"What Jesus Taught About Divorce"

Matthew 5:31-32

4/30/2017

INTRODUCTION: V. 31

***What did Jesus teach about divorce?**

I. Divorce is allowed for "<u>fornication</u>" (v. 32a)

What is meant by "fornication"?

A. View #1 – Adultery

B. View #2 - Unfaithfulness during the "betrothal" period

II. Divorce results in "<u>adultery</u>" (v. 32b)

*Marriage is permanently for life!

The permanence of marriage is evidenced by:

1. The meaning of "<u>covenant</u>" (Mal. 2:14)
2. The bonding of <u>wedlock</u> (Gen. 2:24)
3. Christ's relationship to His <u>bride</u> (Eph. 5:22-32)
4. God's attitude toward <u>divorce</u> (Mal. 2:16)

God wants us to be content with our current marital status! See: 1 Corinthians 7:10-17

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God's plan and purpose for marriage.

"Marriage is a unique union of one man and one woman. It is so intimate that on the earth nothing is its equal." God saw that it was not good for man to be alone, and that man needed a "Help meet" or a helper suitable to himself, his counterpart. Man needed someone to fellowship with him, someone to rejoice with him, someone to plan, share and experience with him the wonders of God and His creation. In Genesis 2:23-24 is presented the ideal which God intended in the marriage relationship. Eve was "bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," said Adam. I Corinthians 11:8-9 states that "Man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man--neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man." A principle that started in the Garden of Eden has gone down through the ages: Man was to leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife, and the two became one flesh (Gen. 2:24). This "leave and cleave" principle illustrates that God instituted marriage and that it was to be a monogamous, heterosexual and complete union of two persons.

God instituted marriage for four basic reasons:

Before the fall -

1) To complete the man which He had created ("help meet" - Gen. 2)

After the fall -

2) To promote sexual purity (I Cor. 7:2)

3) To begin a new family unit (Gen. 2:18-24)

4) To propagate truth and godly principles from one generation to the next (Deut. 6:67)

What makes a marriage?

1. A covenant (a vow before witnesses - Mal. 2:14). This is the premiere essence of a marriage

2. A consummation (sexual union - Gen. 2:24; I Cor. 6:16)

*In the "vow" the two become one by verbal commitment, whereas in the consummation the two become one by a holy physical act.

One of the most plaguing menaces of all time is divorce.

Two major views (schools of thought) toward divorce (two interpretations of Deut. 24:1 - "some uncleanness"):

--Shammai (conservative) - only grounds for divorce was adultery
--Hillel (liberal) - anything that could be interpreted as uncleanness
(if the wife spoiled his dinner, or went out with unbound hair, or was caught speaking to men in the streets, or if she became overweight or unattractive and he found someone more beautiful)

In the context of Matt. 5, Jesus is showing the popular misinterpretations and wrong views prevalent in His day. He is countering such views with teaching that is radically different.

Hence, whatever Jesus is saying in Matt. 5:32 is radically different than what people taught in His day.

SEE: Matt. 19:3ff

V. 3 - "Every cause" - Pharisees wanted to tempt Jesus to contradict his previous statement (Mt. 5:32)

V. 4 - "Have you not read" - a statement proving their ignorance; note this statement put the authority on the Scriptures, not tradition, custom, or religious interpretation of the Law.

Jesus purposely skips over the dispensations, Mosaic Law (Dt. 24), etc.

v. 5 - "cleave" - to glue, cement, or permanently bond together

v. 6 - what God does man is not to undo

V. 8 - "IN this verse, Jesus takes the word "commanded" used by the Pharisees (v. 7) and changes it to "suffered" (Meaning: tolerated, put up with.

Deut. 24:1ff - The reason a written bill of divorcement was required was not to make divorce easier but to put a "legal check upon reckless and tyrannical separation. Divorce was getting out of hand so Moses was regulating an existing practice."

V. 9 - "And I say unto you" (Jesus' disciples - v. 10) When this verse is compared with Mark 10:10, you discover that Jesus' discussion with the Pharisees ended with verse 8. They never heard verse 9, which was given privately to Jesus disciples "in the house" (Mk. 10:10). So Jesus left the Pharisees with the conclusion that there was no allowance whatsoever for divorce.

V. 10 - The reaction of the disciples proves that Christ did not allow divorce.

***What did Jesus teach about divorce?**

I. Divorce is allowed for "fornication" (v. 32a)

"Whosoever" - the most general, inclusive, unconditional term that Christ could have used. This verse applies to everyone who is married. No one is excluded.

"Put away" = divorce

"His wife" - under Jewish law, only a husband was allowed to do the divorcing.

"Saving for the cause of fornication" - those exempt from the verdict of "adultery" are those whose spouse has committed "fornication."

What is meant by "fornication"? Two popular, plausible views:

A. View #1 - Adultery

I do not believe that Jesus meant "adultery". Why not?

1. He did not say "adultery"; he said "fornication."

2. Those words are two totally different words with totally different meanings.

"Adultery" = moicheia (extra-marital sex)

"Fornication" = porneia (pre-marital sex) - I Cor. 7:2; Jn. 8:41)

The two words are distinguished - Gal. 5:19; I Cor. 6:9

3. If Jesus meant adultery, it would have been most natural for Him to say it, since he uses the word adultery 2 other times in this verse!

4. The penalty for adultery was death not divorce

   Under the Mosaic Law, one would not need to divorce his wife if she had committed adultery, because the penalty for this was death (Deut. 22:22) (he could not be going to a divorce court, but to a grave yard)

5. Such a view says that "one wrong justifies another" ("sin justifies sin") Where is forgiveness in this view?

B. View #2 - Unfaithfulness during the "betrothal" period

I believe Jesus is referring to unfaithfulness during the betrothal period.

> Marriage was never to be entered into carelessly or lightly by a Jew who wanted to honor God. They did not rush into a marriage, but did formulate a binding agreement known as the "betrothal"

What was the betrothal period? SEE: paper on Divorce, p. 16, Pentecost

Proof of Betrothal view:

1. Grammatical Proof - the word "fornication" refers to pre-marital sex

2. Historical context - the exception clause is only found in Matthew's gospel, written to Jews (mt. 5:32; 19:9) and not in Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18, written to Gentiles who didn't understand the Jewish concept of the betrothal (Mt. 5:32; 19:19; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18)

3. An example: Joseph was called a "husband" (Mt. 1:19) "espoused [betrothed] to Mary (1:18), who found out that she was pregnant before their marriage, so he decided to "put her away [divorce] privily" (1:19)

--How did Paul interpret Christ's teaching about divorce? (SEE: I Cor. 7:10-11)

--How did Paul interpret the Law's teaching about divorce? (SEE: Rom. 7:1-3)

A believer is never justified to pursue a divorce.
If the unbelever departs, that's one thing (I Cor. 7:15), but a believer is never to leave his/her
unbelieving spouse.

II. Divorce results in "adultery" (v. 32b)

NOTE: Those who are guilty of "adultery":

--The wife (divorcee) - "causeth her"
--The man who marries her (her new spouse)
--The original husband (Mt. 19:9

"Adultery" - I believe that the "adultery" committed is an "adultery" in the eyes of God (who views marriage as permanent).

The adultery would have to be a "spirit of adultery" and not the "letter of adultery". In other words, if the adultery was literal, then the second marriage would have to be dissolved, since they would be "living in adultery."

The real sin was in the divorce itself, more to than the remarriage. The remarriage prevents reconciliation.

CONCLUSION: *Marriage is permanently for life!

In order to have a stable and secure home - Both husband and wife must have a conviction that their marriage is permanent!

In God's Word, the Bible, -
The permanence of marriage is evidenced by:

1. The Meaning of a "COVENANT" (Malachi 2:14)
(Marriage is a Covenant)

--Definition of a "Covenant"

--Examples of "Covenants" in the Bible
a). Gen. 15:6-18 - Abrahamic Covenant (cp. Jer. 34:18-19)
b). Matt. 26:28 - The New Covenant

a. The marriage covenant is an irrevocable Vow

Observe the nature of vows:
1). Numbers 30:2 - Your words are extremely important
2). Deuteronomy 23:21 - God holds you accountable
3). Example: Jephthah's vow - Judges 11:30-39

b. The marriage covenant is an unconditional Vow
"For better or for worse, for richer or for poorer"

2. The Bonding of "WEDLOCK" (Gen. 2:24)
(Marriage is an inseparable union)

a. The Cleaving of Marriage (v. 24a)
b. The Oneness of Marriage (v. 24b)
c. "Till death do we part" (Romans 7:2-3)

3. Christ's Relationship to His BRIDE (Eph. 5:22-32)
(Jesus will never forsake His wife, the Church)

a. The Church is one with Christ (Eph. 5:30; I Cor. 6:17)
b. The Church is the "Bride of Christ" (Rev. 19:7-9)
c. The Church has the promise of eternal security (Mt. 16:18; Jn. 10:28-29; Titus 1:2; Heb. 13:5)

4. God's Attitude about <u>DIVORCE</u> (Malachi 2:16)
(God hates divorce)

a. "He may not put her away all his days"
(Deut. 22:19, 29)

Suppose you were to pursue a divorce and you received a letter in the mail. It read: "I hate divorce. Signed, Jehovah God"

SEE: last paragraph p. 23 <u>Divorce</u> paper

Don't even think about divorce!

God wants us to be content with our current marital status! See: 1 Corinthians 7:10-17