

FORWARD

Our culture today is experiencing political, social, and economical changes, but far greater than these is a decline in morality and our Judeo-Christian values that are based upon the honor of God and His Word. This is evident in our changing laws and constitution, which is a response to the amoral lifestyles that are present today.

The traditional family is the foundation of society, and this relationship is facing an unprecedented attack from the enemy, resulting in the break down of the sanctity of marriage.

The Bible proclaims absolute truth and ideals for all affairs of life, including marriage. And the following pages are an in depth teaching of what the Bible has to say about the permanency of marriage.

God's plan for marriage has been and always will be, that it is to be a monogamous, lifetime commitment between a man and a woman. It is God's will that marriage relations be strengthened and nurtured and that those that are broken down find restoration and reconciliation by His Grace.

Oh that God would send a revival! (society's greatest need). Where righteousness

would be restored, and that people would experience His salvation, healing, baptism in the Holy Ghost, and a fresh anticipation of Jesus' soon return.

Rev. John Rowe

PREFACE

In April of 1997 during my last month of Bible College prior to my graduation, the Lord placed a burden upon my heart to study and write a book on the issue of divorce and remarriage.

However, desiring to know the certainty of the Lord's leading along with my procrastination, I hesitated to begin this great task. Then the Lord used my wife Pam (then fiancée), to suggest without any previous conversation (of the burden the Lord placed upon my heart), that I should write a book on divorce and remarriage. This was done to confirm to me that He was in fact leading me to write this book.

Many factors over the years contributed to the study of this extremely important subject, but perhaps the most important factor is the majority of fundamental and evangelical denominations, along with preachers, and Bible teachers, and professors of theology justifying divorce and remarriage as an acceptable lifestyle that is pleasing to God. And as a result those precious souls entangled in the sinful and adulterous relationship of divorce and remarriage who believe this lie, and fail to

repent, will on the day of judgment find themselves in the lake of fire (1 Corinthians 6:9; Revelation 21:8).

The purpose of this book is not to create the greatest argument against divorce and remarriage, but rather, to be a small flashlight to some wandering sea man that leads him to the lighthouse, the Lord Jesus Christ, that they may repent, and find refuge in Him and be saved (Romans 6:23). Its purpose is to proclaim and expose the truth of what the Bible actually teaches about divorce and remarriage, and that broken lives, ruined marriages, and destroyed families, can be restored, reunited, reconciled, and the victory won through Jesus Christ our Lord (Luke 18:27).

Evangelist Sean Bonitto

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Dedicated to the Glory of Almighty God.

CHAPTER 2

The Context Of Matthew 19:1-12

In Matthew 19:1-12 we are given the context of the statement which the Lord Jesus Christ made in Matthew 19:9. The Bible says,

And it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judae-a beyond Jordan; And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there. The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, and said, FOR THIS CAUSE SHALL A MAN LEAVE FATHER AND MOTHER, AND SHALL CLEAVE TO HIS WIFE; AND THEY TWAIN SHALL BE ONE FLESH? Wherefore they are

no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He said unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication (porneia), and shall marry another, committeth adultery (moichatai): and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery (moichatai). His disciples say unto him, if the case of the man be so with *his wife*, it is not good to marry. But he said unto them, All *men* unto cannot receive this saying, save *they* to whom to it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from *their* mother's womb: 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* (Matthew 19:1-12).

In the text the Pharisees ask the Lord Jesus Christ a question to tempt, test, and if possible, trap Him in His words to see whether or not He would go against the scriptures. Of course this attempt of the Pharisees was foolish, given the fact that it was impossible to trap Him, for He (Jesus) is God, the very one who gave the scriptures.

Homosexuality Condemned as Sin

They asked Him, “Is *it* lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?” And the Lord Jesus Christ responded to their question by going back to creation and describing the purpose God planned for men and women which is to be husband and wife. The Lord Jesus Christ explains how God made mankind, male and female to come together to be husband and wife. Notice He did not make male and male to be together and female and female to be together, but He made only male and female to be united in the bonds of holy matrimony. This tells us that homosexuality is indeed sin, and

against the ordained plan of God (Genesis 1,2,3; Genesis 19:1-29; Leviticus 20:13; Matthew 19:1-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Jude 7).

The Permanency of Marriage

The Lord Jesus Christ says in verse 6 of Matthew 19, “Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” In this statement He is telling the Pharisees, and even us today, that God made one man, to be with one woman, for one life time, in the confines of marriage. The strong command (imperative mood) here where Jesus says, “...let not man put asunder”, tells us that man has no right to separate, or rip apart at any time, or for any reason the work that God has done.

The verb “hath joined together” (sunzeugnumi) is literally to yoke together, and denotes the marriage union. This work of God was not to be undone; only death could dissolve the bond when a further marriage would not constitute adultery (Rom 7:1-3; Deut 25:5;

Matt 22:24-26; 1 Cor 7:39)
(Wilson & Stapley 255).

Man is commanded not to destroy this union between a husband and his wife because God brought them together. And to destroy that is to go against the ordained plan of God. And therefore to separate this union is indeed a sin against God.

God says through the prophet Malachi concerning divorce or putting away, “For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith he hateth putting away...” (Malachi 2:16).

There was to be no divorce at all at this point in the text under any circumstances, and it is evident by the Pharisees response in verse 7. “They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?” They (Pharisees) clearly understood the strong command of the Lord Jesus Christ in verse 6 which condemned divorce, and earnestly wanted to know why Moses gave a writing of divorcement to put away their wives. In this statement the Pharisees were referring back to Deuteronomy 24:1 which says,

When a man hath taken a wife, and

married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her; then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give *it* in her hand, and send her out of his house.

This passage of scripture makes clear to us that the Holy Ghost through Moses allowed Hebrew men at one point in time to put away or divorce their wives for any reason. If a man's wife did not please him or, “find no favour in his eyes,” whether the reason was trivial or perhaps more serious, he could divorce her without question. However, in the first century A.D not all Jewish rabbis interpreted Deuteronomy 24:1 in this manner.

Rabbinical Schools of Shammai and Hillel

It is necessary at this point in time to give a brief background of the differing views concerning divorce and remarriage during the time of Christ. During this time in Jewish history there existed two Hebrew rabbinic schools that taught contrary views concerning divorce and remarriage. One was the

conservative school of Shammai, and the other, the liberal institution of Hillel. Edward E. Hindson describes how these two schools interpreted Moses' statement concerning the only conditions for divorce,

In ancient rabbinic Judaism Moses' statement had been variously interpreted from meaning adultery (Shammai) to the trivial matters of personal preference (Hillel) (1890).

The school of Shammai taught that man could divorce his wife only for the cause of adultery. While Hillel taught that a man can divorce his for merely trivial reasons. The Pharisees were well aware of these two schools and their teachings. And perhaps wanted to see whether the Lord Jesus Christ would agree with one of the these schools concerning divorce. So when Jesus told the Pharisees, “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder,” giving no room for divorce at all, neither agreeing with either rabbinic school, they wanted to know why did Moses allow it. And the Lord Jesus Christ told them why Moses allowed men to divorce their wives. In verse 8

He says, “Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.”

No Divorce and Remarriage After the Marriage Ceremony

The Lord Jesus Christ exposes the reason why Moses allowed divorce and it was because of the hard hearts of men to love, appreciate, and forgive the wife that God had given them, and to be content with her. Christ also refers back to his argument of creation by telling them, “...but from the beginning it was not so,” giving a clear indication of how God made man and woman to be husband and wife for the rest of their lives, and that He had no plans of the relationship ever being dissolved at any time, for any reason.

Even here in verse 8 the Lord Jesus Christ reaffirms His strong stand against divorce and stresses the seriousness of marriage, as well as His utmost support for the marriage union, and how it must not be put asunder for any reason. At this point in the text, the Lord Jesus Christ gives no room whatsoever for any exception to divorce, much less remarriage.

Finally we come to Matthew 19:9 where

all the debate on the issue of divorce and remarriage begins, and for the most part ends. After the Lord Jesus Christ tells the Pharisees why Moses allowed divorce and explained how God did not intend for the marriage relationship to be destroyed under any circumstances by referring back to creation, He now continues to emphasize and expound the seriousness of His strong commandment in verse 6, and ones consequence when disobeying it.

Jesus says in verse 9 of Matthew chapter 19,

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for FORNICATION (PORNEIA), and shall marry another, COMMITTETH ADULTERY (MOICHATAI): and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth COMMIT ADULTERY (MOICHATAI).

Is the Lord Jesus Christ now giving us a reason to destroy the marriage contract after He strongly commanded us in verse 6, “What therefore God hat joined together, let not man put asunder?” Is Christ now being inconsistent

and contradicting Himself? The answer is no to both of these questions. Then one may ask, “Why did He give an exception for a man to put away his wife?”

The Lord Jesus Christ does give an exception for a man to put away his wife, and that exception is for the cause of fornication only. As was mentioned earlier, in Jewish betrothal, “the betrothed woman was sometimes called 'wife’” (Wright & Thomson 743). And fornication is sexual intercourse between two unmarried persons (Webster's 161), or pre-marital unchastity. Therefore, once again Jesus is saying that only an act of fornication during the betrothal period can give one the right to put away his wife (his betrothed wife). Not for an act after the actual marriage ceremony, for that would be an act of adultery which the Lord Jesus Christ gave no exception for, thus giving no reason for divorce whatsoever after the wedding ceremony.

Porneia Can Only Mean “Fornication” Pre-Marital Unchastity

Some would argue that Jesus meant “porneia” to mean adultery, and as a result agreeing with the school of Shammai that

believed adultery to be the only cause for divorce.

However, on the contrary, the fact that the school of Shammai taught adultery to be the only cause for divorce is further evidence that Jesus clearly did not mean “porneia” to mean adultery. D.A. Carson explains that,

...simple alignment with the school of Shammai is implausible in a book demanding a righteousness surpassing that of the Pharisees (5:20) and in a context where Jesus' teaching on divorce evokes a cynical response from the disciples (19:10) (415).

As a result Christ does not contradict Himself, nor does He back away from His firm position of the seriousness of marriage. If Jesus said, “except *it be* for”, adultery (*moicheia*) or if He meant for, “porneia” to mean adultery, then He would be contradicting Himself and thus backing away from the argument He was making in the text. For then Christ would be allowing the marriage to be, “put asunder”, or ripped apart and therefore contradicting Himself, and bringing the Pharisees, his

disciples, as well as us today in a state of confusion. But He did not say adultery, He said, “except it be for fornication (porneia)”, which does not mean adultery, but only fornication which is pre-marital unchastity that can only happen during the betrothal period.

Divorce and Remarriage is the Sin of Adultery

Jesus made His point on the permanency of marriage even stronger by stressing that, “Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication (porneia), and shall marry another, committeth adultery...” Christ is telling us that if a man divorces his wife other than for the cause of fornication (which is pre-marital sexual intercourse that can only happen before the wedding ceremony), and marries another woman, commits the act of adultery. Christ continues to emphasize the permanency of marriage in the verse by saying, “...and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” Jesus is expounding His statement in verse 6 to the Pharisees and to us today, that if a husband and a wife divorce from each other and remarry, they will both commit the act of adultery. And if one marries a divorced man or

woman, they also commit the sin of adultery.

Since the Pharisees understood Christ's argument on the permanency of marriage, yet continued to question Him after His statement in verse 6, Jesus made His point stronger and firmer. He does this by strongly commanding that those who divorce and remarry, as well as those who marry the divorced, commit adultery. Therefore, stressing once again the seriousness and the permanency of marriage, which is one man and one woman, married for the rest of their lives. This is God's ordained plan from the beginning of creation.

Understanding the Permanency and Seriousness of Marriage

In verse 10 of Matthew chapter 19, Christ's disciples express and acknowledge the seriousness of His strong argument for the permanency of marriage. “His disciples say unto him, if the case of the man be so with *his* wife, it is not good to marry.” They were so overwhelmed by Jesus' firm command on the permanency of the marriage union that they came to the conclusion, “...it is not good to marry.” They understood that one could no longer divorce his wife when he wanted to, but

had to love, care, protect, be faithful, and endure good times as well as bad times. There was no divorce for any reason except for fornication (*porneia*) which can only occur before the wedding ceremony. After the wedding ceremony there is no cause or exception for divorce and remarriage at any time, or for any reason. However, one may remarry only if one spouse dies, and it can only be in the Lord (Romans 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:39). These passages of scripture will be discussed in greater detail further on.

In verses 11 and 12 the Lord Jesus Christ explains to His disciples concerning His strong command on the permanency of marriage. He says,

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*.

In these verses Jesus is saying that only those who make the decision to enter into holy matrimony can receive His saying on marriage, and apply it to their own lives. Christ acknowledges (He is all knowing) the fact that not all men will get married and that some will remain single for one reason or another. However, those who do not get married will have to realize that His strong commands on the permanency of marriage rests on, and applies to their lives, and that they will be held accountable to the truth of His Word.

The Lord's statement, "He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive *it*", doesn't mean that we can refuse or accept His Word on marriage as true or false. For what He said is eternally true. It only means that those who are in a married state or about to enter marriage can actually apply it to their lives. For those who remain single obviously cannot apply His command on marriage to their personal lives as such, but nevertheless, they must acknowledge and receive it as truth. Truth that must be taught and contended for.

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