

Matthew 19:1-12

Marriage matters, and divorce dodges



Matthew lightly flags up a change of direction in his account of Jesus. From here on, his path leads back to Jerusalem, and we will see increasing confrontations with the Pharisees, in particular. They arrive today with another testing question for Jesus, one which was a very live theological issue at the time, But Jesus' answer is one that forthrightly challenges the very biggest changes of our own day, too.

➤ What's behind asking these questions?

How close are our own divorce laws getting to the “for any cause” (3) of Jesus' questioners?

Check out Deuteronomy 24:1 *and read on a bit*. Does the Pharisees' question – and the rabbis' teaching – really do justice to the Scriptures they appeal to? What does that suggest about these people's hearts (8)?

Jesus appeals to God's original setup of the world, and the foundational institution of marriage. How does that answer the Pharisees' question? And how does it address some other big issues of our day?

Were the Pharisees just completely wrong to concentrate so much on divorce – the unfortunate, perhaps occasionally necessary get-out from marriage – instead of marriage itself?

But isn't it also necessary to know if and when it could (is it ever *should?*) legitimately happen?

➤ Are you prepared to accept Jesus' answers?

Agreeing (and especially agreeing *publicly*) with Jesus' statements nowadays can be costly. Are we willing to take this risk, as a church? How far are we called to stick our necks out?

Accepting the Lordship of Jesus Christ, with the implications for our own lives, can be even more challenging. We might not be able to say with total confidence what we might do in any future circumstance ... but what *can* we do now in order to encourage our obedience, should the worst happen?