

EUNUCHS FOR THE KINGDOM'S SAKE

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In Matthew 19:9, Jesus Christ restored the law for marriage that God established in the beginning (see Matt 19:4-6). He said, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." When the Lord's disciples heard the strictness of his teachings, they said, "If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. But he said unto them, *All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it*" (Matt 19:10-12).

Fruits of repentance

How does one repent if they have married someone that the Lord has said they must not? True repentance requires fruits (Matt 3:8; Luke 3:8; 19:8-9; Acts 19:18-19; 26:20). It is not acceptable to God for man to merely confess his past sins and express a will not to repeat those same sins again. Man must bring forth fruits of repentance by ceasing to commit the sin and by correcting what he has done to whatever extent possible. For example, Zacchaeus had to give back what he had wrongly taken as fruits of his repentance (Luek 19:8-9). The Ephesian converts did not keep or sell their false religious books. They "showed their deeds" by burning the books (Acts 19:18-19). It would not have been acceptable for them to have promised not to get more books like that but to have kept the ones they already had. Similarly, repentance from an unscriptural marriage requires getting out of the sinful relationship. It is not sufficient to say, "I should not have married this person and I am sorry for doing so, and I will never again divorce and remarry. But I will stay married to this person." Ezra 10 demonstrates in clear terms what is required in repenting from being in an unscriptural marriage. In the Old Testament, the Israelites were forbidden to marry individuals from seven heathen nations (Deut 7:1-6). The returned captives nevertheless entered into marriages with the people of those nations (Ezra 9:1-2). They needed to correct this in order to get right with God. Proverbs 28:13 says God will give mercy to those who confess and forsake their sins. Ezra told Israel to "make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers," and to "do his pleasure" by separating themselves from the people of the land and from the

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(continued)

people of the land and from the strange wives (Ezra 10:11). Repentance from these sinful marriages necessitated getting out of those marriages. Though the covenant has changed and what constitutes an unscriptural marriage in the New Testament is different from the Old Testament, what is required to repent of being in an unscriptural marriage has not changed. Repentance from an unscriptural marriage requires separation from the unlawful mate.

The few who receive Christ's teachings

According to Christ's statement in Matthew 19:12, there are 3 kinds of eunuchs: 1) "For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb." These are men who are *born* impotent. 2) "And there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men." These are men who are castrated. 3) "And there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake." As Jesus described those who make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom's sake, he concluded his point by saying, "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" (Matt 19:12). According to the context of this passage, the ones who have "made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake" are men who are practicing sexual abstinence in order to comply with Christ's teachings in Matthew 19:9. Per the context, these are men who have either been divorced, or have divorced their wives for some reason other than fornication. For them, getting married again would constitute adultery (Matt 5:31-32; 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18). The New Testament condemns fornication and warns of the eternal judgment that will come upon those who practice it (Rom 1:28-32; 1 Cor 5:11; 6:9-7:2; 10:8; 2 Cor 12:21; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:3; Col 3:5; 1 Thes 4:3; Jude 7; Rev 2:14,20-23; 9:21). Thus, the ones who "have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake" *choose* to be unmarried (though not via literal castration). The reality is that few people who are in a situation where they are scripturally ineligible to be married are willing to "receive" the truth of Christ's teachings and live by it (Matt 19:10). It is extremely rare to find someone who is willing to either separate from a person they have no right to be married to, or to agree to remain celibate. Most people reject the Lord's teachings. This does not remove the responsibility from them to live by these teachings, nor will they escape eternal condemnation if they do not live by these teachings. No matter how difficult it is, we must all obey the Lord in order to receive eternal salvation (Matt 7:21; Heb 5:9).