

April 16th to 22nd: “Wives and Widows”

Discussion Questions

Old Testament

- God warned the Israelites to not intermarry with the foreigners in the lands they conquered. What was the purpose of this rule? Does the rule have anything to do with who Christians should marry?

New Testament

- Jesus praised the widow who gave a small amount. So why do we usually only praise people who give large amounts?
- What did Jesus mean when he said, “Most certainly, I tell you, whoever doesn’t receive the Kingdom of God like a little child, he will in no way enter into it.” Luke 18:15-17.
- Should we interpret the story about the rich young ruler to mean it is bad to be rich? Luke 18:18-27.

Notes and Commentary

Old Testament

God warned the Israelites to not intermarry with the foreigners in the lands they conquered. What was the purpose of this rule? Does the rule have anything to do with who Christians should marry?

JOSHUA 23:11-13 (WEBME) – [11] *Take good heed therefore to yourselves, that you love the LORD your God. [12] “But if you do at all go back, and hold fast to the remnant of these nations, even these who remain among you, and make marriages with them, and go in to them, and they to you; [13] know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no longer drive these nations from out of your sight; but they shall be a snare and a trap to you, a scourge in your sides, and thorns*

in your eyes, until you perish from off this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

[Jamieson Fausset Brown Bible Commentary]¹ As marriage connections with the idolatrous Canaanites would present many and strong temptations to transgress it, these were strictly prohibited (Ex 34:12-16; De 7:3). With his eye, as it were, upon those prohibitions, Joshua threatens them with the certain withdrawal of the divine aid in the further expulsion of the Canaanites (a threat founded Ex 23:33; Nu 33:55; De 7:16).

[Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible] The first step would be, friendship with idolaters; the next would be, marrying with them; the end of that would be, serving their gods. Thus the way of sin is down-hill, and those who have fellowship with sinners, cannot avoid having fellowship with sin. [Joshua] describes the destruction he warns them of.

New Testament

Jesus praised the widow who gave a small amount. So why do we usually only praise people who give large amounts?

LUKE 21:1-4 (THE MESSAGE). *Just then [Jesus] looked up and saw the rich people dropping offerings in the collection plate. Then he saw a poor widow put in two pennies. He said, "The plain truth is that this widow has given by far the largest offering today. All these others made offerings that they'll never miss; she gave extravagantly what she couldn't afford—she gave her all!"*

[Kretzmann Popular Commentary]² The rich people put in large gifts, which was an easy matter for them to do. Gifts of a comparatively large size represented no sacrifice for them. But then the Lord's attention was drawn to a widow, a miserably poor and needy woman. Going up to one of the chests, this woman deposited therein two mites. "Another coin, translated mite, is in Greek lepton, 'the small one,' or the 'bit.' It was two of these that

the widow cast into the treasury. ...Two of them equaled a quadrans. The mite was, then, of the value of 1/8 of a cent. It was doubtless the smallest coin in circulation." This act of real love and sacrifice made a deep impression upon Christ. With warm feeling He told His disciples: Truly I say to you that this poor widow cast in more than all the others. The actual amount was, of course, much smaller than the gifts of the rich. But in proportion to the ability of the others her simple gift stood so far ahead of the rest that there was no comparison possible. The others had given of their superfluity: they did not even feel the giving of the amount they cast into the chest. But this widow might have been expected to beg rather than to be giving to the Temple treasury. And yet out of her want, when she was deprived of practically all her living, she had given her last quarter of a cent to the Lord, all that she had to sustain life. True love and real sacrifice are here exemplified, and this is the attitude in which all work for the Lord and all gifts for His "kingdom should be given." Cp. Mark 12, 41-44.

What did Jesus mean when he said, "Most certainly, I tell you, whoever doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a little child, he will in no way enter into it." Luke 18:15-17.

[The New John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible]

As a little child, means "without prejudice, pride, ambition, and vanity, with meekness, and humility."

[Kretzmann Popular Commentary] The incident here told

happened in one of the hamlets, probably in Perea, while Jesus was on His last journey to Jerusalem. The kindness of Jesus won the hearts of all that were not filled with prejudice against Him. And therefore the mothers of the village brought their little children, their babies, to Jesus, in order that He might lay His hands upon them in blessing. There was nothing of superstition in this act. But the disciples, as soon as they noticed this proceeding, gravely rebuked the mothers for disturbing the Master, who in their opinion was far too busy and engaged with far too weighty questions to be disturbed with trifles. But the view of Jesus in this matter differed from

that of His disciples very decidedly. In a manner which carried a world of reproof for their interference, He called out to the mothers, bidding them come. He was glad and wanted the little children brought to Him. No one should in any way interfere with such bringing nor deny to the little ones the friendship and blessing of the Savior. Of such is the kingdom of God. That is the requirement for entry into the kingdom of God, that faith must be as simple and sincere as that of children. They accept Jesus, their Savior, without question and without doubt; they love Him and cling to Him in joyful abandon. With solemn seriousness Jesus makes this declaration, that no one can enter into the Kingdom unless he accepts it as a little child.

[Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible] None are too little, too young, to be brought to Christ, who knows how to show kindness to those not capable of doing service to him. It is the mind of Christ, that little children should be brought to him. The promise is to us, and to our seed; therefore He will bid them welcome to him with us. And we must receive his kingdom as children, not by purchase, and must call it our Father's gift.

[Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament] Jesus makes the child the model for those who seek entrance into the kingdom of God, not the adult the model for the child. He does not say that the child is already in the kingdom without coming to him. Jesus has made the child's world by understanding the child and opening the door for him.

Should we interpret the story about the rich young ruler to mean it is bad to be rich? Luke 18:18-27.

Much has been said, written, and preached about this story. The interpretation of the dangers associated with accumulating wealth often bears a direct relationship to the wealth of the person expressing the view.

[Burkitt's Expository Notes] Our holy Lord takes occasion from the rich man's departure from him, to discourse concerning the danger of riches, and the difficulties that attend rich men in their way to heaven. From whence we may collect and gather,

1. That rich men do certainly meet with more difficulties in their way to heaven than other men; it is difficult to withdraw their affections from riches, to place their supreme love upon God in the midst of their riches, and to depend entirely upon God in a rich condition; for the rich man's wealth is his strong tower.
2. That yet the fault lies not in riches, but in rich men, who by placing their trust and reposing their confidence in riches, do render their salvation difficult, if not impossible.
3. Our Saviour's proverbial speech of a camels going through the eye of a needle implies thus much, that it is not only a great difficulty, but an utter impossibility, for such as abound in worldly wealth, and place their confidence therein, to be saved, without an extraordinary grace and assistance from God. It is hard for God to make a rich man happy, because he thinks himself happy without God.
4. That as difficult and impossible as this may seem to men, yet nothing is impossible with God; he can change the heart of the rich, by the rich and powerful influences of his Holy Spirit: That which is impossible with men is possible with God.

[Kretzmann Popular Commentary] The young ruler had gotten more than he bargained for; he went away from Jesus, and it is very doubtful whether he ever returned. Jesus determined to teach His disciples and oth-

ers that were near a lesson drawn from the incident. He told them in the form of an exclamation: How difficult, how next to impossible, it is for those that have goods, that are rich, to enter into the kingdom of God! Cp. Matt. 19, 23-30; Mark 10, 23-31. A person that is rich, actually calls the goods that are entrusted to him his own, and thus puts his trust in them, instead of in God alone, who has laid this responsibility upon him, is a servant of mammon, and cannot get to heaven. The difficulty is well illustrated by a proverb after the Oriental fashion, according to which it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man of that kind to enter into the kingdom of heaven. "For the rich people commonly become so entangled in the love and in the lust of riches that they cannot seek Jesus; yea, they do not desire to see Him: All their consolation is centered in money and goods; the more they get, the greater their desire, grows to possess still more." *n93 But the saying of Jesus was too much for the spiritual understanding of the disciples and other hearers. In astonishment and perplexity they ask: And who can be saved? But Jesus gave them the solution by saying: The impossible with men is possible with God. It is true in general that God's almighty power is not limited. And it is true, with special reference to conversion, that it is by the merciful power of God that sinful people are converted and renewed, that their hearts are torn loose from the love of this world and its riches and turned to His service all alone.

[Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible] Many have a great deal in them very commendable, yet perish for lack of some one thing; so this ruler could not bear Christ's terms, which would part between him and his estate. Many who are loth to leave Christ, yet do leave him. After a long struggle between their convictions and their corruptions, their corruptions carry the day. They are very sorry that they cannot serve both; but if one must be quitted, it shall be their God, not their

wordly gain. Their boasted obedience will be found mere outside show; the love of the world in some form or other lies at the root. Men are apt to speak too much of what they have left and lost, of what they have done and suffered for Christ, as Peter did. But we should rather be ashamed that there has been any regret or difficulty in doing it.

Random Quotes

"To me, old age is always 15 years older than I am." *Bernard M. Baruch (1870 – 1965)*

"We didn't underestimate them. They were just a lot better than we thought." — *Bobby Robson, After playing Cameroon in the 1990 world cup finals*

"We would all like to vote for the best man but he is never a candidate." — *Kin Hubbard (1868 – 1930)*

"You can't just let nature run wild." — *unknown*

Notes:

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