

Matthew 19

by John Nelson Darby

Jesus teaches about the true character of marriage, the relationship between riches and the kingdom of heaven, and the importance of renouncing everything for Jesus' sake.

Scripture: Matthew 19:4-6, Matthew 19:12, Matthew 19:21, Matthew 19:26, Matthew 19:29, Matthew 20:16, Mark 10:6-9, Luke 18:16-17, Romans 8:31, Philippians 4:13

Topics: "Marriage", "Sacrifice for Christ"

Description

John Nelson Darby explores the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 19, emphasizing the divine principles governing marriage and the kingdom of heaven. He highlights the indissoluble nature of marriage as intended by God, contrasting it with the hardness of human hearts that led to the law's allowances. Darby also discusses the value of children in God's eyes and the challenges of wealth, illustrating that true devotion to Christ requires sacrifice and a rejection of worldly desires. He reassures that while it is impossible for man to achieve salvation through his own efforts, with God, all things are possible. The sermon concludes with the promise of rewards for those who renounce worldly possessions for the sake of following Jesus.

Transcript

Chapter 19 carries on the subject of the spirit that is suited to the kingdom of heaven, and goes deep into the principles which govern human nature, and of what was now divinely introduced. A question asked by the Pharisees-for the Lord had drawn nigh to Judea-gives rise to the exposition of His doctrine on marriage; and turning away from the law, given on account of the hardness of their hearts, He goes back [See Footnote #58] to God's institution, according to which one man and one woman were to unite together, and to be one in the sight of God. He establishes, or rather re-establishes, the true character of the indissoluble bond of marriage. I call it indissoluble, for the exception of the case of unfaithfulness, is not one; the guilty person had already broken the bond. It was no longer man and woman one flesh. At the same time, if God gave spiritual power for it, it was still better to remain unmarried.

He then renews His instruction with respect to children, while testifying His affection for them: here it appears to me rather in connection with the absence of all that binds to the world, to its distractions and its lusts, and owning what is lovely, confiding, and externally undefiled in nature; whereas, in chapter 18, it was the intrinsic character of the kingdom. After this, He shews (with reference to the introduction of the kingdom in His Person) the nature of entire devotedness and sacrifice of all things, in order to follow Him,

if truly they only sought to please God. The spirit of the world was opposed at all points,-both carnal passions and riches. No doubt the law of Moses restrained these passions; but it supposes them, and, in some respects, bears with them. According to the glory of the world, a child had no value. What power can it have there? It is of value in the Lord's eyes.

The law promised life to the man that kept it. The Lord makes it simple and practical in its requirements, or, rather, recalls them in their true simplicity. Riches were not forbidden by the law; that is to say, although moral obligation between man and man was maintained by the law, that which bound the heart to the world was not judged by it. Rather was prosperity, according to the government of God, connected with obedience to it. For it supposed this world, and man alive in it, and tested him there. Christ recognises this; but the motives of the heart are tested. The law was spiritual, and, the Son of God there; we find again what we found before-man tested and detected, and God revealed. All is intrinsic and eternal in its nature, for God is revealed already. Christ judges everything that has a bad effect on the heart, and acts upon its selfishness, and thus separates it from God. "Sell that thou hast," says He, "and follow me." Alas! the young man could not renounce his possessions, his ease, himself. "Hardly," says Jesus, "shall a rich man enter into the kingdom." This was manifest: it was the kingdom of God, of heaven; self and the world had no place in it. The disciples, who did not understand that there is no good in man, were astonished that one so favoured and well disposed should be still far from salvation. Who then could succeed? The whole truth then comes out. It is impossible to men. They cannot overcome the desires of the flesh. Morally, and as to his will and his affections, these desires are the man. One cannot make a negro white, or take his spots from the leopard: that which they exhibit is in their nature. But to God, blessed be His name! all things are possible.

These instructions with regard to riches give rise to Peter's question, What shall be the portion of those who have renounced everything? This brings us back to the glory in chapter 17. There would be a regeneration; the state of things should be entirely renewed under the dominion of the Son of man. At that time they should sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. They should have the first place in the administration of the earthly kingdom. Every one, however, should have his own place; for whatever any one renounced for Jesus' sake, he should receive a hundredfold and everlasting life. Nevertheless these things would not be decided by appearance here; nor by the place men held in the old system, and before men: some that were first should be last, and the last first. In fact, it was to be feared that the carnal heart of man would take this encouragement, given in the shape of reward for all his labour and all his sacrifices, in a mercenary spirit, and seek to make God his debtor; and, therefore, in the parable by which the Lord continues His discourse (chap. 20), He establishes the principle of grace and of God's sovereignty in that which He gives, and towards those whom He calls, in a very distinct manner, and makes His gifts to those whom He brings into His vineyard depend on His grace and on His call.

Footnotes for Matthew 19

58: The connection is here traced between the new thing and nature, as God had originally formed it, passing over the law as something merely come between. It was a new power, because evil had come in, but it recognised God's creation, while proving the state of the heart, not yielding to its weakness. Sin has corrupted what God created good. The power of the Spirit of God, given to us through redemption, raises man and his path wholly out of the whole condition of flesh, introduces a new divine power by which he walks in this world, after the example of Christ. But with this there is the fullest sanction of what God

Himself originally established. It is good, though there may be what is better. The way the law is passed over to go back to God's original institution, where spiritual power did not take the heart wholly out of the whole scene, though walking in it, is very striking. In marriage, the child, the character of the young man, what is of God and lovely in nature is recognised of the Lord. But the state of man's heart is searched out. This does not depend on character but motive, and is fully tested by Christ (there is an entire dispensational change, for riches were promised to a faithful Jew), and a rejected Christ-the path to heaven-everything, and the test of everything, that is of the heart of man. God made man upright with certain family relationships. Sin has wholly corrupted this old or first creation of man. The coming of the Holy Ghost has brought in a power which lifts, in the second Man, out of the old creation into the new, and gives us heavenly things-only not yet as to the vessel, the body; but it cannot disown or condemn what God created in the beginning. That is impossible. In the beginning God made them. When we come to heavenly condition, all this, though not the fruits of its exercises in grace, disappears. If a man in the power of the Holy Ghost has the gift to do it, and be entirely heavenly, so much the better; but it is entirely evil to condemn or speak against the relationships which God originally created, or diminish or detract from the authority which God has connected with them. If a man can live wholly above and out of them all, to serve Christ, it is all well; but it is rare and exceptional.

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