

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Deuteronomy: Moses' Great Appeal For Israel To Obey God For Blessing Part V: Specific Treaty Stipulations Of The Great King, Deuteronomy 12-26 R. Heeding God's Will On Divorce And Remarriage (Deuteronomy 24:1-4 et al.)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) Divorce is common in today's world: (a) Not only do half of American marriages end in divorce, after nearly 39 years of marriage and the release of their 1975 hit, "Love Will Keep Us Together," even the Captain and Tennille are divorcing! (cbsnews.com, "The Captain and Tennille are getting a divorce," January 22, 2014) (b) Divorce is so common locally that a Church member told me last week that half of the babies born now in the Torrington, Connecticut Charlotte Hungerford Hospital are born to parents who are not married to each other!

(2) However, we often hear of the marriages of professing Christians that border on or end in divorce, and this is often fueled by teachings that make the rounds in evangelical circles. For example, Christianity Today in October 2006 ran David Instone-Brewer's article, "When to Separate What God has Joined: A Closer Reading on the Bible on Divorce" that permitted divorce for "adultery, emotional and sexual neglect, abandonment (by anyone) and abuse," time.com, David Van Biema, "An Evangelical Rethink on Divorce?", November 15, 2007.

(3) As a Pastor, I have seen a lot of evangelical teachers sanction divorce by relying on the following interpretations of Scripture: (a) they may view Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 KJV that do not permit divorce "except for fornication" as allowing divorce in the event of adultery; and/or (b) they may take 1 Corinthians 7:15 that claims if an unbeliever initiates a divorce, his believing spouse is "not under bondage in such cases" as meaning that the divorced believer can remarry another Christian party and/or (c) they may take Matthew 19:7 that refers to Deuteronomy 24:1-4 where it is claimed that Moses commanded divorce for "uncleanness" as allowing divorce due to adultery.

(4) However, Jesus in Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18 and Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 **unconditionally prohibited** divorce and remarriage, so many Christians are confused and divided over the whole subject.

Need: *So we ask, "With all the confusion and division involved, what does Scripture REALLY teach on divorce?!"*

- I. When Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was written, "divorce was widespread in the ancient Near East (B. K. C., O. T., p. 305), and its patristic culture saw women often treated as but property to be passed from man to man in unbridled divorce and remarriage, leading to chaos and trauma for women and their children opposite God's original Genesis 2:24 pattern where one man and one woman were to stay wed for life.**
- II. Accordingly, in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, GOD BEGAN to RESTRICT divorce and remarriage in Israel's life:**
 - A. The apodosis of the conditional statement at Deuteronomy 24:1-4, that is, the "then" clause in the Hebrew text there, starts at verse 4 as seen in the NASB, NIV and ESV, **not** part way through verse 1 as reads the KJV.
 - B. Moses then taught there that if a man took a woman in marriage and divorced her for some reason and she was subsequently married to a second man who in turn either divorced her or died, the woman's first husband could not marry her again, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Deuteronomy 24:1-4.
 - C. Thus, Moses did **NOT** there **COMMAND** that a divorce occur as taught by the Pharisees in Matthew 19:7; rather, like *Jesus* taught in Matthew 19:8, Moses only **permitted** it due to Israel's hardness of heart, for Moses was merely trying to curb abusive, rampant divorce in the nation Israel!
- III. Indeed, GOD HATED divorce: in Malachi 2:16 NIV we read, "'I hate divorce,' says the Lord God of Israel," calling it "violence," so Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was given to START to CURB DIVORCE!**
- IV. Then, Jesus in Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18 and Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 UNCONDITIONALLY FORBADE DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE AFTER DIVORCE as FORMS of the sin of ADULTERY!**
- V. Now, Scripture is INERRANT, so it MUST be LOGICALLY CONSISTENT (Clark H. Pinnock, A Defense of Biblical Infallibility, 1967, p. 17), meaning that the verses used by SOME to PERMIT divorce must DOCTRINALLY HARMONIZE with those that UNCONDITIONALLY REJECT it (as follows):**
 - A. As explained in section "III" above, Deuteronomy 24:1-4 only permitted divorce and remarriage under the Law like Jesus taught in Matthew 19:8 in God's effort to begin to restrict divorce.
 - B. Then, the "except for fornication" clause in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 does not apply to us today (as follows):
 1. First, Matthew 19:10 shows Jesus' disciples thought His view of divorce was so strict, one was better never to marry, so they held He denied divorce even for general immorality! (Ibid., Ryrie, ftn. to Matthew 19:10)

2. Besides, unlike Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18, Matthew's Gospel was written to **Jews**, *Ibid.*, Ryrie, p. 1337, so the "exception for fornication" clause of **necessity** appears **only** in **Matthew's** Gospel:
 - a. As in Matthew 1:18-20 where Joseph thought of divorcing Mary when they were engaged but had not come together, immorality by an engaged party led to the breaking of the engagement, and for **Jews**, that **culturally required a divorce**, Howard Hendricks, *Christian Couns. for Contemp. Problems*, 1968, p. 112.
 - b. In addition, for **Jews** under the dispensation of the **Law**, marriage within the prohibited Levitical degrees of close relatives was called "fornication," and **required a divorce to heed the Law**, *Ibid.*
 - c. Also, for **Jews** under the **Law**, marriage to unsaved Gentiles was "fornicacious" and required a **divorce to heed the Law**, an action that was applied to disobedient Jews in Ezra chapters 9-10, *Ibid.*, p. 113.
3. If each such "fornication" situation required **ONLY Jews to divorce**, and this did **not apply to Gentiles** who were **not** under the **Law**, Matthew **had to include** the "except for fornication" clause lest his **Jewish** readers think Jesus under the Law taught Jewish customs and the Law were to be violated, and Mark and Luke **had to exclude** it lest their **Gentile readers** think Jesus sanctioned divorce for general immorality!
4. Thus, the "except for fornication" clause in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 does **NOT apply** to the **Church** era!
- C. Last, Paul's 1 Corinthians 7:15 phrase of not "being under bondage in such cases" is explained as follows:
 1. By the "not under bondage" phrase, Paul did **not** mean one was free after his unsaved spouse divorced him to wed another, for that would **logically contradict** the Corinthians 7:10-11 teaching in the **same context!**
 2. Rather, the believer was not bound to hold to his marital union if the lost partner wanted a divorce; he had to give the lost liberty to do as he willed to live in peace with him to win him to Christ, 1 Corinthians 7:16.
- VI. For those with divorce or divorce and remarriage in their past, Scripture provides edifying direction:**
 - A. Faith in Christ for salvation leads to cleansing from all sin (John 3:16; Colossians 1:14), so once we trust in Christ, we are forgiven an unbiblical marital history, and are to stay in our latest state, 1 Corinthians 7:17-24.
 - B. If as **believers** we have divorced and remarried even multiple times, we should confess it as sin to God for full cleansing (1 John 1:9) and apply the principle of "peace" in 1 Corinthians 7:17-24 by staying in our last state.
- VII. In cases of marital abuse, 2 Timothy 3:1-5 directs a believer to withdraw from an abusive party to avoid facing needless harm, but this can be done WITHOUT a divorce in HOPE of SAVING the marriage!**
- VIII. A word to the unmarried: walk with God in the Holy Spirit's power to prepare yourself one day to be a responsible, considerate spouse (Gal. 5:16-23), and wed ONLY in God's Biblical will (2 Corinthians 6:14; 1 Corinthians 6:18). In doing so, you will avoid much needless heartache and enjoy God's blessing.**

Lesson: *In Deuteronomy 24:1-4, God began to curb Israel's rampant divorce and remarriage that He hated. Thus, in the New Testament, God went further to teach believers that divorce and remarriage is adultery to be avoided though He gave needed Biblical exceptions for Jews under the Law in Jesus' era. In grace, God offers forgiveness for marital sin, and calls us to avoid needless abuse while honoring the marital bond "until death do us part."*

Application: *May we (1) trust in Christ for salvation from sin, including the sin of divorce and remarriage, John 3:16; Colossians 1:14. (2) May we heed Scripture unconditionally to avoid divorce and remarriage except in the lone case of honoring an unsaved spouse's will to divorce a believer, and (3) may we confess to God all such marital sin committed as believers for forgiveness, 1 John 1:9. (4) In cases of marital abuse, may we heed Paul's call in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 to avoid needless exposure to abuse while still honoring the marital bond as God wills.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

The greatest illustration of what God thinks of the permanency of marriage is given in the creation account of the first man and the first woman! God first created Adam from the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7), and then, to give him a wife, instead of creating a woman from the dust of the ground, God put Adam into a deep sleep and took out one of his ribs to form his wife from his rib, Genesis 2:20-22. When Adam awoke and saw the scar in his side, and realized the loss of his rib and beheld his wife Eve, he stated that she was from him, a part of himself, Genesis 2:23. The idea of divorcing Eve, then, would have been unthinkable for Adam, for she was a part of his body!

That is how God wants every married man and every married woman to view each other -- as an extension of themselves in a "one flesh" union that is unbreakable until death parts them.

May we (1) trust in Christ for salvation and (2) walk with God to marry the party God leads us to wed. (3) Once we marry, may we stay wed to that spouse in obedience to God until death parts us! (Romans 7:1-3)