

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XVII

January 27, 2008

No.4

Who Can Receive It?

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Jesus had just laid down the foundation for marriage as God had intended it from the beginning of time. One man and one woman permanently becoming one flesh together in marriage has been God’s plan for marriage and His will for all mankind today. The disciples picked up on the permanency of marriage: “let not man put asunder” and just one reason for divorce (*Matthew 19:6, 9*), and contrasting them with the popular thinking that one could put away for any cause, comment on the strictness of Jesus’ authoritative word. They say, “If the case of the man is so with his wife, it is not expedient to marry” (*Matthew 19:10*).

The next response of Jesus demands our attention. He says, “Not all men can receive this saying, but to whom it is given” (*Matthew 19:11*). Was Jesus saying that not all men can receive the strictness of the permanency of marriage, and therefore among those it is ok for them to ignore Jesus’ strict teaching regarding marriage? Was Jesus enforcing later Calvinistic dogma that men by themselves cannot receive this strict statement but can only receive it with the help

of the Holy Spirit directly coming upon them to change their heart?

Jesus’ next statement helps us understand that neither of these two theories are correct. Jesus says, “for there are eunuchs, that were so born from their mother’s womb; and there are eunuchs, that were made eunuchs by men; and there are eunuchs, that made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake” (*Matthew 19:12*). Jesus’ statement concerning those who cannot receive this saying is explained in verse 12 which begins with the word “for,” introducing his explanation. He is not referring to those who are unwilling to accept Jesus’ strict teaching of the permanency of marriage or those whose fleshly heart is deficient of the Holy Spirit to accept Jesus’ spiritual teaching, but is focusing on those who are not able to have a one flesh or sexual relationship in marriage.

Those, “to whom it is given” (*Matthew 19:11*), capable and desirous of a sexual relationship are able to “receive” what Jesus said regarding God joining the male and female in this one flesh relationship of marriage. Those who are born as “eunuchs”

or castrated by others, are those identified by Jesus’ statement: “Not all men can receive this saying.”

Jesus also adds to the list those who have freely chosen to refrain from marriage and the sexual relationship. They have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. Paul is a good example of one who made this choice. Paul realized men have different gifts from God (*I Corinthians 7:7*), and not all are capable of depriving oneself of the sexual relationship which Paul had the gift to do. Jesus is telling us that the desire and ability to have a sexual relationship is also a gift from God - those “to whom it is given”.

With the exception of “eunuchs” before the minds of the disciples, Jesus sums up all his teaching regarding marriage and divorce by saying, “He that is able to receive it, let him receive it” (*Matthew 19:12*). Those capable of the sexual relationship must heed all of what the Lord said upon entering the marriage relationship. This includes accepting Jesus’ strict teaching of one reason for divorce as well as being one flesh. Let him “receive it”.