

Marriage, Divorce & Remarriage

(Matthew 19:1-9)

- Introduction:
1. Never has there been a time in the history of our society when divorce was so common place.
 2. In years past, divorce carried with it a heavy stigma.
 3. As we begin, allow me to say this: Divorce is an emotional issue. But let us not allow our emotions to cloud our vision regarding what God had said on this subject.
 4. Also, allow me to say this: This is not a blanket condemnation of all who have suffered through a divorce.
 - a. Some have divorced and remarried because of their spouse's fornication.
 - b. Some have, against their will, been put away by their spouse.
 - c. I personally feel that sometimes we have been so quick to condemn divorce, that we have unintentionally failed to reassure and comfort those who have divorced but who are innocent in God's eyes.

I. What Jesus Taught About Divorce And Remarriage

- A. (Matthew 19:1-12).
- B. The Pharisees were trying (testing) Jesus (19:3).
 1. In order to understand how this question could be considered a "test" to Jesus, one must understand the background of Jewish thought and interpretation.
 2. (Deuteronomy 24:1).
 3. The school of Hillel (liberal) - divorce for any cause.
 4. The school of Shammai (conservative) - divorce of adultery.
 5. To take a stand on such a controversial issue would alienate Jesus from one group or the other.
 6. Personally, I believe that the school of Hillel was correct in their understanding, for adultery was punishable by death (Deuteronomy 22:22).
- C. God's original plan
 1. Marriage is constituted by male and female.
 2. Marriage is not homosexual, nor is it polygamous.
 3. Their relationship is intended by God to last for life.
- D. Alteration of God's original plan
 1. During the Old Covenant, divorce was permitted.
 2. The reason: the hardness of their hearts.
 3. It was never God' ideal; "from the beginning it was not so."
 4. Why did God allow it, if He didn't like it?
 - a. I don't know.
 - b. He appointed a king over Israel against His wishes (Hosea 13:11).
 5. There were many things that God tolerated, and even regulated which were not

- a part of his "ideal will" for man.
6. (Acts 17:30-31; 14:26)
- E. Christ's teaching on marriage and divorce (19:9)
1. Whoever puts away his wife and marries another commits adultery.
 2. "Commits"- present tense meaning "keeps on committing adultery".
 3. On exception (fornication) sexual immorality.
 4. Any passage that is interpreted in such a way that is in conflict with this plain passage is wrongly interpreted.
- F. The disciples response (19:10).
1. They say that if this is true, that it is better for a man not to even marry.
 - a. Does it not seem strange that men today just cannot seem to understand this passage, when it's meaning was so apparent to the disciples of Christ?
 2. Apparently, they understood precisely what Jesus was saying and saw the implications of it.
- G. Jesus' response to the disciples statement (19:11-12).
1. He says that all can accept this statement.
 - a. "This statement"- not Jesus' statement, but the disciples' statement.
 2. Not everyone is suited to live a single life.
 3. However, some are suited for single life.
 - a. Eunuchs who are born.
 - b. Eunuchs who are made by man.
 - c. Eunuchs who have made themselves so for the kingdom's sake.
 - 1) Those who desire not to be burdened with a wife and family so that they can devote themselves fully to the Lord's work.
 - 2) Those who find themselves ineligible for marriage.

II. An Examination Of Various Theories Concerning MDR

- A. Prior to examining these views that have been offered up in recent years, I'd like to make several observations.
1. These positions are relatively new.
 - a. I find it interesting that they have arisen along with the rise of divorce in our culture.
 - b. Could our culture be dictating our understanding of the Bible?
 2. Any position that violates or contradicts the "exceptive phrase" of Matthew 19:9 is incorrect.
 - a. Don't allow the sophistry of men deceive you. When you get confused, go back to what is clear.
 - b. The exceptive phrase means "if and only if."
 - 1) (John 3:2-5)
 - a) Except a man be born of water and the spirit.
 - b) If and only if.
 - c) Any interpretation of any other passage that would

remove the force of this exceptive phrase and provide another entrance into the kingdom would be an incorrect interpretation.

- c. The same is true with respect to MDR.
 - 1) (Matthew 19:9).
 - a) If one divorces and remarries “except for fornication” he commits adultery.
 - b) Any interpretation of any other passage that would remove the force of this exceptive phrase, and provide another ground for divorce and remarriage cannot be true and would be an incorrect interpretation.

B. Divorce is never allowed.

- 1. The position set forth.
 - a. (Romans 7:1-4).
 - b. Paul doesn’t mention fornication, but only offers death as what frees one from the bond of marriage.
 - c. Therefore, death is the only grounds to ever remarry.
- 3. The position refuted.
 - a. There is the issue of context that is being overlooked in this interpretation. Paul is not discussing divorce in the context of Romans 7.
 - 1) E.g. - Peter’s mentions water but not faith (1 Peter 3:21).
 - 2) E.g. - David’s statement (Psalm 51:4).
 - b. While God never gives contradictory revelation, he does give additional revelation.
 - 1) Example - The Rich Young Ruler.
 - a) Rich (Mark 10:22).
 - b) Young (Matthew 19:20).
 - c) Ruler (Luke 18:18).
 - 2) Romans 7 must be considered along side of Matthew 19.
- 4. It is no safer to bind what God has loosed than loose what God has bound.

C. Matthew 19 Is Old Testament Legislation.

- 1. The position set forth.
 - a. Matthew 19 was spoken under the Old Testament. Jesus was clarifying what the Old Testament law taught.
 - b. But the Old law was nailed to the cross (Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14).
 - c. The most misunderstood page in the entire Bible is the introduction page that is placed prior to the book of Matthew which says, “The New Testament.” They say that page should be placed at the beginning of the book of Acts.
- 2. The position refuted.
 - a. Matthew 19 is not a clarification of the law (Leviticus 20:10), but rather is a different law.
 - b. It is a contrast, rather than a clarification.
 - c. The Old Testament contained anticipatory teaching concerning the

Kingdom of God.

- 1) (Matthew 4:23).
- 2) (Matthew 15:18).

D. Matthew 19 & Covenant Legislation.

1. The position set forth.
 - a. Matthew 19 is “covenant legislation” and only applies to two Christians married to each other.
 - b. Sometimes called “Bales’ Doctrine” (J.D. Bales from Harding University).
 - c. Bales argued that God’s marriage laws are “covenant laws.” In other words, they don’t apply to you until and unless you are in the covenant.
 - d. For example:
 - 1) Must people in England pay taxes on April 15?
 - 2) No, the reason being that they are not citizens of the U.S.
 - 3) However, if they were to become citizens of the U.S., they would be amenable to the law that demands we pay our taxes on April 15.
 - e. Therefore, Matthew 19 only applies to two Christians married to each other.
2. The position refuted.
 - a. Note the “whosoever.”
 - b. Marriage is not a Christian institution, but for all men.
 - c. Therefore the legislation Jesus gives is not just for Christians, but for all men.
 - d. Consider the consequences if this passage only applies to two Christians married to each other.
 - 1) Christian man married to a cheating non-Christian wife. What is his recourse?
 - e. The gospel is universal (Mark 16:15-16).
 - 1) Consider the difference between “amenability” and “qualification.”
 - a) Are atheists amenable to the command to be baptized?
 - b) Are atheists qualified to be baptized.
 - c) Atheists are amenable to the command to be baptized, but are not qualified to do so until they become believers.

E. Baptism Washes Away The Previous Failed Marriage.

1. The position set forth.
 - a. Baptism washes away all our sins.
 - b. If one of the sins you committed was adultery by being unscripturally married, it would have been forgiven in the waters of baptism.
2. The position refuted.
 - a. While baptism does remit one’s past sins, it doesn’t sanctify future sin.

- b. Adultery is a sexual act.
 - c. A prerequisite of baptism is repentance, and repentance demands a cessation of that which is sinful.
 - d. Instead of the issue being adultery, what if we substitute polygamy, homosexuality or any other sinful relationship.
 - e. What relationship is there that is sinful before baptism, but after baptism it is holy?
 - f. Baptism doesn't perform marriage ceremonies for adulterers.
 - g. All sin, any sin, that was a sin before baptism is still a sin after baptism.
 - h. What does baptism do for the alien sinner that prayer doesn't do for the Christian?
 - 1) If adulterers can remain together after baptism, then why can't Christian adulterers remain together after prayer?
 - i. What if it's a mixed marriage - only one is baptized.
 - 1) Is the same relationship sinful for one, but holy for the other?
 - 2) Can a relationship be both sinful and holy at the same time?
- F. **Remain in the calling.**
- 1. The position set forth.
 - a. (1 Corinthians 7:17-24).
 - b. Remain in the calling in which you were called.
 - c. Just pick up where you at the time you obey the gospel and start living for him at that point.
 - 2. The position refuted.
 - a. What "callings" was he talking about?
 - 1) Sinful callings?
 - 2) Morally upright callings?
 - b. God is not saying that one may stay in a sinful relationship if he was in that relationship when he obeyed the gospel.
 - 1) He's talking about things like, circumcision and slavery.
 - c. Wouldn't marriage also fit this context?
 - 1) Yes. Absolutely. Marriage would fit this context.
 - 2) But adultery would not.
- G. **The "Waiting Game," or "Mental Divorce."**
- 1. The position set forth.
 - a. Two divorce without scriptural grounds. After the passing of time, one remarries. Now the other one has the right to remarry.
 - b. They claim that though there was a divorce, they are still married in God's eyes.
 - b. The "innocent" one then, "mentally divorces" his spouse when his spouse remarries first.
 - 2. The position refuted.
 - a. Avoid the verbiage that says one is "divorced" but they're really still "married" in God's eyes.
 - 1) God recognizes our marriages and divorces, though he doesn't

always approve of them.

- 2) The fact that he doesn't approve of them doesn't mean they don't happen, exist, or are not recognized by God.
- 3) Try reading Matthew 5:32 with such a view.
 - a) Whoever divorces [but not really divorces in God's eyes] his wife, except for fornication, and marries [but not really marries in God's eyes] another commits adultery. And whoever marries [but not really marries in God's eyes] her who is divorced [but not really divorced in God's eyes] commits adultery.
- 4) Such a view denies that there is even such a thing as an "unscriptural divorce," and an "unscriptural remarriage."
 - a) For, according to this view, if it is unscriptural, it is neither a divorce or a remarriage.
- b. (Luke 16:18) Addresses this very scenario.
 - 1) Man and woman divorce - no adultery.
 - 2) If the man remarries he commits adultery.
 - 3). If the woman remarries, she too commits adultery.
- c. (Matthew 19:9) The cause must be "fornication."

H. **Divorce Is Not A Sin, Remarriage Is The Sin**

1. The position set forth.
 - a. Some contend that one may divorce for any cause, but as long as they don't remarry, no sin has been committed.
2. The position refuted.
 - a. This is not the case, for what is sin?
 - b. Is not sin doing what God said for us not to do?
 - 2) (Matthew 19:6) Let not man put asunder.
 - 3) (1 Corinthians 7:10-11) Do not depart.
 - 4) (Malachi 2:16) God hates divorce.
 - c. 1 Corinthians 7:11 is not permissive, but regulatory.
 - 1) It is comparable to saying, "Don't drink alcohol. But if you do drink, drink at home, not behind the wheel of a car."
 - 2) What is my instruction - Don't drink.
 - 3) But didn't I say, "Drink at home?" Yes, but was this permissive, or regulatory?
 - 4) It is regulatory, and that regulation is intended to prevent further complications.
 - d. The will of God is not to divorce, and when one does, he sins.

I. **The Pauline Privilege**

1. The position set forth.
 - a. Desertion by a non-Christian of their Christian spouse gives the Christian the right to remarry (1 Corinthians 7:15).
2. The position refuted.
 - a. However, remember that whatever disagrees with the exceptive phrase

of Matthew 19:9 is an incorrect interpretation.

- 1) There can be additional revelation, but not contradictory revelation.
- 2) To offer “another” ground for remarriage that differs from the only ground Jesus offered is contradictory to Jesus.
- b. A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases.
 - 1) Paul has been trying to stress permanency all through this chapter, however, an unbeliever might not be so inclined to listen.
 - 2) Are these Christians so bound to the teachings of Paul and Jesus on marriage that they have to do anything and everything to keep their marriage together?
 - 3) No! They are not so bound by their marriage vows that they would have to do this.
 - 4) Would one be so bound by their marriage that one would have to be unfaithful to Jesus to keep one’s marriage together.
- c. The subject of remarriage is not even mentioned in this context.

J. **But What About God’s Character?**

1. The position set forth.
 - a. I don’t believe that God would hold people to their mistakes.
 - 1) What if one acted without knowledge?
 - 2) What if one has children?
 - b. Surely, God would not demand separation in such situations.
2. The position refuted.
 - a. First of all, note that this argument is solely based on emotion and feeling, not Scripture.
 - b. Furthermore, I believe that such requirements are not outside the nature and character of God.
 - c. (Ezra 10:3, 10-12,44).
 - d. (Proverbs 13:15).
 - e. While this is Old Testament legislation, it is used to simply show that separation is not outside the realm of being within God’s character and nature to expect one to separate.

- Conclusion:
1. Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage is of vital importance because adultery will keep a person out of the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21).
 2. Jesus gave one and only one ground for divorce and remarriage, and that was fornication (Matthew 19:9).
 3. Any position, any understanding, any text that we might think teaches otherwise needs to be reexamined because it would violate the exceptive phrase that Jesus gave in Matthew 19:9.