

# Divorce and Remarriage

Matthew 19:3-9; Matthew 5:32; Malachi 2:16

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## INTRODUCTION:

- A. There are times when things must be preached which will not be well received by all.
- B. A true and faithful preacher of God will not preach what the people want to hear, but rather what they need to hear . . . The Truth!
1. **Acts 20:27** – “For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.”
  2. **2 Timothy 4:1-4** – “I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:
    - <sup>2</sup> Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.
    - <sup>3</sup> For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;
    - <sup>4</sup> and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”
  3. There are some subjects some preachers refuse to preach on . . . Shame on them in their refusal and unwillingness to declare the whole counsel of Almighty God. **Acts 20:27** – “For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.” (To the Ephesian elders at Miletus)
  4. Preaching on this subject has cost some preachers their jobs.
  5. Some elders have ordered their preacher not to speak on this subject.
  6. Some preachers think divorce is okay.
    - a. Religious broadcaster Pat Robertson told his "700 Club" viewers this past week that divorcing a spouse with Alzheimer's is justifiable because the disease is "a kind of death . . . . . I know it sounds cruel, but if he's going to do something, he should divorce her and start all over again, but make sure she has custodial care and somebody looking after her," Robertson said.
    - b. Some gospel preachers and elderships take positions that are contrary to what the Bible teaches.
- C. The truth concerning divorce and remarriage is one such subject which is not always well received.
1. Divorce used to be a rarity in this country.
  2. But since the 1960s, we have instituted so-called “no fault” divorce laws. That simply means **you no longer have to prove your spouse did something wrong in order to get a divorce.**

- a. The very term, “no fault” divorce is an oxymoron.
  - b. It’s like talking about a married bachelor. If one is a bachelor he is not married . . . If one is married he is not a bachelor.
  - c. There is no such thing as a divorce where fault is not present or shared.
  - d. **Divorced in the eyes of men does not necessarily one is divorced in the eyes of God.**
- D. The purpose of this study is to focus on the truth taught by Jesus in Matthew 19:9.
- E. Divorce is not God’s desired will for man in marriage. **Genesis 2:24** – “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”
1. **Any time a divorce occurs somebody sins. Never under any circumstances whatsoever can there be a scriptural divorce with two innocent parties.**
  2. That bears repeating . . . **Any time a divorce occurs somebody sins. Never under any circumstances whatsoever can there be a scriptural divorce with two innocent parties.**
- F. Three foundational passages.
1. Divorce is a terrible thing! Regardless of the lax attitude our society now takes of divorce, God has an entirely different outlook on the matter. **Malachi 2:16** – “For the Lord God of Israel says that he hates divorce...” Always has . . . Always will.
    - a. The world makes it easy . . . God’s Word makes it wrong.
    - b. **It is a lot easier to stay out of a bad marriage than it is to get out of one . . .** Especially where children are involved.
    - c. Because divorce is so rampant . . . so glamorized in print, media, television, movies, in every community, in so many families, that children growing up come to think of it as common place and okay . . . acceptable and fashionable and an easy way out of marriage for any reason. Listening friends . . . **It is anything and everything but okay!**
  2. Jesus Christ stated Heaven’s position on the subject in:
    - a. **Matthew 19:3-9** – “The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for *just* any reason?”
      - 4 And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made *them* at the beginning ‘*made them male and female,*’
      - 5 and said, ‘*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?*’
      - 6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”
      - 7 They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?”

<sup>8</sup> He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

<sup>9</sup> And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, **EXCEPT** for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

- b. **Matthew 5:32** - "But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason **EXCEPT** sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery."

## THE TEMPTATION

A. The question: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?"

**Matthew 19:3**

1. The Pharisees, the self-appointed watchdogs of the day, asked this question in order to tempt Jesus.
2. Their motive was not pure, but rather they wanted Him to choose sides in a continuing dispute among the Jews.

B. The Jews had two schools of thought concerning divorce and remarriage.

1. **The School of Hillel.** This school taught that a man could divorce his wife for even the slightest of offenses, based on what Moses taught in **Deuteronomy 24:1** – "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts *it* in her hand, and sends her out of his house."
2. **The School of Shammai.** This school taught that a man could only divorce his wife on the grounds of adultery, based again on Deuteronomy 24:1.

C. The question was designed to entrap Jesus, to get Him to take sides in the dispute over these two schools of thought.

1. Any side He took would certainly alienate Him against the other side and they against Him.
  - a. If Jesus responded by saying that a man could not put away his wife for every cause, then He would have offended the **School of Hillel.**
  - b. If, on the other hand, He responded by saying that a man could put away his wife for every cause, He would have offended the **School of Shammai.**
2. They clearly wanted Jesus to choose sides according to Moses' teaching in Deuteronomy 24:1
  - a. The world constantly pressures Christians to choose sides in a variety of matters, and none of the choices are the Biblical positions of God.
  - b. The Three Ds of Life . . . **Decisions Determine Destinies.**

- D. Jesus avoided the dispute by returning to God’s original plan in Genesis and not to Moses’ teaching in Deuteronomy. Genesis 1:27; 21-24
1. God’s original design did not embrace divorce, but rather emphasized the permanence of the marriage relationship. Matthew 19:5
  2. God is not the author of divorce, but of marriage, and has always been against divorce. “For the Lord God of Israel says that he hates divorce . . .” **Malachi 2:16**
  3. Hence the statement: “. . . What God has joined together, let not man separate.” **Matthew 19:6**
- E. Their response: “Why did Moses then command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?” **Matthew 19:7**
1. Again they sought to entrap Jesus by saying this was a command of Moses.
  2. Jesus pointed out that this was not a command, but as one put it, “a sufferance.” In other words, God permitted or tolerated it.”
  3. “But from the beginning it was not so.” **Matthew 19:8**

**THE TRUTH** **Matthew 19:9** – “And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.”

- A. **WHOEVER** – This is a universal term and makes NO exceptions!
1. To argue that this term only applies to Christians, or only to the Jews under the Old covenant, is to make an exception where the Lord does not.
  2. The context bears out that this was God’s plan from the beginning, therefore, the term **WHOEVER** applies to everyone.
- B. **DIVORCES HIS WIFE**: This clearly refers to divorce (Malachi 2:16; Matthew 5:32; 19:3-9).
- C. **EXCEPT IT BE FOR SEXUAL IMMORALITY** (NKJV): (“Fornication” KJV). This is the one and only exception to God’s law concerning divorce and Remarriage, save for the death of a spouse. **Romans 7:3** – “So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.”
1. Fornication is sexual immorality, a term which means “unlawful sexual relations,” and is an all encompassing word to include heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bestiality; all of which are clearly condemned by God.
    - a. **Romans 1:27** – “Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.”
    - b. **Romans 13:9** – “ For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear

false witness,' 'You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

- c. **Leviticus 20:15-16** – "If a man mates with an animal, he shall surely be put to death, and you shall kill the animal. If a woman approaches any animal and mates with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood *is* upon them. "

2. This exception is also seen in Matthew 5:32

**D. AND MARRIES ANOTHER, COMMITS ADULTERY:** This clearly shows that even though a marriage takes place, and is acceptable with the laws of the land, it may not be acceptable with God!

1. John the Baptist told Herod, who had married his brother Philip's wife, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." **Mark 6:17-18**
2. This clearly emphasizes that unless one is remarried because his or her spouse was guilty of fornication, or because his or her spouse passed away, they are committing adultery.

**E. AND WHOEVER MARRIES HER WHO IS DIVORCED COMMITS**

**ADULTERY:** To marry a woman or man who did not have proper grounds for remarriage, is to openly commit adultery.

1. It should be pointed out, if the party that is put away is the guilty party, that is if they had been guilty of fornication (sexual unfaithfulness) which led to the divorce, then they have lost their rights of remarriage.
2. Anyone who marries them commits adultery.

**THE TEST: (ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE TRUTH):**

A. "Baptism cleanses an adulterous marriage."

1. It is contended by some, that when a couple is baptized who have been living in an adulterous marriage relationship, they then are free to remain in that relationship, and everything is the "alright."
2. We need to be reminded of the purpose of baptism . . .
  - a. To cleanse us of our past sins. Acts 2:38; 22:16
  - b. To put on Christ. Galatians 3:27
  - c. To be saved. Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21
3. It is true, baptism washes away our sins **PROVIDED** we truly have repented of those sins.
4. For example: If one is in an adulterous marriage relationship on Saturday night and one is baptized Sunday morning, and returns to living in that adulterous relationship Sunday night, then they have not repented.
5. **Illustration:** If a thief is baptized into Christ, and then returns to committing his crimes after his baptism, has he truly repented? The obvious answer is NO!

## 6. IF IT WAS A SIN BEFORE BAPTISM, IT IS STILL A SIN AFTER BAPTISM!

7. The point is this . . . If a marriage was adulterous before baptism, it is still adulterous after baptism. **Baptism does not divorce and remarry people.**

B. “An exception needs to be made when children are involved.”

1. It is contended by some that God would not want a home broken up where there are children involved. That argument is tugging at heart strings.
2. When children are born into an adulterous marriage, they are consequences of that sin . . . But they are not to be used as a reason to remain in an adulterous marriage.
3. The presence of children does not excuse nor justify the situation.
4. The couple must no longer engage in sexual relations.

C. “Let each one abide in the same calling in which he was called.”

### 1 Corinthians 7:20

1. It is contended by some that a person should remain with whomever he or she is married to at the time of their conversion, because Paul supposedly gives permission in 1 Corinthians 7:20 to do so, even if it is the third, fourth, or fifth marriage.
2. Such reasoning is an abuse of this passage, for Paul has an honorable calling in mind and not the one misconstrued by men.
  - a. If one is a rapist at the time of his conversion, can he continue raping others?
  - b. If one is a homosexual at the time of his conversion, can he continue that behavior?
  - c. If one is a murderer at the time of his conversion, can he continue murdering people?
  - d. Etc.
3. In fact, the calling referred to in 1 Corinthians 7:20 is not referring to any calling in a negative or sinful sense.

## CONCLUSION:

A. Who may scripturally marry in the sight of God?

1. Those who have never married before . . . But must marry someone who has a scriptural basis to marry.
2. Those whose spouses have died.
3. Those whose spouses committed fornication.

B. Men who want to justify themselves and their adulterous marriages, or those of their family members and friends, have to work hard to misunderstand of God’s simple teachings in this matter. **Hebrews 13:4** – “...But fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”

C. A popular idea today . . . “If it doesn’t work out we will get a divorce.”

1. Divorce negatively impacts a lot of people.
    - a. You and your spouse
    - b. The children
    - c. The parents
    - d. Whom you remarry
    - e. Your friends
    - f. The Church
    - g. The nation
  2. You can make your marriage work out, but it requires the total commitment of both spouses.
  3. Remember again . . . **It is much easier to stay out of a bad situation than it is to get out of one!**
- C. Every parent should want their children to know that **GOD HATES DIVORCE AND IT CAN CAUSE THEM TO LOSE THEIR SOULS**
- D. We may not like a “Thus say the Lord”, but if we are to honor and obey the Most High God, we must respect what He says in His written word.
- E. **God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation**