

CHAPTER 19

INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW 19

Ver. 1. *And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings,* etc.] Concerning humility, avoiding offences, the methods to be taken in reproving offenders, and the forgiveness that is to be exercised towards them:

he departed from Galilee; where he had chiefly preached and wrought his miracles, no more to return thither till after his resurrection:

and came into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan; that is, to that country which was called “beyond Jordan”, and bordered on Judea; coming still nearer and nearer to Jerusalem, where he had told his disciples, a little while ago, he must come, and suffer, and die. Rather, it should be rendered, “on this side Jordan”, as also in (^{<6028>}John 1:28) for the coasts of Judea were on this side; so ^{dryh rb}[, is rendered in (^{<6049>}Deuteronomy 4:49)

Ver. 2. *And great multitudes followed him,* etc.] The Persic version adds, “of the sick and diseased”; but all that followed him were not such, though some were: these came not only from Galilee, but from the adjacent parts, from the country beyond Jordan, and the coasts of Judea, where he had been formerly; and who resort to him again, as Mark observes; and whom, according to his usual manner, he taught and instructed in the knowledge of divine things, and confirmed his doctrines by miracles:

and he healed them there; in the above mentioned places, even as many of them as were sick and diseased.

Ver. 3. *The Pharisees also came unto him,* etc.] Either from the places round about, or from Jerusalem: these came unto him, not for the sake of learning, or to be instructed by him; but as spies upon him, to observe what he said and did, and watch every opportunity to expose him to the contempt and hatred of the people;

tempting him with a question about divorces, in order to ensnare him:

and saying to him, is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? be it ever so trivial, as said the school of Hillell: for there was a difference between the school of Shammai and the school of Hillell about this matter; the former insisted that a man might not put away his wife but in case of uncleanness; but the latter allowed putting away for very trifling things; as if she spoiled her husband's food by over roasting, or over salting it; and, as one of the doctors say, if he found another woman that was more beautiful than her; *see Gill* "~~418~~⁴¹⁸*Matthew 5:32*". This question being now agitated in the schools, they artfully put to Christ; not for information, but with a view to reproach him in some way or other; and that he might incur the resentment of one party or another, as he should answer. They might argue thus with themselves, and hope to succeed in this manner; should he be on the side of the school of Shammai, which was the weakest side, and less popular, as they had reason to believe he would, he would then expose himself to the resentment of the school of Hillell, and all on that side the question; should he take the part of Hillell, he would make the school of Shammai his enemies; should he forbid putting away of wives, which Moses allowed, they would then traduce him as contrary to Moses, and his law, which could not fail of setting the people against him; and should he consent to it, they would charge him with contradicting himself, or with inconstancy in his doctrine, since he had before asserted the unlawfulness of it, but in case of adultery; and should he abide by this, they might hope to irritate the men against him, who would think their liberty granted by Moses was entrenched on; as, on the other hand, should he, according to the question, admit of putting away for every cause, the women would be provoked at him, who would be left to the uncertain humour and caprice of their husbands; so that either way they hoped to get an advantage of him.

Ver. 4. *And he answered and said unto them,* etc.] Not by replying directly to the question, but by referring them to the original creation of man, and to the first institution of marriage, previous to the law of Moses;

have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female? This may be read in (⁴¹⁰¹²⁷Genesis 1:27) and from thence this sense of things collected; that God, who in the beginning of time, or of the creation, as Mark expresses it, made all things, the heavens, and the earth, and all that is therein, and particularly "man", as the Vulgate Latin, and Munster's Hebrew Gospel supply it here, made the first parents of mankind, male and female; not male and females, but one male, and one

and they twain shall be one flesh; the word “twain” is: not in the Hebrew text in Genesis, but in the Septuagint version compiled by Jews, in the Samaritan Pentateuch, and version, and in the Targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel, who renders, it as here, *dj arçybl ı̄whywwrt ı̄whyw*, “and they two shall be one flesh”. This is the true sense, for neither more nor less can possibly be meant; and denotes that near conjunction, and strict union, between a man and his wife, the wife being a part of himself, and both as one flesh, and one body, and therefore not to be parted on every slight occasion; and has a particular respect to the act of carnal copulation, which only ought to be between one man and one woman, lawfully married to each other; (see Gill on “~~416~~1 Corinthians 6:16”).

Ver. 6. *Wherefore they are no more twain*, etc.] They were two before marriage, but now no more so; not but that they remain two distinct persons,

but one flesh; or, as the Syriac, Arabic, Persic, and Ethiopic versions read, “one body”: hence the wife is to be beloved by the husband as his own body, as himself, as his own flesh, (~~418~~Ephesians 5:28,29).

what therefore God hath joined together; or, by the first institution of marriage, has declared to be so closely united together, as to be, as it were, one flesh, and one body, as husband and wife are;

let no man put asunder; break the bond of union, dissolve the relation, and separate them from each other, for every trivial thing, upon any slight occasion, or for anything; but what is hereafter mentioned. The sense is, that the bond of marriage being made by God himself, is so sacred and inviolable, as that it ought not to be dissolved by any man; not by the husband himself, or any other for him; nor by any state or government, by any prince or potentate, by any legislator whatever; no, not by Moses himself, who is, at least, included, if not chiefly designed here, though not named, to avoid offence: and God and man being opposed in this passage, shows, that marriage is an institution and appointment of God, and therefore not to be changed and altered by man at his pleasure; this not merely a civil, but a sacred affair, in which God is concerned.

Ver. 7. *They say unto him*, etc.] That is the Pharisees, who object the law of Moses to him, hoping hereby to ensnare him, and expose him to the resentment of the people, should he reject that, as they supposed he would;

why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and put her away? referring to (^{194B}Deuteronomy 24:1) which they thought to be a contradiction, and what they knew not how to reconcile to the doctrine Christ had delivered, concerning the original institution of marriage, and the close union there is between a man and his wife, by virtue of it, and which is not to be dissolved by men. Concerning a writing of divorcement and the form, and manner of it, *see Gill* “^{195B}Matthew 5:31”

Ver. 8. *He saith unto them,* etc.] In answer to their objection;

Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives: in which may be observed, that, though it was by direction that Moses, in his system of laws, allowed of divorces; yet not God, but he is said to do it, because it was a branch of the political and judicial laws, by which the people of the Jews were governed under Moses, and whilst the Mosaic economy continued, and did not concern other people, and other times; and therefore it is said “you” and “your” wives, you Jews, and you only, and not the Gentiles. And so the Jews say ^{f1023}, that the Gentiles have no divorces: for thus they represent God, saying;

“in Israel I have granted divorces, I have not granted divorces among the nations of the world. R. Chananiah, in the name of R. Phineas, observed, that in every other section it is written, the Lord of hosts, but here it is written, the God of Israel; to teach thee, that the holy, blessed God does not join his name to divorces, but in Israel only. R. Chayah Rabbah says, ךַּוּרַיִג םַּל םַּוּוּג, “the Gentiles have no divorces.””

Besides, this was a direct positive command to the Jews, as the Pharisees suggest in their objection; it was only a sufferance, a permission in some cases, and not in everyone; and that because of the hardness of their hearts; they being such a stubborn and inflexible people, that when they were once displeased there was no reconciling them; and so malicious and revengeful, that if this had not been granted, would have used their wives, that displeased them, in a most cruel, and barbarous manner, if not have murdered them: so that this grant was made, not to indulge their lusts, but to prevent greater evils; and not so much as a privilege and liberty to the men, as in favour of the women; who, when they could not live peaceably and comfortably with a man, might be dismissed and marry another:

but from the beginning it was not so; from the beginning of time, or of the creation, or of the world, or at the first institution of marriage, and in the first ages of the world, there was no such permission, nor any such practice. This was not the declared will of God at first, nor was it ever done by any good men before the times of Moses; we never read that Adam, or Seth, or Noah, or Abraham, put away their wives, upon any consideration; though in the latter there might have been some appearance of reason for so doing, on account of sterility, but this he did not; nor Isaac, nor Jacob, nor any of the “patriarchs”.

Ver. 9. *And I say unto you*, etc.] To his disciples, when they were with him alone in the house, and asked him more particularly about the subject, concerning which he had been discoursing with the Pharisees, as Mark observes, (~~4100~~ Mark 10:10,11) when he said to them much the same things, he had delivered before in (~~4162~~ Matthew 5:32)

whosoever shall put away in his wife; separate her from his person, house and bed, and dismiss her as his wife, no more to be considered in that relation to him,

except it be for fornication; or whoredom, for defiling his bed: for this is not to be understood of fornication committed before, but of uncleanness after marriage, which destroys their being one flesh:

and shall marry another woman, committeth adultery; Marks adds, “against her”; which may be understood either of the woman he marries, which not being lawfully done, she lives in adultery with the husband of another woman; or of his former wife, and who is still his wife, and to whose injury he has married another; and he not only commits adultery himself, but, as in (~~4162~~ Matthew 5:32) “causeth her to commit adultery also”, by being the occasion of marrying another man, when she is still his lawful wife:

and whoso marrieth her which is put away, for any other cause than adultery,

doth commit adultery also; since he cohabits with the wife of another man; see Gill “(~~4162~~ Matthew 5:32”

Ver. 10. *His disciples say unto him*, etc.] Being surprised at this account of things, it being quite contrary to what they had been taught, and very different from the general practice and usage of their nation:

if the case of a man be so with his wife; if they are so closely joined together in marriage; if they are, as it were, one flesh, or one body, that a man's wife is himself: that the bond between them is so inviolable, that it is not to be dissolved, but in case of adultery; that if a separation be made by a bill of divorce, in any other case, and either party marry again, they are guilty of adultery; if a man cannot part with his wife lawfully, provided she be chaste, and is faithful to his bed, let her be what she will otherwise, though ever so disagreeable in her person, and troublesome in her behaviour; though she may be passionate, and a brawler; though she may be drunken, luxurious, and extravagant, and mind not the affairs of her family, yet if she is not an adulteress, must not be put away:

it is not good to marry; it would be more expedient and advisable for a man to live always a single life, than to run the risk of marrying a woman, that may prove very disagreeable and uncomfortable; to whom he must be bound all the days of his or her life, and, in such a case, not to be able to relieve and extricate himself. This they said under the prejudice of a national law and custom, which greatly prevailed, and under the influence of a carnal heart.

Ver. 11. *But he said unto them*, etc.] With respect to the inference or conclusion, the disciples formed from what he had asserted:

all men cannot receive this saying; of their's, that it is not good to marry, but it is more proper and expedient to live a single life! every man, as the Syriac version renders it, is not **hl qps**, "sufficient", or "fit", for this thing; everyone has not the gift of continency, and indeed very few; and therefore it is expedient for such to marry; for what the disciples said, though it might be true in part, yet not in the whole; and though the saying might be proper and pertinent enough to some persons, yet not to all, and indeed to none,

save they to whom it is given; to receive such a saying, to live unmarried with content, having the gift of chastity; for this is not of nature, but of grace: it is the gift of God.

Ver. 12. *For there are some eunuchs*, etc.] Our Lord here distinguishes the various sorts of persons, that can and do live in a single state with content: some by nature, and others by violence offered to them, are rendered incapable of entering into a marriage state; and others, through the gift of God, and under the influence of his grace, abstain from marriage cheerfully

and contentedly, in order to be more useful in the interest of religion; but the number of either of these is but few, in comparison of such who choose a conjugal state, and with whom it is right to enter into it, notwithstanding all the difficulties that may attend it. Some men are eunuchs, and of these there are different sorts; there are some,

which were so born from their mother's womb; meaning, not such who, through a natural temper and inclination of mind, could easily abstain from marriage, and chose to live single; but such who had such defects in nature that they were impotent, unfit for, and unable to perform the duties of a marriage state; who, as some are born without hands or feet, these were born without proper and perfect organs of generation; and such an one was, by the Jews, frequently called, *hnh syrs*, “an eunuch of the sun ^{f1024}”: that is, as their doctors ^{f1025} explain it, one that from his mother's womb never saw the sun but as an eunuch; that is, one that is born so; and that such an one is here intended, ought not to be doubted. The signs of such an eunuch, are given by the Jewish ^{f1026} writers, which may be consulted by those, that have ability and leisure. This sort is sometimes ^{f1027} called *μymç ydyb syrs* “an eunuch by the hands of heaven”, or God, in distinction from those who are so by the hands, or means of men, and are next mentioned:

and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: as among the Romans formerly, and which Domitian the emperor forbid by a law ^{f1028}; and more especially in the eastern countries, and to this day among the Turks, that they may the more safely be entrusted with the custody of their women; and this sort the Jews call *μda syrs*, “an eunuch of men”, or *μda ydyb*, “by the hands of men”. The distinction between an “eunuch of the sun”, and an “eunuch of men”, is so frequent with the Jews ^{f1029}, and so well known to them, that a question need not be made of our Lord's referring to it:

and there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs; not in a literal sense, in which the words are not to be taken, as they were by Origen; who though otherwise too much pursued the allegorical way of interpreting Scripture, here took it literally, and castrated himself ^{f1030}; as did also a sort of heretics, called Valesians ^{f1031}, from one Valens an Arabian; and which practice is recommended by Philo the Jew ^{f1032}, and by Heathen philosophers ^{f1033}, for the sake of chastity. But here it means such, who having the gift of continency without mutilating their bodies, or indulging

any unnatural lusts, can live chastely without the use of women, and choose celibacy:

for the kingdom of heaven's sake; not in order, by their chaste and single life, to merit and obtain the kingdom of glory; but that they might be more at leisure, being free from the incumbrances of a marriage state, to attend the worship and service of God, the ordinances of the Gospel church state, to minister in, and preach the Gospel of Christ, and be a means of spreading it in the world, and of enlarging his kingdom and interest.

He that is able to receive it, let him receive it: whoever is able to receive cordially, and embrace heartily, the above saying concerning the expediency and goodness of a single life, and having the gift of continency, can live according to it; let him take it, and hold it fast, and act up to it; he may have less of worldly trouble, and be more useful for God in the Gospel of Christ, and to the interest of religion; but this should be a voluntary thing: no man should be forced into it; and he that goes into it, ought to consider well whether he is able to contain, or not.

Ver. 13. *Then were there brought unto him little children*, etc.] It does not appear that they were new born babes; the words used by either of the evangelists do not always signify such, but are sometimes used of such as are capable of going alone; yea, of receiving instructions, of understanding the Scriptures, and even of one of twelve years of age, (~~4182~~ Matthew 18:2 ~~4183~~ Mark 5:39,42 ~~4185~~ 2 Timothy 3:15) nor is it probable that infants just born, or within a month, should be had abroad. Moreover, these were such as Christ called unto him, (~~4186~~ Luke 18:16) and were capable of coming to him of themselves, as his words following suppose; nor does their being brought to him, or his taking them in his arms, contradict this; since the same things are said of such as could walk of themselves, (~~4122~~ Matthew 12:22, 17:16) (~~4106~~ Mark 9:36). Nor is it known whose children they were, whether their parents were believers or unbelievers, nor by whom they were brought: but the end for which they were brought is expressed,

that he should put his hands on them, and pray; not that he should baptize them, nor did he; which may be concluded from the entire silence of all the evangelists; and from an express declaration that Christ baptized none; and from the mention of other ends for which they were brought, as that Christ should “touch” them, (~~4103~~ Mark 10:13 ~~4185~~ Luke 18:15) as he sometimes used to do persons, when he healed them of diseases; and probably some of those infants, if not all of them, were diseased, and brought to be cured;

otherwise, it is not easy to conceive what they should be touched by him for: or as here, that he might put his hands on them, and pray over them, and bless them, as was usual with the Jews to do; (see ^{<0484>}Genesis 48:14-16) and it was common with them to bring their children to venerable persons, men of note for religion and piety, to have their blessing and prayers ^{f1034}:

and the disciples rebuked them; not the children, as the Persic version reads, but those that brought them, Mark observes; either because they came in a rude and disorderly manner, and were very noisy and clamorous; or they might think it would be too troublesome to Christ, to go through such a ceremony with so many of them; or that it was too mean for him, and below him to take notice of them; or for fear he should take fresh occasion, on the sight of these children, to rebuke them again for their pride and ambition. However, from this rebuke and prohibition of the disciples, it looks plainly as if it had never been the practice of the Jews, nor of John the Baptist, nor of Christ and his disciples, to baptize infants; for had this been then in use, they would scarcely have forbid and rebuked those that brought them, since they might have thought they brought them to be baptized; but knowing of no such usage that ever obtained in that nation, neither among those that did, or did not believe in Christ, they forbid them.

Ver. 14. *But Jesus said, suffer little children* etc.] This he said to show his humility, that he was not above taking notice of any; and to teach his disciples to regard the weakest believers, and such as were but children in knowledge; and to inform them what all ought to be, who expect the kingdom of heaven; for it follows;

and forbid them not to come unto me, now, or at any other time;

for of such is the kingdom of heaven; that is, as the Syriac renders it, “who are as these” or as the Persic version, rather paraphrasing than translating, renders it, “who have been humble as these little children”: and it is as if our Lord should say, do not drive away these children from my person and presence; they are lively emblems of the proper subjects of a Gospel church state, and of such that shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: by these I may instruct and point out to you, what converted persons should be, who have a place in my church below, and expect to enter into my kingdom and glory above; that they are, or ought to be, like such children, harmless and inoffensive; free from rancour and malice, meek, modest, and humble;

without pride, self-conceit, and ambitious views, and desires of grandeur and superiority. Christ's entire silence about the baptism of infants at this time, when he had such an opportunity of speaking of it to his disciples, had it been his will, has no favourable aspect on such a practice. It is not denied that little children, whether born of believers or unbelievers, which matters not, may be chosen of God, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and have the passive work of the Spirit on their souls, and so enter into heaven; but this is not the sense of this text. It was indeed a controversy among the Jews, whether the little children of the wicked of Israel, *abh ml w[I ^yab*, "go into the world to come": some affirmed, and others denied; but all agreed, that the little children of the wicked of the nations of the world, do not. They dispute about the time of entrance of a child into the world to come; some say, as soon as it is born, according to (¹⁹²³¹Psalm 22:31) others, as soon as it can speak, or count, according to (¹⁹²³¹Psalm 22:30) others as soon as it is sown, as the gloss says, as soon as the seed is received in its mother's womb, though it becomes an abortion; according to the same words, "a seed shall serve thee": others, as soon as he is circumcised, according to (¹⁹⁸¹⁵Psalm 88:15) others, as soon as he can say "Amen", according ^{f1035} to (²³¹⁰Isaiah 26:2) All weak, frivolous, and impertinent.

Ver. 15. *And he laid his hands on them*, etc.] "And blessed them", as Mark says; he put his hands upon them, according to the custom of the country, and wished all kind of prosperity to them:

and departed thence, out of the house where he had been, and his disciples with him: the Ethiopic version renders it, "and they went from thence", from those parts, towards Jerusalem.

Ver. 16. *And behold, one came*, etc.] The Persic version reads, "a rich man"; and so he was, as appears from what follows: Luke calls him, "a certain ruler"; not of a synagogue, an ecclesiastical ruler, but a civil magistrate: perhaps he might be one of the sanhedrim, which consisted of "twenty one" persons; or of that which consisted only of "three", as in some small towns and villages Mark represents him as "running"; for Christ was departed out of the house, and was gone into the way, the high road, and was on his journey to some other place, when this man ran after him with great eagerness; and, as the same evangelist adds, "kneeled to him"; thereby paying him civil respect, and honour; believing him to be a worthy good man, and deserving of esteem and veneration:

and said unto him, good master: some say, that this was a title which the Jewish doctors were fond of, and gave to each other, but I have not observed it; he seems by this to intimate, that he thought him not only to be a good man, but a good teacher; that he was one that came from God, and taught good doctrine, which induced him to run after him, and put the following question to him:

what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? Or, as in the other evangelists, “inherit eternal life”; a phrase much in use with the Jewish Rabbins ^{f1036}:

“Judah confessed, and was not ashamed, and what is his end? **abh ml w[h yyj l j n**, “he inherits the life of the world to come” (i.e. eternal life); Reuben confessed, and was not ashamed, and what is his end? “he inherits the life of the world to come”.”

This man was no Sadducee, he believed a future state; was a serious man, thoughtful about another world, and concerned how he should enjoy everlasting life; but was entirely upon a legal bottom, and under a covenant of works; and speaks in the language and strain of the nation of Israel, who were seeking for righteousness and life by the works of the law: he expected eternal life by doing some good thing, or things; and hoped, as the sequel shows, that he had done every good thing necessary to the obtaining it.

Ver. 17. *And he said unto him,* etc.] By way of reply, first taking notice of, and questioning him about, the epithet he gave him:

why callest thou me good? not that he denied that he was so; for he was good, both as God and man, in his divine and human natures; in all his offices, and the execution of them; he was goodness itself, and did good, and nothing else but good. But the reason of the question is, because this young man considered him only as a mere man, and gave him this character as such; and which, in comparison of God, the fountain of all goodness, agrees with no mere man: wherefore our Lord’s view is, by his own language; and from his own words, to instruct him in the knowledge of his proper deity. Some copies read, “why dost thou ask me concerning good”. And so the Vulgate Latin, and the Ethiopic versions, and Munster’s Hebrew Gospel read; but the Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions, read as we do, and this the answer of Christ requires.

There is none good but one, that is God; who is originally, essentially, independently, infinitely, and immutably good, and the author and source of all goodness; which cannot be said of any mere creature. This is to be understood of God considered essentially, and not personally; or it is to be understood, not of the person of the Father, to the exclusion of the Son, or Spirit: who are one God with the Father, and equally good in nature as he. Nor does this contradict and deny that there are good angels, who have continued in that goodness in which they were created; or that there are good men, made so by the grace of God; but that none are absolutely and perfectly good, but God. What Christ here says of God, the ^{f1037} Jews say of the law of Moses, whose praise they can never enough extol; **hrwt al a bwj ^ya** “there is nothing good but the law”. The law is good indeed; but the author of it must be allowed to be infinitely more so. Christ next directly answers to the question,

but if thou wilt enter into life: eternal life, which is in the question, and which being sometimes expressed by a house, a city, and kingdom, by mansions, and everlasting habitations, enjoyment of it is fitly signified by entering into it; which, if our Lord suggests, he had a desire of having a right to by doing any good thing himself, he must

keep the commandments; that is, perfectly: he must do not only one good thing, but all the good things the law requires; he must not be deficient in any single action, in anyone work of the law, either as to matter, or manner of performance; everything must be done, and that just as the Lord in his law has commanded it. Our Lord answers according to the tenor of the covenant of works, under which this man was; and according to the law of God, which requires perfect obedience to it, as a righteousness, and a title to life; and in case of the least failure, curses and condemns to everlasting death; (see ^{<R125>}Deuteronomy 6:25 ^{<R12>}Galatians 3:12,10). This Christ said, in order to show, that it is impossible to enter into, or obtain eternal life by the works of the law, since no man can perfectly keep it; and to unhinge this man from off the legal foundation on which he was, that he might drop all his dependencies on doing good things, and come to him for righteousness and life.

Ver. 18. *He saith unto him, which?* etc.] Whether those commandments of a moral, or of a ceremonial kind; whether the commands of the written, or of the oral law; of God, or of the elders, or both; or whether he did not

mean some new commandments of his own, which he delivered as a teacher sent from God:

Jesus said; according to the other evangelists, “thou knowest the commandments”; not the true nature, spirituality, and use of them, but the letter and number of them; being trained up from a child by his parents, in the reading them, committing them to memory, and the outward observance of them, particularly those of the second table:

thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness. Christ takes no notice of the ceremonial law, nor of the traditions of the elders, only moral precepts; and these only such as refer to the second, and not the first table of the law, which respect duty to the neighbour, and not to God: and this he does, because these commandments were more known, and were in common use; and he chose to instance in these, partly to show, that if men are under obligation to regard these, much more such as concern God more immediately; and partly, to observe, that if men are deficient in their duty to one another, they are much more so in their worship of God; and consequently, eternal life is never to be got and enjoyed by the performance of these things.

Ver. 19. *Honour thy father and thy mother*: etc.] This, as it is the first commandment with promise, so the first of the second table, and yet is here mentioned last; which inversion of order is of no consequence: so the “seventh” command is put before the “sixth”, and the “fifth” omitted, in (~~f1037~~Romans 13:9) and with the Jews it is a common ^{f1038}saying, *hrwtb rj wamw µdqwm ^ya*, “there is neither first nor last in the law”: that is, it is of no consequence which commandment is recited first, or which last. Moreover, it looks as if it was usual to recite these commands in this order, since they are placed exactly in the same method, by a very noted Jewish ^{f1039}writer.

And thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; which is not a particular distinct command from the rest, or an explication of the tenth and last, not mentioned; but a recapitulation, or compendium, and abridgment of the whole, and is said to be a complement and fulfilling of the law; (see ~~f1037~~Romans 13:9 ~~f1034~~Galatians 5:14).

Ver. 20. *The young man saith unto him*, etc.] For though he was so very rich and in such an exalted station in life, as to be a ruler, it seems he was

but a young man; and to be so early serious and religious, amidst so much riches and grandeur, though it was but externally, was both remarkable and commendable: upon hearing the answer of Christ, with which he was highly pleased and greatly elated, he very pertly replies,

all these things have I kept from my youth up: as soon as he was capable of learning, his parents taught him these precepts; and ever since he had the use of his reason, and understood the letter, and outward meaning of them, he had been careful to observe them; nor could he charge himself with any open and flagrant transgression of them; not understanding the internal sense, extensive compass, and spirituality of them; and therefore asks,

what lack I yet? In what am I deficient hitherto? in what have I come short of doing these things? what remains at last to be performed? what other precepts are to be obeyed? if there are any other commands, I am ready to observe them, which may be thought necessary to obtain eternal life.

Ver. 21. *Jesus said unto him, if thou wilt be perfect,* etc.] Wanting nothing, completely righteous, according to the tenor of the covenant of works, having no evil, concupiscence, or worldly lusts: our Lord signifies it was not enough to be possessed of negative holiness, and do no hurt to his neighbour, to his person, property, and estate, but he must love him, and do him good; and therefore, though so far as he had complied with the law, it was right and commendable; wherefore it is said by Mark, “that Jesus beholding him loved him”; had an affectionate regard to him as man, and approved of his intentions, seriousness, and actions, so far as agreeable; yet tells him,

one thing thou lackest: not but that he lacked many more, but he was only willing to observe one thing to him, as a trial of his love to his neighbour, which is the fulfilling of the law:

go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: not that either the law of God, or Gospel of Christ, require this to be done of all men, and at all times; for though it is a duty binding upon all, and always, to relieve the poor and the needy, yet a man is not obliged to give all that he has to them; (see ^{<4813>}2 Corinthians 8:11) nor does either legal or Christian perfection lie in doing this: a man may give all his goods to the poor and yet be destitute of the grace of God, (^{<4813>}1 Corinthians 13:3) much less can such an action merit the heavenly treasure of eternal life. Nevertheless of some persons, and in some cases, it

has been required, that they part with all their worldly substance, for the sake of Christ and his Gospel; as the apostles were called to leave all and follow Christ, as this man was also; for it is added,

and come and follow me: between these two, Mark puts, “take up the cross”; all which to do, was much more than to sell what he had, and give to the poor; and indeed, in this branch lies Gospel perfection, or to be really and truly a Christian: for to “come” to Christ, is to believe in him, lay hold on him, receive and embrace him as a Saviour and Redeemer; and to “follow” him, is to be obedient to his will, to be observant of his commands, to submit to his ordinances, and to imitate him in the exercise of grace, and discharge of duty; neither of which can be done, without “taking up the cross”; bearing reproach and persecution with patience; undergoing hardships and difficulties, of one sort or another, which attend faith in Christ, a profession of his name, and following him the Lamb, whithersoever he goes. The consequence of this now, not by way of merit, but by way of grace, is the enjoyment of the rich treasures of eternal glory: but this man was so far from complying with the latter, with coming to Christ, taking up the cross, and following him, that he could by no means agree to the former, parting with his worldly substance; and which is mentioned, as a test of his love to God and his neighbour, and to discover his sinful love of the world, and the things of it; and consequently, that he was far from being in a state of perfection. Moreover, it should be observed, that Christ is here speaking, not the pure language of the law, or according to the principles of the Gospel, when he seems to place perfection in alms deeds, and as if they were meritorious of eternal life; but according to the doctrine of the Pharisees, and which was of this man; and so upon the plan of his own notions, moves him to seek for perfection, and convicts him of the want of it, in a way he knew would be disagreeable to him; and yet he would not be able to disprove the method, on the foot of his own tenets: for this is their doctrine^{f1040};

“It is a tradition, he that says this “sela”, or shekel, is for alms, that my son may live, or I may be a son of the world to come, lo! rwmg qydx hz, “this man is a perfect righteous man”.”

The gloss adds,

“In this thing; and he does not say that he does not do it for the sake of it, but he fulfils the command of his Creator, who has

commanded him to do alms; and he also intends profit to himself, that thereby he may be worthy of the world to come, or that his children may live.”

And so in answer to a question much like this, the young man put to Christ ^{f1041},

“How shall we come at the life of the world to come?”

It is replied,

“take thy riches, and give to the fatherless and the poor, and I will give thee a better portion in the law.”

Ver. 22. *But when the young man heard that saying.* etc.] That he must sell his estates, and all his worldly substance, and the money made of them, give away to the poor; and become a follower of Christ, deny himself, and submit to hardships very disagreeable to the flesh:

he went away sorrowful; not with a godly sorrow for his sin and imperfections, but with the sorrow of the world, which worketh death: he was ashamed and confounded, that he could not perform what he had just now so briskly promised, at least tacitly, that whatever else was proper he would do; as also grieved, that he had not arrived to perfection, which he had hoped he had, but now began to despair of, and of obtaining eternal life; and most of all troubled, that he must part with his worldly substance, his heart was so much set upon, or not enjoy it:

for he had great possessions; which were very dear to him; and he chose rather to turn his back on Christ, and drop his pursuits of the happiness of the other world, than part with the present enjoyments of this.

Ver. 23. *Then said Jesus unto his disciples.* etc.] When the young man was gone; taking this opportunity to make some proper observations for the use and instruction of his disciples, after, as Mark observes, he had “looked round about”; with concern, and in order to affect their minds with this incident, and to raise their attention to what he was about to say:

verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven: either into the Gospel dispensation, and receive the truths, and submit to the ordinances of it, or into the kingdom of glory hereafter; not but that there have been, are, and will be, some that are rich, called by grace, brought into a Gospel church state, and are heirs of the kingdom of

heaven; though these are but comparatively few: nor is it riches themselves that make the entrance so difficult, and clog the way, either into grace or glory, but putting trust and confidence in them; and therefore in Mark, they “that have riches”, are by Christ explained of such, that “trust in riches”; and which rich men in common are very apt to do, as this young man did, against which the apostle cautions, (^{f1042}1 Timothy 6:17)

Ver. 24. *And again I say unto you*, etc.] After the apostles had discovered their astonishment at the above expression, about the difficulty of a rich man entering into the kingdom of heaven; when they expected that, in a short time, all the rich and great men of the nation would espouse the interest of the Messiah, and acknowledge him as a temporal king, and add to the grandeur of his state and kingdom; and after he had in a mild and gentle manner, calling them “children”, explained himself of such, that trusted in uncertain riches, served mammon, made these their gods, and placed their hope and happiness in them; in order to strengthen and confirm what he had before asserted, and to assure, in the strongest manner, the very great difficulty, and seeming impossibility, of rich men becoming followers of Christ here, or companions with him hereafter, he expresses himself in this proverbial way:

it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God: thus, when the Jews would express anything that was rare and unusual, difficult and impossible, they used a like saying with this. So speaking of showing persons the interpretation of their dreams ^{f1042};

“Says Rabba, you know they do not show to a man a golden palm tree i.e. the interpretation of a dream about one, which, as the gloss says, is a thing he is not used to see, and of which he never thought, *aj j md apwqb l yy[d al yp al w*, “nor an elephant going through the eye of a needle”.”

Again, to one that had delivered something as was thought very absurd, it is said ^{f1043};

“perhaps thou art one of Pombeditha (a school of the Jews in Babylon) *aj j md apwqb al yp ^l yy[md*, “who make an elephant pass through the eye of a needle”.”

That is, who teach such things as are equally as monstrous and absurd, and difficult of belief. So the authors of an edition of the book of Zohar, to set forth the difficulty of the work they engaged in, express themselves in this manner^{f1044}:

“In the name of our God, we have seen fit, *aj j md apwqb al yp synkhl*, “to bring an elephant through the eye of a needle”.”

And not only among the Jews, but in other eastern nations, this proverbial way of speaking was used, to signify difficulties or impossibilities. Mahomet has it in his Alcoran^{f1045};

“Verily, says he, they who shall charge our signs with falsehood, and shall proudly reject them, the gates of heaven shall not be opened to them, neither shall they enter into paradise, “until a camel pass through the eye of a needle”.”

All which show, that there is no need to suppose, that by a camel is meant, not the creature so called, but a cable rope, as some have thought; since these common proverbs manifestly make it appear, that a creature is intended, and which aggravates the difficulty: the reason why instead of an elephant, as used in most of the above sayings, Christ makes mention of a camel, may be, because that might be more known in Judea, than the other; and because the hump on its back would serve to make the thing still more impracticable.

Ver. 25. *When his disciples heard it.* etc.] That is, the difficulty of a rich man’s entering into the kingdom of heaven, aggravated by the above proverbial expression,

they were exceedingly amazed. They were surprised at his first words; but when he confirmed them by the proverb of a camel’s passing through the eye of a needle, they were, as Mark says, “astonished out of measure”: they did not imagine there was any difficulty of rich men coming into the kingdom of the Messiah, which they took to be a worldly one, and would be filled with rich men; for so they understood Christ; though he meant by the kingdom of heaven a spiritual kingdom, a Gospel church state here, or the heavenly glory, or both; but when he expressed, by the proverb, the impracticableness of such men becoming the subjects thereof, their amazement increased;

saying, as in Mark, “among themselves”, privately to one another,

who then can be saved? meaning, not with a spiritual and everlasting salvation, but a temporal one: for upon Christ's so saying, they might reason with themselves, that if rich men did not come into the kingdom of the Messiah, they would oppose him and his kingdom, with all their force and strength; and then what would become of such poor men as themselves, who would not be able to stand against them? nor could they hope to be safe long, or enjoy any continued happiness in the expected kingdom, should this be the case.

Ver. 26. *But Jesus beheld them*, etc.] Looking wishfully and earnestly at them; signifying thereby, that he knew their reasonings among themselves, though they did not speak out so as to be heard by him; and that there was no reason why they should be in so much concern, as their countenances showed, or possess themselves with such fears:

and said unto them, with men this is impossible. Mark adds, "but not with God; for with God all things are possible"; to be done by him, if he will, which are consistent with the glory and perfections of his nature: for as he could, by his almighty power, if he would, reduce a camel to so small a size, as to be able to go through the eye of a needle, which, with men, is an impossible thing; so by the mighty power of his grace he can work upon a rich man's heart, in such a manner, as to take off his affections from his worldly substance, and cause him to drop his trust and confidence in it: he can so influence and dispose his mind, as to distribute his riches cheerfully among the poor, and largely, and liberally supply their wants, and even part with all, when necessity requires it: he can change his heart, and cause the desires of his soul to be after true riches of grace and glory; and bring him to see his own spiritual poverty, his need of Christ, and salvation by him; and to deny himself, take up the cross, and follow him, by submitting to his most despised ordinances, and by suffering the loss of all things for his sake; and he can carry him through a thousand snares safe to his kingdom and glory, which is Christ's sense; though the thing is impossible upon the foot of human nature, and strength, which can never effect anything of this kind: and as to what the apostles suggested concerning the safety of persons in the Messiah's kingdom, if no rich man could enter there, but should be in opposition to it; our Lord's answer implies, that though, humanly speaking, it was not possible and practicable that they, a company of poor, mean, and despicable men, should be able to stand against the united force of the great and mighty men of the earth; yet God was able to support, and uphold them, succeed, and keep them, and make them both

useful and comfortable, amidst all the opposition and persecution they should meet with, until he had finished his whole will and work by them.

Ver. 27. *Then answered Peter and said unto him*, etc.] Peter observing what Christ said to the young man, bidding him sell all that he had, and give to the poor, and he should have treasure in heaven, and come and follow him, lays hold on it, and addresses him in the following manner,

behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee. Though their worldly substance was not so large as the young man's, they had not such estates to sell, nor that to give to the poor, he had; yet all that they had they left for Christ's sake, their parents, wives, children, houses, and worldly employments, by which they supported themselves and families; and became the disciples and followers of Christ, embraced his doctrines, submitted to his commands, imitated him in the exercise of grace, and discharge of duty, denying themselves, and suffering many hardships on his account: wherefore it is asked,

what shall we have therefore? what reward for all this? what part in the Messiah's kingdom? or what treasure in heaven?

Ver. 28. *And Jesus said unto them*, etc.] To all the disciples whom Peter represented;

verily I say unto you: the thing being something very considerable, and of great moment, Christ uses the asseveration he sometimes does in such cases:

that ye which have followed me. Christ does not deny that they had forsaken all for his sake, nor does he despise it, because it was but little they left, though he does not repeat it; but only takes notice of their following him, which, including their faith in him, their profession of him, and subjection to him, was a much greater action, and of more importance than the other, and therefore is only mentioned, and which our Lord confirms:

in the regeneration. This clause is so placed, that it may be read in connection with the preceding words, and be understood of the disciples following Christ in the regeneration; meaning, not the grace of regeneration, in which they could not be said, with propriety, to follow Christ; and one of them was never a partaker of it: but the new state of things, in the church of God, which was foretold, and is called the time of

reformation, or setting all things right, which began upon the sealing up the law, and the prophets, and the ministry of John the Baptist, and of Christ; who both, when they began to preach, declared, that this time, which they call the kingdom of heaven, was at hand, just ushering in. Now the twelve apostles followed Christ herein: they believed, and professed him to be the Messiah; they received, what the Jews called, his new doctrine, and preached it to others; they submitted to the new ordinance of baptism, and followed Christ, and attended him wherever he went, working miracles, preaching the Gospel, and reforming the minds and manners of men. Now this new dispensation is called the regeneration, and which more manifestly took place after our Lord's resurrection, and ascension, and the pouring down of the Spirit; wherefore the phrase may be connected with the following words,

when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory in the regeneration; not in the resurrection of the dead, or at the last judgment, but in this new state of things, which now began to appear with another face: for the apostles having a new commission to preach the Gospel to all the world; and being endued with power from on high for such service, in a short time went every where preaching the word, with great success. Gentiles were converted, as well as Jews, and both brought into a Gospel church state; the ceremonies of the old law being abolished, were disused; and the ordinances of baptism, and the Lord's supper, every where practised; old things passed away, and all things became new: agreeably to this the Syriac version renders the phrase, *atdj aml [b*, "in the new world"; and so the Persic. The Arabic reads it, "in the generation", or "age to come"; which the Jews so often call the world, or age to come, the kingdom of the Messiah, the Gospel dispensation.

When the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, or glorious throne; as he did when he ascended into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God; and was then exalted as a prince, and made, or declared to be Lord and Christ; and was crowned in human nature, with honour, and glory, and angels, principalities, and powers, made subject to him:

ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones: for though Judas fell from his apostleship, yet Matthias was chosen in his room, and took his place, and made up the number twelve; a metaphorical phrase, setting forth the honour, dignity, and authority of their office and ministry, by which they should be

judging the twelve tribes of Israel; doctrinally and practically; by charging them with the sin of crucifying Christ, condemning them for their unbelief, and rejection of him, denouncing the wrath of God, and the heaviest judgments that should fall upon them, as a nation, for their sin; and by turning from them to the Gentiles, under which judgment they continue to this day. So the doctors among the Jews are represented as sitting and judging others: of “the potters”, in (~~1302~~ 1 Chronicles 4:23) they say ^{f1046},

“these are the disciples of the law, or the lawyers, for whose sake the world is created, *anyd I [^ybtyd* “who sit in judgment”, and establish the world; and build, and perfect the ruins of the house of Israel.”

Ver. 29. *And everyone that hath forsaken houses*, etc.] Not only the then disciples of Christ, but any other believer in him, whether at that time, or in any age, that should be called to quit their habitations, or leave their dearest relations, friends, and substance: as

brethren or sisters, or father or mother, or wife or children, lands, for my name's sake; or, as in Luke, “for the kingdom of God’s sake”; that is, for the sake of the Gospel, and a profession of it. Not that believing in Christ, and professing his name, do necessarily require a parting with all worldly substance, and natural relations, but when these things stand in competition with Christ, he is to be loved and preferred before them; and believers are always to be ready to part with them for his sake, when persecution arises, because of the word. All these things are to be relinquished, rather than Christ, and his Gospel; and such who shall be enabled, through divine grace, to do so,

shall receive an hundred fold: Mark adds, “now in this time”; and Luke likewise, “in this present time”, in this world; which may be understood either in spiritual things, the love of God, the presence of Christ, the comforts of the Holy Ghost, the communion of saints, and the joys and pleasures felt in the enjoyment of these things, being an hundred times more and better to them, than all they have left or lost for Christ’s sake; or in temporal things, so in Mark it seems to be explained, that such shall now receive an hundred fold,

even houses and brethren, and sisters and mothers, and children and lands; not that they should receive, for the leaving of one house, an hundred houses; or for forsaking one brother, an hundred brethren, etc.

which last indeed might be true, as to a spiritual relation; but that the small pittance of this world's goods, and the few friends they should have "with persecutions" along with them, and amidst them, should be so sweetened to them, with the love and presence of God, that these should be more and better to them than an hundred houses, fields, and friends, without them:

and shall inherit everlasting life. The other evangelists add, "in the world to come", which is infinitely best of all; for this is an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, which fades not away, reserved in the heavens, when all other inheritances are corruptible, defiled, fading and perishing; houses fall, relations die, friends fail, and lands and estates do not continue for ever: they then have the best of it, who being called, in providence, to quit all terrene enjoyments for Christ's sake, are favoured with his presence here, and shall enjoy eternal glory and happiness with him in another world.

Ver. 30. *But many that are first shall be last,* etc.] This may refer unto, or be occasioned by, either the young ruler; signifying that he, and others like him, who were superior in riches and honour, were first in this world, of the first rank and figure, should be the last in the world to come:

and the last shall be first; the apostles, who were last in this world, being poor, mean, and abject, should be the first in the other: or to the Scribes and Pharisees, who were in the chief place, and highest esteem, in the Jewish church, and yet least in the kingdom of heaven; when, on the other hand, the publicans and sinners, who were in the lowest class, and in least esteem, went first into it: or to the case of persecution, when some, who seem most forward to endure it at a distance, when it comes nearer, are most backward to it; whilst others, who were most fearful of it, and ready to shrink at the thoughts of it, most cheerfully bear it: or to the apostles themselves, one of which, who was now first, Judas, should be last; and the apostle Paul, who was last of all, as one born out of due time, should be first: or to Jews and Gentiles, intimating, that the Jews, who were first in outward privileges, would be rejected of God for their unbelief, and contempt of the Messiah; and the Gentiles, who were last called, should be first, or chief, in embracing the Messiah, professing his Gospel, and supporting his interest. This sentence is confirmed, and illustrated, by a parable, in the following chapter.