

12

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

MARK 10:1-31



Herod Antipas, the ruling king in Galilee, had married his brother's wife. It was *the* scandal of the time. Whatever the first century equivalent of the tabloids was, this was front-page news. Mark has informed us of Herod's marital status and of the price John the Baptist paid for speaking out against him. It may be that this hot topic buzzing throughout Judean society incited the Pharisees to quiz Jesus about divorce. It was just as controversial then as it is today. And, Jesus' response in Mark 10 just as relevant today as it was then.

DIVORCE IN THE HEART (10:1-12)

1. Read Mark 10:1-12. How might the Pharisees question been meant to entrap Jesus so that no answer could satisfy them? How does Jesus deal with this trap?
2. In this dialogue, what point is Jesus making by referring to what Moses *commanded* about divorce in Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 while the Pharisees note what Moses *permitted* in Deuteronomy 24:1-4?

"WHO CAN BE SAVED?" (10:13-31)

The problem, Jesus says, was not with the ideal, nor with the law, but with the people: Israel was, when it all came down to it, just like everybody else—hardhearted. Eager to take the precious gift of genuine humanness and exploit or abuse it. This means that, for

Jesus' response to make sense, he must be offering a cure for hard hearts. His cure is the coming of his Kingdom.

3. Read Mark 10:17-31. What does the rich man want? Jesus answers his question by restating what every Jew knew all too well: the Ten Commandments. However, Jesus leaves some out. Read Exodus 20:1-17 and compare the commandments Jesus quotes with those he leaves out. How do the commandments Jesus does not mention relate to his counsel to the rich man?

4. In verses 23-26, Jesus says riches can no more go into the eye to come than a camel can go through a needle. This was typical of a deliberate overstatement used in rabbinical teaching. It's like saying, "You'll get your riches into God's kingdom when you can fit the entire ocean into a bottle." Many today believe that wealth is a sign of God's pleasure. What is Jesus teaching us about wealth?

5. Read Mark 10:13-16. Consider Jesus' teachings on marriage and divorce and on earthly wealth. If the kingdom belongs to those who practice a childlike faith, how is Jesus calling you to change your thinking on these issues?