25. “To heal” was first seen at 4:23-24. “Pharisees” (ver. 3) were first seen at 3:7. “To test” is the verb used of Satan in 4:1, 3. See that text for further comments. “Authorized” is a verb in the Greek; it was used first at 12:2, 4, 10, 12. “To divorce” means to “release;” it was first seen at 1:19; 5:31-32. “Wife” can be translated in broader contexts as “woman;” it was first seen at 1:20, 24; 5:28, 31-32. “Cause” is used 20 times in the NT; three times in Matthew: 19:3, 10; 27:37.

The verb “to read” (ver. 4) is used 32 times; in Matthew, first at 12:3, 5. “To create” is used 15 times; only here in Matthew. “Male” is used only 9 times in the NT; only here in Matthew. “Female” is used less frequently, only 5 times: Matthew 19:4; Mark 10:6; Rom. 1:26-27; Gal. 3:28. “To leave” (ver. 5) is used 24 times, four times in Matthew; first at 4:13. “To become attached” is used here, first in Matthew (its only use) out of twelve times. “Flesh” was used first at 16:17. It is used 147 times, in Matthew 16:17; 19:5-6; 24:22; 26:41. It refers to the physical nature of man or the worldly thinking of man, in absence of God’s teachings. It is unfortunate that some translations render it “sinful nature.” The word has nothing inherent to do with sin.

“To pair” (ver. 6) or “to join” is used only here and Mark 10:9. “To separate” is used 13 times in the NT; only here in Matthew. “To command” (ver. 7) was used first at 4:6; 17:9. “Certificate” translates a word commonly translated as “book” or “scroll.” This is its first, and only, use in Matthew. It is used 34 times in the NT, with 23 of those uses in Revelation. The

noun “divorce” is only used at 5:31; 19:7; Mark 10:4. “Hard heart” (ver. 8) is one word, a compound, in the Greek; it is used only here and Mark 10:5; 16:14. “To allow” was used first at 8:21. “Fornication” (ver. 9) was seen first in the parallel teaching at 5:32. It refers to every type of sexual behavior not authorized by the word of God, from adultery to bestiality to homosexuality. “To marry” was also seen first at 5:32. “To commit adultery” was seen first at 5:32; it is used here and Mark 10:11-12. It refers to unauthorized sexual relationships involving a married person.

“To be profitable” (ver. 10) was used first at 5:29-30. “To accept” (ver. 11) is used first at 15:17; it is used here at 19:11-12. It is used 10 times in all, in the NT. The noun “eunuch” is a transliteration of the Greek word; it used 8 times (Matt. 19:12; Acts 8:27, 34, 36, 38-39) and the verb “to make one a eunuch” (one word) is used twice, only in verse 12. “Womb” is used 22 times, first at 12:40; 15:17. “Kingdom of heaven” was first seen at 3:2.

GREEK GRAMMAR:

“It has not been thus” (ver. 8) translates a verb in the perfect tense which suggests that God had never intended to allow divorce for flippant reasons. It also suggests that Jesus is restoring the original importance to the marriage vow that had eroded since the Garden of Eden. There will be no more tolerance for lackadaisical attitudes toward marriage and divorce.

PARALLELS:

Mark’s parallel is found at 10:1-12. Matthew had already given a very similar statement on divorce and remarriage at 5:31-32. Luke presents this teaching briefly: 16:18.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

God hates divorce, simply put by Malachi (2:16). The penalty for adultery in the Law was death: Deut. 22:20-22. The primary text behind the Jews’ consideration of divorce was Deuteronomy 24:1-4. The Law was intended to protect a woman from the capricious whims of men. Eunuchs were not allowed to enter the assembly of Jehovah God (Deut. 23:1; Lev. 21:20; 22:24). However, Isaiah (56:3-5) anticipated the day when they would be allowed to enter! We see that idea fulfilled in Acts 8:26-40.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

“Galilee” (ver. 1) is mentioned 61 times in the NT, first at 2:22. “Judea” is mentioned first at 2:1, out of 43 uses. “Jordan” is mentioned 15 times, first at 3:5. The journey south from Galilee to the area of Jerusalem would be about 50 miles and would normally be traveled on the east side of the Jordan River so Jews could avoid traveling through the area of Samaria.

COMMENTS:

Matthew moves Jesus forward chronologically toward Jerusalem and toward the cross. He left the area surrounding the Sea of Galilee and moved toward Jerusalem, crossing the Jordan River. The Greek phrase translated “the other side of Jordan” gave this region its name, which is not used in the NT: *Perea*. As we have seen happen many times before, sick people were brought to Jesus and He healed them. Jesus will not return to Galilee until after His resurrection (Matt. 28:16-17).

During this period of time, Pharisees came to Jesus with a question about marriage and divorce. We know they were insincere in their question because Matthew tells us they were “testing” Him (ver. 3; see also 12:14, 24, 38; 15:1-2, 11; 16:1; 22:18, 35). Jesus had already taught about divorce and remarriage in the sermon on the mount at 5:31-32. Jesus also challenged the Pharisees in their knowledge of the Scriptures: “Have you not read...?” We repeat those thoughts here from Matthew 5:31-32, since the text is very similar. In that culture, men could divorce their wives for any cause. Women could divorce their husbands only if they went to the court and the court forced the issue.

It seems that Jews practically expected a man whose wife was unfaithful to divorce her. Jesus holds out hope that forgiveness and reconciliation is possible but He does allow divorce and a second marriage for sexual unfaithfulness.

In Jesus' day, there were two schools of thought, dating about two decades before Jesus, relative to divorce and remarriage, based around an interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1. The school of Rabbi Hillel, focusing on the phrase "she finds no favor in his eyes," believed that any reason would be appropriate for a divorce. The school of Rabbi Shammai focused on the term "indecency" and argued that only adultery was acceptable for divorce.

Jesus actually does not side with either rabbi. Adultery was punishable by death under the old law so that Deuteronomy 24 could not be about adultery. Yet, Jesus applies the "love" principle. One should not divorce his wife *at all* unless she has violated her vow to stay sexually faithful to him. If a man divorces his wife for some other reason, she would (presumably) enter a second marriage and, therefore, be guilty of adultery. By the same token, if someone has been divorced, whoever marries the divorced person commits adultery. To put it simply, if someone commits adultery against his or her spouse and he / she is subsequently put away ("divorced"), the guilty party may not remarry. If he / she does, he / she becomes an adulterer as long as he or she is in that marital union.

Jesus begins His response by challenging the Pharisees' knowledge of the Bible, specifically the book of Genesis. "Have you not read...?" Jesus expected the Pharisees to: 1) Know the Bible; 2) Reason properly from the text. We ought to learn the same lessons.

First, Jesus quoted Genesis 1:27 (perhaps 5:2): God made man to be two genders: male and female. Secondly, Jesus quoted Genesis 2:24: God created marriage so that two people, a male and a female, could come together in a new family, including its sexual relationship in order to form children. In that new relationship, the man (and, by implication, the woman) is to leave his parents and start a new family with his new wife. The two are not two in flesh anymore but the sexual relationship now makes them one flesh. Since God joined them together (see 1 Cor. 7:14), no individual has God's permission to break up that marriage.

The Pharisees responded with their own citation of Deuteronomy but when one reads the text, it is obvious that Moses did not "command" divorce. Jesus properly interprets the passage as God "allowing" divorce, but it was because of the Jews' hardness of heart. Jesus restores God's original marriage law: "from the beginning it has not been thus." In verse 9, Jesus gives the passage that causes issues with people today who find it too narrow and too restrictive: One may not divorce the spouse and remarry unless the spouse is guilty of sexual unfaithfulness. An innocent spouse may remarry; the guilty spouse has put himself or herself into a position where he or she can never remarry again and still be faithful to God. Marriage must be taken seriously.

Yet, this text and its companion text in Matthew 5:31-32 are so narrow and restrictive that men have developed many ways to try to get around the impact of the text.

1. Some suggest that since Matthew records Jesus' words before Pentecost, therefore His teachings were just for those Jews and does not apply after the kingdom is established. That position effectively makes all that Jesus taught worthless to those living past Pentecost. The truth, however, is that John was preaching the kingdom was coming (3:2) and Jesus was preaching the kingdom was coming (4:17) and His teachings (Matt. 5:32; including 19:9) teach what God expects out of men in order for them to *enter* into that kingdom and to remain *faithful* in that kingdom.

2. Some teach that *non-Christians*, the world, pagans, are not required by God to obey God's marriage law *until* they become Christians. *Then*, they must submit to the teachings of Christ on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. However, as we have already shown, the teachings of Jesus give the ethics which God requires *of everyone* if they are going to enter the kingdom and remain in the kingdom until it is consummated in heaven. This means that one cannot be an adulterer, having entered a marriage he / she was not authorized to enter, and then enter the kingdom of heaven. By what standard of biblical interpretation could such a person argue that non-Christians are not obligated to live by Matthew 19:9 but they *are*

obligated to live by Matthew 19:14 or even Matthew 28:18-19? The truth is, the Gospel is one message, the entire NT (and including the OT in its most broad definition), and the Gospel is God's law for all of humanity after the establishment of the church in Acts 2. Marriage was created by God in Genesis 2, which Jesus points out here; God governs and regulates, even blesses, all marriages which have been contracted with His authority. Additionally, we note that Jesus was teaching the Pharisees here, not just His disciples, about the requirements for living in the kingdom.

3. If one finds himself / herself an adulterer, defined by Matthew 19:9, but has children with the adulterous wife or husband, it would involve breaking up a family. Therefore, the argument is, Matthew 19:9 cannot be understood as it is written. It is only "an ideal." While a man and a woman who bring a child into the world are both responsible for that child's welfare, they cannot be husband and wife, in the marital relationship, without violating Jesus' instructions. See the case of the Israelites in Ezra and Nehemiah's day and observe that having children did not allow the Israelites to remain in unauthorized marriages (see especially Ezra 10:44).

4. Others desire to argue that marriage is a covenant and that adultery breaks the covenant so that adultery would terminate a marriage and then *both* the adulterer and the innocent spouse are free to remarry. In response, this position would entirely negate Jesus' whole discussion here and in Matthew 5. Effectively, He wasted His breath, if this position is true.

5. Still others desire to argue that baptism washes away sin (Acts 22:16), therefore baptism would wash away the sin of adultery for a non-Christian and he or she might still remain in the "adulterous" marriage after baptism. Again, the arguments against this position are numerous. Effectively, prayer does for a sinning Christian what baptism does for a non-Christian. In that case, a Christian could commit adultery, pray for forgiveness, and continue in the adulterous relationship. That would, as in #4 above, negate what Jesus said about marriage and divorce. Secondly, if a behavior or relationship is *sinful* in its nature *before* baptism, it is still a *sinful* behavior or relationship after baptism. Baptism does not automatically create a scriptural divorce and a scriptural remarriage. Third, the relevant verb in verse 9 is a present tense verb: "The one who may divorce his wife except for the cause of fornication *is committing adultery*." Clearly Jesus is forbidding the *relationship*, not just a one-time-act which baptism could wash away. Baptism does not *change the nature of the relationship*.

Sinful man will do what he can to rationalize the position he desires to take in rebellion against the word of God. But we need to be humble and accept what Jesus says and then have the courage to change our behavior to make it fit what Jesus teaches.

The disciples drew the conclusion from Jesus' teaching that His law was narrow and restrictive: "it is not profitable to marry." Jesus agreed. Not everyone should get married. Some are "eunuchs" from birth, born sterile or with no desire for marriage or the sexual relationship. Some are made eunuchs, to serve over a king's harem, for example (see Esther 2:14). Then there are those who, through the course of life, find themselves in a position where they have to live as a "eunuch" in order to be faithful to God. If a man's wife leaves him (other than immorality) and never marries, she has put him into a position where he can never marry either. Not with God's authority. Marriage must be taken seriously.

No man, no church, no council has the right to set aside or change the laws of Christ. The Lord's curse rests on such (Gal. 1:6-9). While God tolerated the "hardness of hearts" - and made His exception - under the Law of Moses, there is no indication (and Jesus actually teaches strongly otherwise) that Jesus will continue to tolerate "hardness of hearts" and allow exceptions to His single reason for divorce and remarriage.

APPLICATION:

There is no reason to teach this text is hyperbole except a desire to weaken God's law on marriage and divorce. God has always upheld with the strictest discipline the sanctity of marriage. It is clear that in order to be pure in God's eyes, one must be pure and innocent of

sexual immorality for a second marriage to be entered. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 7:13-16 do not suggest any exception to this principle. That text deals with divorce but not remarriage. Again, in that text (1 Cor. 7:10-11), Paul teaches that if one were to divorce, he or she should be reconciled to their spouse or remain unmarried. That is consistent with Jesus' instructions here. The sexual relationship binds a man and woman together in a way that other aspects of a relationship do not (1 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 5:28-31). We also note in Romans 7:3-4 that Christ teaches that death ends a marriage relationship so that a surviving partner may enter into a second marriage with God's authority.

Neither this text nor any other suggests that singleness is a more holy state than marriage. There are those who can choose to live alone (see 1 Cor. 7:25-38) but that is the individual's choice (see also 1 Cor. 7:2, 7).

TRANSLATION - 19:13-15:

13 At that time, there was brought to Him children in order that the hands He may lay on them and He may pray; but the disciples rebuked them. **14** And Jesus said, "Allow the children and do not hinder them to come to Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." **15** And after laying the hands on them, He departed from there.

GREEK WORDS:

This word for "children" (ver. 13) was first seen at 2:8-9, 11, 13-14, 20-21. "To lay" is used 39 times; in Matthew first at 9:18. "To pray" was first used at 5:44 and extensively at 6:5-7, 9. "To rebuke" was used first at 8:26. "To leave" (ver. 14) or "to allow" was first seen at 3:15. "To forbid" or "to hinder" is used 23 times, only here in Matthew.

PARALLELS:

Mark (10:13-16) and Luke (18:15-17) have parallels to this text.

COMMENTS:

This paragraph highlights the love Jesus has for children. Laying hands on others was a sign of blessing (Gen. 48:14) and these parents desired Jesus to bless their children and pray to the Father for them. The disciples believed Jesus was too busy or too important to be disturbed by these parents and children and they rebuked the parents. But then Jesus rebuked the disciples! As He had said in 18:3-4, the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who have the humble quality of children. Jesus then laid His hands on them; we presume He prayed as well. Then He left.

APPLICATION:

Jesus loves little children, all the children of the world. Jesus wants them to be taught and reared to love Him and His word (see Eph. 6:4). However, this text has been abused to argue for the baptism of infants, babies, and children. That practice is lawless for the following reasons:

1. Children have no sin (Deut. 1:39). Because they are innocent of evil, they need no forgiveness. They are "safe" in the arms of Jesus until they reach a level of maturity where they can and need to obey Jesus Christ.
2. Because one needs to believe before he or she can be baptized (Mark 16:16) and children can't believe, they can't be baptized.
3. Because one needs to repent of sins before one can be baptized (Acts 2:38) and children have no sins of which to repent, they can't be baptized.
4. Because one needs to confess faith in Christ before one can be baptized (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10), and children can't confess faith in Christ, they can't be baptized.
5. Because baptism is to wash away sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16) and infants have no sins, there's no reason to baptize them.
6. There is no example in the NT of an infant being baptized.

7. There is no command in the NT to baptize an infant.
8. There is no implication in the NT that infants ought to be baptized.
9. Additionally, infant “baptism” is often the pouring of water over their head or sprinkling water on their head. Since “baptism” means immersion and is, literally, a burial (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12), then infant “baptism” is not according to NT practice or teaching. There is also no biblical reason to give infants chrismation, communion, or anointing. The first mention of baptizing infants is found in the late 2nd century, as a practice to be avoided. Yet, it is still 100 years too late to have the approval of an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Religions which are practicing lawlessness (Matt. 7:23) need to repent of their sin and conform their teaching to the pattern of the NT (Rom. 6:17).

For the practice of “laying on hands” in the first-century, Jewish influenced, churches, see: Acts 8:17-19; 19:6; 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim. 1:6.

TRANSLATION - 19:16-22:

16 And behold, one after coming to Him said, “Teacher, what good may I do in order that I may have eternal life?”

17 But He said to him, “Why Me are you asking concerning the good? One there is good. But if you desire into eternal life to enter, keep the commandments.”

18 He said to Him, “Which?” And Jesus said, “Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not bear false testimony. **19** Honor the father and the mother and love your neighbor as yourself.”

20 The young man said to Him, “All these things I kept. What yet do I lack?”

21 Jesus was saying to him, “If you desire complete to be, go, sell your belongings and give [them] to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come, follow Me.”

22 And after hearing, the young man the word, he departed, grieving; for he was having much possessions.

GREEK WORDS:

“Teacher” (ver. 16) is found first at 8:19. “Good” is found 102 times; in Matthew first at 5:45. “Life” is found 135 times, first in Matthew at 7:14. “Eternal” is found 71 times, in Matthew first at 18:8. The phrase “eternal life” is found 41 times in the NT, in Matthew at 19:16, 29; 25:46. It is used most extensively in the gospel of John, 15 times.

“To ask” (ver. 17) was used first at 15:23; 16:13. “To keep” or “to guard” or “to protect” is used here for the first time in Matthew (also at 23:3; 27:36, 54; 28:4, 20). It is used 70 times in the NT. “Commandment” was used first at 5:19; 15:3. “To murder” (ver. 18) is used first at 5:21. “To commit adultery” is used first at 5:27-28, 32. “To steal” is used first at 6:19-20. “To bear false testimony” is all one word in the Greek; it is used here; Mark 10:19; 14:56-57; Luke 18:20.

“Honor” (ver. 19) was used first at 15:4, 6, 8. “To love” (*agape*) was used first at 5:43-44, 46. “Neighbor” was used first at 5:43. “Young” (ver. 20) is used 11 times in the NT, in Matthew only in this context (19:20, 22). “To keep” is used here for the only use in Matthew; it is found 31 times in the NT. “To lack” is only found here in Matthew, out of 16 uses. “Complete” (ver. 21) was used first at 5:48. “To sell” was used first at 10:29; 13:44. “Belongings” is a participle in the Greek language; it is used here, 24:47; 25:14 in Matthew, out of 60 uses. “Poor” was used first at 5:3. “Treasure” was used first at 2:11. “To follow” was used first at 4:20, 22, 25. “To grieve” (ver. 22) was seen first at 14:9; 17:23; 18:31. “Possession” is used only 4 times: Matthew 19:22; Mark 10:22; Acts 2:45; 5:1.

GREEK GRAMMAR:

“Was saying” (ver. 21) translates a verb in the imperfect tense, which often suggests continuous action in the past.

PARALLELS:

This text is found also in Mark 10:17-31 and Luke 18:18-30.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

Compare the teaching of Micah 6:8 with this text. God taught that if Israel wanted to “live,” it should keep His commandments: Leviticus 18:5. These specific commandments are found at Exodus 20:12-16 and Deut. 5:16-20. “Love your neighbor” is found at Leviticus 19:18.

COMMENTS:

The challenge to balance material wealth with one’s spiritual health has plagued mankind from very early. This young man asks Jesus what good he could do to have eternal life. We ought to presume that he is as sincere as we are when we ask what we need to do to be saved. Jesus points out to him that God is good and the young man should seek God’s answer to that question. Everything that flows from God is good, including commandments (Rom. 7:12). Anything that is truly good, comes from God. In this case, Jesus tells the young man, who was a Jew, that he needed to keep the commandments of God through Moses. Out of the 613 commands (based on the Jewish rabbi’s count), the young man asks which ones.

Jesus responds by citing several of the Ten: do not kill, commit adultery, steal, or bear false testimony. To those ten, Jesus adds one from Leviticus 19:18: Love your neighbor as yourself.

With all sincerity and, no doubt, hope, the young man says he has kept those. We should not impugn his motives or challenge him for lying or being insincere. It may very well be that he had not committed those sins and that he did “love his neighbor.” He asks Jesus what he might still lack.

There was one thing, Jesus points out, that kept him from being “complete.” His possessions took up too much space in his heart. He needed to go, sell his possessions to give the money to the poor, and then he could have a heart open for Jesus to sit on its throne. He should come and follow Jesus.

The young man was wealthy and could not imagine emptying his heart of his possessions. Unfortunately, he did not (as far as the text is concerned) do what Jesus told him to do. Instead, he went away grieving. He could not remove his possessions from the throne of his heart to make room for Jesus.

APPLICATION:

All Christians are not required to sell their possessions and give to the poor. There were many wealthy Christians in the first century church: Acts 5:4; 12:12; 21:8; James 2:1-7. It is only to those who have allowed wealth or possessions to become their god who need to dethrone possessions from their hearts and enthrone Jesus (see Col. 3:5). “Treasures in heaven” were encouraged in Matthew 6:19-21; see also 13:44-46; Luke 12:33; Acts 2:43-47; 1 Cor. 13:3.

Jesus continues to challenge His disciples to be “complete:” 1 Cor. 2:6; 14:20; Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:15; Col. 1:28; 4:12; Heb. 5:14. Christians are also encouraged to help the poor: Acts 4:34-37; Gal. 2:10; 6:10; James 2:1-17; 1 John 2:17. It is dangerous, but not sinful, to be wealthy: 1 Tim. 6:9-19; James 2:6-7. We should continue keeping Christ’s commandments, in order to enjoy life: Galatians 3:12.

TRANSLATION - 19:23-30:

23 And Jesus said to His disciples, “Truly I say to you that the rich with difficulty will enter into the kingdom of heaven. **24** And again I say to you, easier it is for a camel to pass through the hole of a needle than for a rich person to enter into the kingdom of God.”

25 And after hearing, the disciples were greatly astounded, saying, “Who then is able to be saved?”

26 And Jesus, looking, said to them, “By men this is impossible, but by God all [is] possible.”

27 At that time, Peter answering said to Him, “Behold we ourselves have left all and followed you. What is there for us?”

28 And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you that you yourself, those following Me in the regeneration, whenever the Son of Man may sit on the throne of His glory, you will sit also yourselves on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. **29** And all whoever leaves houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for the sake of My name, one hundredfold he will receive and eternal life he will inherit. **30** And many will be first, last and last, first.”

GREEK WORDS:

“Rich” (ver. 23) is found here (19:23-24) and 27:57 in Matthew, out of 28 uses in the NT. “With difficulty” is found only here; Mark 10:23; Luke 18:24. “Easier” (ver. 24) is found at 9:5; 19:24 in Matthew, out of 7 uses. “Camel” is found first at 3:4. “Hole” is found only here. “Needle” is found only here and Mark 10:25.

“To be astounded” (ver. 25) was seen first at 7:28. “Greatly” was seen first at 2:10; 17:6, 23. “To save” is used 106 times; first at 1:21. It can mean to “save from illness or death” or it can mean (as here) to save from eternal death. “Impossible” (ver. 26) is used for the only time here in Matthew, out of 10 uses. “Possible” is used here for the first time in Matthew (also at 24:24; 26:39), out of 32 uses.

“To leave” (ver. 27) was used at verse 14. It was first used at 3:15. “To follow” was used first at 4:20, 22, 25. “Regeneration” (ver. 28) is used only once more: Titus 3:5. “Throne” was used first at 5:34. “Glory” is used first at 4:8; 6:29. “To judge” was seen first at 7:1-2. “Tribe” is used here and 24:30 in Matthew, out of 31 uses. It is used most extensively in Revelation (21 times). “To inherit” (ver. 29) was used first at 5:5.

PARALLELS:

This paragraph has its parallels in Mark 10:23-31; Luke 18:24-30. For the idea that God can do the impossible, see Mark 9:23; 2 Cor. 9:8.

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES:

For a background to the idea of “regeneration” in the Messianic reign, see Isaiah 65:17; 66:22. Daniel pictures the saints reigning with the Son of Man: Daniel 7:9, 13-14, 18, 22, 27. The idea that God can accomplish the impossible is found in the OT at Genesis 18:14; Job 42:2; Zechariah 8:6.

COMMENTS:

With the rich man’s interchange in the background (19:16-22), Jesus turns to His disciples to teach them a profound lesson. Then, as now, people assume that earthly blessings are a sign that God is pleased with one’s behavior. The danger with wealth is that one believes that God is pleased with the wealthy’s behavior so that he or she does not believe they have anything of which to repent. False teachers believe wealth is a sign that God is pleased with their teaching, despite the fact that it is false. While riches come from God (Psa. 112:1-3; James 1:17), they do not mean God is pleased with their behavior. The wealth might be an inducement from God for the wealthy to *repent* of their sins, not to remain in their behavior (see Rom. 2:4).

On this occasion, Jesus simply says it is difficult for a rich man to go to heaven (ver. 23), the “kingdom of God,” which Matthew only uses four times. To emphasize the point, He says that a camel, the largest animal familiar in Palestine, could go through the hole, the ear, the eye of a needle than for a wealthy person to go to heaven. Certainly Jesus is using hyperbole to express His point.

Based on the misunderstanding of wealth, the disciples are shocked. If wealth is not a sign that someone is blessed by God and therefore, going to heaven, who can be saved? Jesus states that salvation is impossible from the human perspective. Even wealth will not get

one into heaven. But with God, all things are possible. God can save, regardless of one's financial security.

Pursuing the discussion further, Peter points out that he and the other disciples had left everything to follow Jesus. What might they get from their efforts? Jesus does not scold Peter for asking about such rewards. Instead, Jesus points out that they will receive a tremendous blessing. The "regeneration" refers to the renewed relationship God will establish with humanity in the new covenant of His Son, Jesus Christ. The only other time the word "regeneration" is used in the NT is Titus 3:5, referring to baptism which puts one into that new kingdom, the church.

In the "regeneration" when the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne (see Acts 2:30, 33), His disciples will sit on twelve thrones, judging the "tribes of Israel" through their words or teachings. The church is the "new spiritual Israel of God" (Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 6:16) and the apostles judge the church through their teachings (Eph. 2:20). Now we know why Jesus chose twelve men to be apostles (Matt. 10:1); it was so that the new Israel of God, with her twelve apostles, would reflect the old Israel of God, with her twelve tribes.

Moving beyond the twelve apostles, Jesus promises blessings to those who do follow Him. They might leave houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children, or fields (businesses) in order to follow Christ (see 10:34-39). But, they will receive so much more - an entire spiritual family in an organization which will have its consummation in heaven (1 Cor. 15:24)! The promise that those who are first will be last and those who are last will be first reflects the same idea Jesus presented in 16:25. If we wish to be in the kingdom, we need to put Christ first and ourselves last in all our choices.

APPLICATION:

Followers of Christ will be "joint heirs" with the Son of Man: Romans 8:18-25. It is nearly impossible for Christians to fully grasp the blessings that await them if they remain faithful to Christ until death; see John 14:1-6.