

• *Jesus turns south*

At Mark 10:1 we come to a major turning-point in the ministry of Jesus. Jesus travels into the region of Judea. Although the Gospel of John provides evidence that Jesus made periodic trips to Jerusalem for the various festivals of the Jewish year. Jesus has not made Judea the major location of His ministry. John the Baptist worked among Judeans according to Mark 1:5 and Jesus identified Himself with John's ministry according to Mark 1:9. There is a slight hint in Mark chapter 1 that Jesus spent some time in Judea, but after John's arrest Jesus had not made Judea the base of His work. He 'went into Galilee', says 1:14 (suggesting that He had been in Judea immediately before). Not since the beginning of His ministry has He been based in Judea, but now He crosses the Jordan into Judea. The rest of the Gospel will tell of His Judean ministry.

• *Three key matters*

As He travels He gives extra teaching to His disciples and to the crowds^{□1}. Three key matters are divorce^{□2}, children^{□3} and wealth^{□4}.

1. Divorce

1. **Divorce.** Jesus is asked about divorce^{□1}. He deals with the fact that the Mosaic law permitted it^{□2} but explains that this low level of spirituality was tolerated because of the hardness of Israelite hearts at the time of the giving of the law^{□3}.

• *The Mosaic Law tolerated divorce*

God's original and ideal standard was monogamous and allowed no separation between husband and wife at all^{□1}. In a private word Jesus explains further to His disciples^{□2}. Mark is obviously allowing generalisation in his account of the teaching. Matthew's version mentions a proviso not mentioned by Mark^{□3} and Paul will accept that sometimes (rightly or wrongly) separation does take place^{□4}. Also it must be remembered that matrimonial sin is not an 'eternal sin'^{□5}; it may be forgiven.

• *Permanent marriages are the kingdom ideal*

The point of Mark's record is not to go into details but to give the general and the ideal requirement. Ideally divorce is a serious lapse. It creates adulterous actions. (Jesus widens the idea of adultery. In Mosaic law it was the sin of taking a man's wife. Jesus enlarges the definition.) Permanent marriages are the ideal in God's kingdom.

2. Children

• *Jesus treats them lovingly*

2. **Children.** Those who expect to experience the powers of God's rule will also have a loving and accepting approach to children. People were bringing children to Jesus but the disciples tended to discriminate against them^{□1}. But discrimination against children makes Jesus angry. He wants contact with them. It is people who are like children – that is, people in weakness, dependence and lack of power – that experience God's royal power^{□2}. Anyone who does not identify with children and discriminates against them lacks an essential requirement for experiencing God^{□3}. Jesus Himself treats them lovingly and affectionately and especially prays for them^{□4}.

• *God's kingdom for those lacking status and power*

Christians should like children. Anyone who is impatient of them or wants them out of the way has missed the essential character of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God comes not simply upon adult, clever, rich people. It comes upon the underprivileged and upon those lacking status and power. Just as there is racism and tribalism and snobbishness of class and wealth and education – so there is 'age-ism' – discrimination against people of a certain age, perhaps against the

□1 10:1
 □2 10:2–12
 □3 10:13–16
 □4 10:17–31

□1 10:2
 □2 10:3–4

□3 10:5a

□1 10:5b–9
 □2 5:10–12
 □3 see
 Matthew 5:32, 19:9
 □4 1 Corinth 7:11, 15
 □5 see 3:28–29

□1 10:13

□2 10:14
 □3 10:15
 □4 10:16

elderly or perhaps against children. Age-ism is not tolerated by Jesus. The Christian will cross barriers of age just as he will cross every other barrier. And if he is close to Jesus he or she will like and appreciate children.

3. Wealth

• A question about inheriting eternal life

• “Good teacher” – a discussion about goodness

• Jesus’ three-fold answer

• Warnings – the difficulties faced by the rich

3. **Wealth.** A man comes to Jesus asking about ‘inheriting eternal life’^{¶1}. The word ‘inherit’ must signal to us that it is not simply a question about coming to initial salvation. The question is not parallel to Acts 16:30. It is enquiring about ‘inheriting’, about living for God in such a way that one reaps the blessings of eternal life.

Jesus wants first of all to discuss the way the man has addressed Him. He is preoccupied with the idea of goodness. He addresses Jesus as ‘good teacher’ but does he know what he is doing? Are men and women really good? Is there not plenty of evidence that they are actually wicked – maybe in a respectable way! If Jesus really is ‘good’, then who is He? Only God can be called ‘good’ in a totally unqualified way. (In Matthew’s Gospel the young man asks ‘What good thing must I do?’ Obviously in the original conversation – which may have taken an hour or so and is summarised in the gospels in a few lines – there was a lot of talk about goodness. Both being good and doing good were involved in the original conversation in Aramaic. Matthew takes up one side of the matter; Mark records another side of the matter.)

Then Jesus answers:

- (i) the young man must get to a level of godliness that is greater than the law of Moses^{¶1};
- (ii) the young man must attend to one particular requirement that Jesus is laying upon him; and
- (iii) the young man must get involved in being trained for ministry by starting to travel around with Jesus.

This is more than the man expected and he goes away^{¶1}. The event leads Jesus to give some warnings. Wealth hinders experience of the kingdom^{¶2}. The disciples find this amazing. ‘Then who can be saved?’ they ask^{¶3}. ‘Saved’ in this verse obviously refers to final salvation, the time when those who have been initially saved are given their final rewards. This is confirmed by the fact that reward is obviously the topic of 10:27–31. God can help overcome the difficulties faced by the rich^{¶4}. The disciples who have left much material wealth in order to follow Jesus will experience God’s compensations^{¶5}. But the final allocations of rewards will bring some surprises^{¶6}.

¶1 10:17

¶1 10:19–21

¶1 10:22

¶2 10:23–25

¶3 10:26

¶4 10:27

¶5 10:28–30

¶6 10:31



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