



Lesson 7

Chapter 19: Entering the Kingdom

A Question about Divorce (19:1-12)

Great multitudes of people followed Jesus from Galilee in the north to Judea in the south and he continued to heal those who came to him.

The Pharisees asked Jesus about divorce in order to test him. Remember, Herod had taken his brother's wife and John Baptist had lost his life protesting about it. Notice how Jesus went to the Old Testament for guidance. When we are faced with difficult moral questions we should also turn to the Bible. Jesus showed that what God set up originally (Genesis 2:24) was meant to last for life because when a man marries he:

- leaves his parents
- 'holds fast' to his wife
- becomes 'one flesh' with her
- has been joined by God to his wife
- must not allow anyone to separate them.

Jesus said that the only reason a man could divorce his wife was if she had been unfaithful, otherwise a man who divorced his wife and married another was committing adultery.

God intended marriage to last for life so that a man and his wife would always love and care for each other, working together to serve their Creator. This stable relationship provides the ideal situation in which to bring up children.

In his reply to the disciples' question Jesus knew that some men would remain unmarried because they were physically unable to have a marital relationship. However, there would also be some who would choose to remain unmarried so that they could give all of their time and energy working for the Lord. Jesus himself did not marry for this reason.

'What Good Deed must I do to have Eternal Life?' (19:16-26)

A rich young man came to Jesus. He asked Jesus what he should **do** to obtain eternal life. He did not understand that we cannot earn eternal life by the things we **do**. It is God's **gift** to those who live by faith, trying their best to please Him.

By comparing the other Gospel accounts of this incident we discover that the young man was a ruler (read Luke 18:18) and Jesus loved him (read Mark 10:21). When Jesus told him to keep the commandments, he asked which ones. Jesus listed them and the young man replied that he had kept all the commandments Jesus had mentioned. Jesus then dealt with the one he knew the man had not kept - "*You shall not covet*" (desire what belongs to someone else).

"And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, 'You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.'" (Mark 10:21)

The young man loved his riches too much so he turned away in sorrow, unable to make the commitment to follow Jesus.

His story does not mean that every disciple of Jesus is called to give up all his possessions. For example, shortly after this incident Jesus met another wealthy man, Zacchaeus (Luke 19: 1-9). Zacchaeus was not asked to sell all that he had, although he did give half of his possessions to the poor. Some people are able to use their wealth wisely while following Jesus; for others, who always want more, the safest course is to get rid of it.

The disciples found this teaching of Jesus very difficult, they were astonished and said - '*who then can be saved*'. Jesus replied:





“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”
(Matthew 19:26)

We know that it is impossible for us to **do** God's will perfectly to gain our salvation. It is God who made it possible by sending His Son to live and die for us.

“More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” (Romans 5:11)

Blessings on the faithful (19:27-29)

However, the Apostles still struggled with this teaching and Peter reminded Jesus of what they had given up to follow him. They had left their families and homes behind, so what would they have in the kingdom? Jesus told them they would have highly honoured places, ruling the tribes of Israel. Everyone who gives up things that keep him from following Jesus will receive far more, including everlasting life, when Jesus returns.

This is a great comfort to all disciples today. Sometimes we might regret that we gave up things which are against God's teaching in order to be a disciple. We should remind ourselves that this is only for a little while and that we shall be given gifts and honours greater than we can imagine in God's kingdom and these will last forever. It is our hope of being with Jesus in his kingdom which will keep us strong in our faith and commitment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: 'SON OF MAN' (19:28)

We know that Jesus was God's only begotten Son, born by the power of the Holy Spirit on Mary and God acknowledged him as His Son.

“A voice from heaven said, This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17)

However, Jesus rarely referred to himself as the Son of God (we only find him using this title in John's Gospel). Instead he frequently called himself the Son of Man as we read in this chapter.

“Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

This phrase is one that we meet many times in the Bible and it tells us of Jesus who never misused his position as the Son of God but always humbled himself to do God's will.

“...who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:6-8)



Chapter 20: Approaching Jerusalem

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (20:1-16)

This parable sometimes seems unfair: today no employer would be able to pay his workers like this – the same pay regardless of how many hours they had worked. However, Jesus uses the parable to teach his disciples a lesson. God does not reward people depending on how much they have done for Him; the reward is the same for all who have accepted the offer to work for Him.

When we look at the parable in more detail we see that the verses before and after it give the same message – the first will be last and the last will be first. The 'first' were the only group of workers who made an agreement with the owner about their wages. All the others went to work trusting the owner – that he would give them 'what was right'. The owner graciously gave those who had only worked for a short time the same amount as those who had worked all through the heat of the day, more than their work deserved.

The first group of people to be invited to work in God's vineyard was the Jewish nation. We read of their agreement, or covenant, with God in the book of Exodus. If they kept the Law given by God to Moses they would receive God's blessing. They failed, but God has still been merciful to them.

In New Testament times the invitation to work for the Lord was extended to Gentiles (non-Jews) under the New Covenant. This did not require people to keep fully the Law of Moses in order to receive a blessing from God. Instead God asked for faith in His promise of salvation that He had made through Jesus and, as the parable says, '*whatsoever is right I will give to you*'.

God has promised eternal life (the same 'payment') to all who believe His word and accept His Son as their saviour.

This parable was given to the Jews who still thought they had a privileged position in God's purpose simply because of their birth as descendants of Abraham and that Gentiles were unacceptable to God.

Warnings for the Apostles (20:17-19)

In verses 17-19 Jesus again told the Apostles about his suffering, death and resurrection. For the first time he revealed to them that he would be crucified. Jesus was very careful in the way he taught his disciples about his death. He knew it would be a terrible shock to them and he did not mention his death at all until just six months before it happened.

Here, in chapter 20, he is only a few weeks away from the cross and it is time for the disciples to know the details of the awful death that awaits their Lord at Jerusalem.

The parallel account in Luke 18:31-33 gives more details – these dreadful events were to fulfil the words of the Old Testament prophets. When we read the Old Testament we need to remember to look out for passages that refer to the Lord Jesus. His constant concern was for his followers. He knew the path he had to take, yet he still had time to support his disciples. The risen Lord has this same care for his followers today.

Rewards (20:20-28)

However, the disciples still did not understand what Jesus was telling them. Two of them, James and John, selfishly wanted the best places in the kingdom. They were Jesus' cousins and it was their mother, Jesus' aunt, who came and asked him to give her sons preferential treatment in his kingdom.

We meet this sort of thing in our own lives today. Sometimes a man in a good job or position of authority is expected to look after his relatives and give them jobs, even if they are not the most suitable candidates for the role. It brings jealousy and discontent and that is exactly what happened with the disciples. The two cousins told Jesus that they deserved the best positions in his kingdom as they were prepared to go and suffer with him. When the other ten Apostles heard this they were very displeased with them.

Later we read that the argument about who should be the greatest in the kingdom continued right up to the night before Jesus' death.





Often we might say things which later will have serious consequences for us and our fellow worshippers and it is important that we always think carefully about our words and any trouble they might cause.

Rulers exercise dominion over their subjects but true disciples of the Lord Jesus must be like their Lord and serve one another, not looking for positions of authority in the church. Not long afterwards, at the Lord's Supper, Jesus gave the Apostles a practical demonstration of humble service. He washed his disciple feet before laying down his life for his friends.

“If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.

Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.” (John 13:14-17)

Healing the Blind Men (20:29-34)

Jesus now began the final part of his journey to Jerusalem. A great crowd followed him and we know from the next chapter that many of them went all the way to Jerusalem with him (compare Matt. 20:29 and 21:8).

Just outside Jericho they passed two blind men sitting by the roadside. They cried out to Jesus for help and he showed compassion for them, stopping and healing their eyes so that they could see.

Although Jesus was approaching the most important stage of his life's work, he still had time to stop and help those who needed him. In Mark's gospel, one of the men is named Bartimaeus – perhaps this blind beggar was known to Mark's readers as a faithful believer in later life. If so, how glad he would have been for the compassion shown to him on the Jericho road.

Matthew tells us that they also then followed Jesus – what an example for us! The Bible describes people who do not know about Jesus as spiritually blind, they cannot see the truth about him. Those who accept Jesus as their saviour are those who have spiritual sight and understand his call to follow him on the way to the kingdom.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: SON OF DAVID

Why did the blind men call Jesus the Son of David? We know that he is the Son of God and the adopted son of Joseph, the husband of Mary. But Matthew chapter one also showed us that Jesus was descended from King David who was promised a special son who would sit on his throne and reign forever. So these blind men realised that Jesus was the promised king! They 'saw' more than most!



Chapter 21: Jesus reaches Jerusalem

Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem (21:1-16)

Jesus and his disciples have now reached Bethphage on the Mount of Olives and the Lord prepares for his entry into Jerusalem. Two disciples were sent to a house nearby to collect a donkey for him to ride into the city. As events progress we are reminded that everything Jesus did was in obedience to his Father's will.



His journey fulfilled a prophecy from Zechariah 9:9.

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey."

When he entered the city all the people were excited, they recognised Jesus as a prophet and a king and thought their king had come to take his kingdom. This worried the religious leaders.

"And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!'" (Matthew 21:9)

These words, shouted by the crowd, were written 1,000 years earlier in Psalm 118:25, 26. People recognised Jesus as the 'Son of David' – the heir to King David's throne in Jerusalem (2 Samuel 7:12, 13). The expression 'Hosanna', (meaning 'save now') was used as a shout of praise by the Jews. The people hoped that Jesus would save them at that time - 'save us now' - from the Romans who ruled over them at that time. Because he would not do this, a few days later the same crowd would shout "Crucify him!"

Jesus cleanses the Temple (21:12-16)

Rather than enjoy the praise of the people Jesus shocked everyone by throwing the traders out of the Temple. He was angry that the house of God was being used by people who were making money for themselves. The money changers exchanged foreign coins for those in which the Temple tax could be paid, but made sure they kept some for themselves. The Temple should have been a place for worshipping God, but it was a 'den of robbers'. Jesus was quoting from Jeremiah 7:11, written 600 years before!

"Spoken by the prophet..."

The Gospel of Matthew reminds us that Jesus' life was dedicated to doing all that his Father had revealed through the prophets in the Old Testament. The phrase "was spoken by the prophet" occurs more times in Matthew's Gospel than anywhere else.

These quotations from the Old Testament help our understanding of the Gospel message.

Check out these references and see what they tell us of Jesus.

Matthew 1:22; 2:15; 2:17; 3:3; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 24:15; 27:9

The Fig Tree (21:18-22)

Jesus spent the night at Bethany, a village close to Jerusalem, probably in the home of Mary and her sister, Martha, of whom we read in Luke 10:38,39 and John 11:1.

In the morning he left Bethany and returned to Jerusalem. He saw a fig tree (verse 19) and expected to find it bearing fruit. He cursed the fig tree and it began to wither and die.

However, there is more to this incident. In Luke 13:6-9 Jesus told a parable about a fig tree being unfruitful. It referred to the nation of Israel who refused to accept the Gospel message. A fig tree with leaves usually had fruit as well, but not this one! Jesus used this as a parable of the nation of Israel. They seemed to





worship God enthusiastically, just as the fig tree displayed a lot of leaves. But like this fig tree they had no fruit; they did not display the qualities of Godly people and their worship was not genuine. By causing the fig tree to wither away, Jesus pointed to God's judgement which would come on those Jews who failed to accept him as their Saviour. Forty years later the Romans came against Jerusalem and destroyed it as Jesus prophesied in Matthew 24

Christ's Authority (21:23-27)

The chief Priests and elders were always trying to trap Jesus with his words. They asked by what authority he was teaching and performing miracles. They wanted to trap him into admitting that he was doing these things on the authority of his heavenly Father. Then they could accuse him of blasphemy which would give them the excuse to condemn Jesus to death.

It was obvious that the wonderful miracles of Jesus were only possible if God was working through him. So Jesus asked a searching question of those who had challenged him. The chief priests and elders could not say that John's baptism had God's authority because they had not believed John. They were afraid to say this because most people thought John was one of God's prophets. So they had to give the feeble reply, 'We don't know'.

The Parable of the Two Sons (21:28-32)

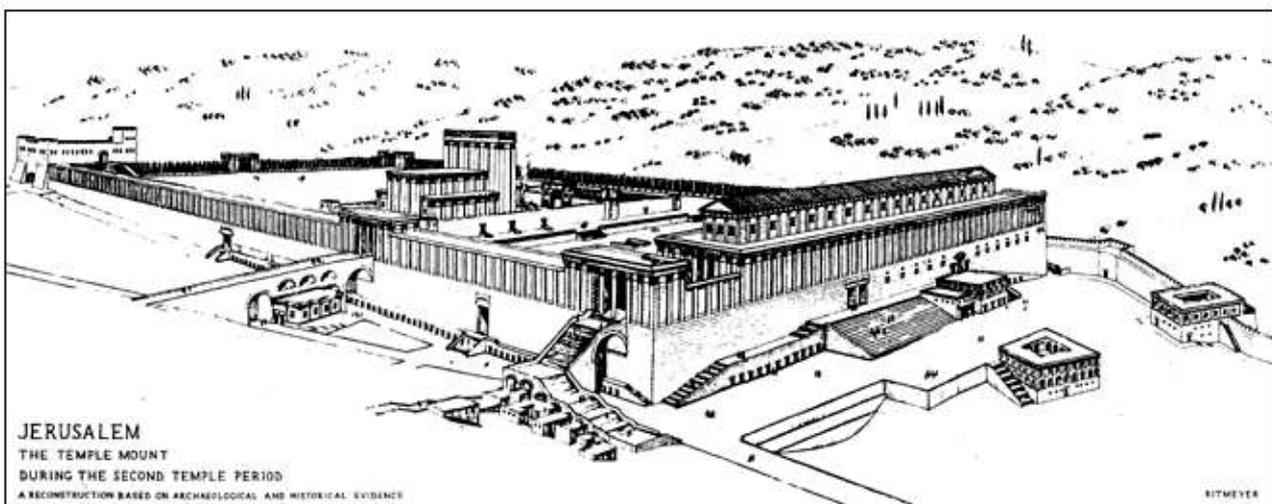
The Jewish leaders were just like the second son in this parable. They pretended to work in God's vineyard but they showed by their behaviour that they were rejecting God. They despised the lower classes and the tax collectors. The first son represents those who heard the call to repentance and realised they needed to repent when they heard John the Baptist's teaching. Later they followed Jesus as John instructed them.

The Parable of the Tenants (21:33-46)

This parable again shows how the Jewish leaders had failed. In the past Israel had been God's kingdom (see Lesson 9 of the 40 Lesson course), and the people had been called by Him to be His children. However they had rejected the prophets who had been sent to warn them, and Jesus knew that they were about to reject him. This opened up the way for the Gentiles (non-Jews) to have a place in God's Kingdom (verse 43).

Jesus quotes from Psalm 118:22, 23 which shows us that in spite of the Jews' rejection of Jesus, God's plan of salvation would triumph in the end.

The chief priests and Pharisees understood the parable because they realised that Jesus was speaking about them in these parables. Therefore they looked for a way to kill him but feared the multitude because the people accepted Jesus as a prophet.



Name	
Address	
Reference Number	
Tutor	

Answers to most questions can be found in the lessons or Bible passages given. Please write your answers on this question paper and return them in the envelope provided:

Questions on Chapter 19

- 1 Which verses show that Jesus believed that Genesis chapters 1&2 are true?

- 2 What is the great lesson Jesus taught about marriage?

- 3 What does Jesus mean by his words in Verse 14?

- 4 Verse 28 refers to the Lord Jesus sitting on his glorious throne in the future. From which capital city will he reign?

- 5 In your own words say how the Apostles will be rewarded when the Lord Jesus returns (verse 29)

Questions on Chapter 20

- 1a Why did some of the labourers grumble against the owner of the vineyard?

- 1b We would probably sympathise with those who had worked the longest and perhaps think the owner unfair. But what does the owner say?

- 1c The owner of the vineyard in the parable represents God (see Isaiah 5:7). If we think the judgement is unfair then it shows that our way of thinking is not God's way of thinking. Which verse in Isaiah 55 says this?

- 2a The disciples were annoyed that James and John wanted to be great. How can we be great – what did Jesus say?
- 2b How did Jesus show his greatness?
- 3 Copy out Psalm 89:35, 36. According to Acts 13:22, 23 who is the offspring (son) spoken of in these verses?

Questions on Chapter 21

The crowds cheered Jesus as he rode into Jerusalem.

- 1a What did he do when he reached the Temple?
- 1b Why didn't the chief priests and scribes like what the children were shouting in the Temple area?

Parables have hidden meanings. The table below refers to the parable in verses 33-46. Try to work out what each part represents. Some have been done for you.		
	Person/Object	What they represent
2a	The owner of the vineyard	
2b	The owner's servants	God's prophets
2c	The owner's son	
2d	The first tenants	Jews
2e	Other tenants (verse 41)	
2f	The vineyard (verses 41, 43)	
2g	The rejected stone	