

The Question of Divorce

Matthew 19:3-6

Introduction: The spirit of compromise in the church is all too prevalent. This is threatening the moral purity of the church. Those who advocate a loose teaching on divorce are opening the door of immorality in the church.

For many years, denominations have had difficulty with the plan of salvation brought about by their desire to make their teachings conform to their desires. Much of the difficulty understanding the subject of divorce is due to this same spirit in the church. People want the subject of divorce to conform with their own desires. Therefore, they readily open themselves up to compromised theories over the question of divorce.

I. The divine rule (Matt. 19:3-6).

A. There is no greater authority than from the creator who instituted marriage itself. God joins the couple together in a relationship described as one flesh.

B. The duration of this union is meant to be for a lifetime (Rom. 7:2-3).

1. Bound is from the same Greek word used to describe a physical binding (John 19:40; Acts 12:6; 21:33). This binding is for as long as both live.

2. Therefore, adultery occurs when one is joined (married) to another while he/she is bound (by law) to his/her living spouse.

C. Just because a man has a wife does not mean that she is his wife.

1. Herodias married Herod though she was still Phillip's wife (Mark 6:17-18).

2. The Corinthian had his father's wife (1 Cor. 5:1).

3. Consider 1 Cor. 7:10-11. This woman, though divorced, still has a husband. Why? The answer is in verse 39!

D. To avoid fornication let each man have his own wife (1 Cor. 7:2).

II. The one exception (Matt. 19:7-9).

A. Regardless of Moses' permission for divorce from the beginning of time it has not been the rule. The rule has and always will be one man and one woman joined by God until the death of the other spouse.

B. The exception given by Christ is infidelity due to sexual immorality. If a spouse commits a sexually immoral act, the other spouse may acquire a divorce.

C. Anyone who marries the divorced spouse is as much an adulterer as the divorced spouse.

III. Compromised theories on divorce.

A. Some argue that Jesus' teachings on divorce does not apply today.

1. The logic for this argument states that Jesus was just restating the law of Moses. The Old Law holding no authority for us today.

2. However, Jesus often taught His law by first looking at the Old Law and then developing a proper understanding of the subject (Ex. Matt. 5:27-28). The Old law never contributed lust as adultery before the act as Jesus so clearly defines the sin in this passage. Would anyone demand this passage is strictly Old Law?

B. Some argue that the subject of divorce only applies to Christians.

1. They contend the sinful conduct that occurs before conversion in a person's life is forgiven at baptism. Therefore, a person's wife at the point of baptism is his lawful spouse regardless of his past relationships.

2. It is true that past sins are forgiven at the point of baptism (Acts 22:16). However, that does not give us the right to continue in sin after baptism (Rom. 6:1-2). Sin applies to the just as well as to the unjust (Rom. 4:15). Therefore, Christ's teachings on divorce apply to Christians as well as non-Christians.

C. Some argue that an adulterous marriage is made pure at baptism.

1. Similar to our last argument, this argument contends that the unholy relationship becomes holy at baptism.

2. However, baptism washes away sins, not marriages. An adulterous marriage before baptism is still an adulterous marriage after baptism.

3. Why would God require Christians to flee all sins except adultery (1 Cor. 6:9-11)? Using this ungodly logic, could a polygamist continue to live with six wives after baptism?

4. Does God join adulterous people in marriage?

5. Repentance requires change from sinful conduct (Acts 2:38).

Would a thief in possession of stolen goods become the owner of those stolen goods at baptism?

D. There are many more theories that deal with divorce which we will not have time to discuss in this lesson. Mental divorce and the notion of continual cleansing being two other false theories which should be examined in other lessons.

Conclusion: Since marriage is ordained of God, we should look upon it with a spirit of reverence. It is a lifelong commitment and those who enter marriage should do so cautiously. Happiness in the marriage relationship does not come by pleasing oneself but in doing what is right.

Have you compromised your belief over the question of divorce?