

DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

Sermon by Mark S. Aites

TEXT: MATTHEW 5:31-32; 19:3-9

INTRODUCTION:

1. There are times when things must be preached which will not be well received by all.
2. A true preacher of God will not preach what the people want to hear, but rather what they need to hear; the truth! (Acts 20:27; 2 Tim. 4:1-4).
3. The truth concerning divorce and remarriage is one such subject which is not always well received.
4. The purpose of this lesson is to focus on the truth taught by Jesus in Matt. 19:9.

DISCUSSION:

I. THE TEMPTATION.

- A. The Question: "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" (Matt. 19:3).
 1. The Pharisees, the self-appointed watchdogs of the day, asked this question to tempt Jesus.
 2. Their motive was not pure, but rather they wanted him to choose sides in a continuing dispute.
- 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 upon what Moses said in **Deut. 24:1**.
 2. The School of Shammai. This school taught that a man could only divorce his wife on the grounds of adultery, based again on **Deut. 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. 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.
 2. 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.
 3. They clearly wanted Jesus to choose sides concerning Moses' teaching in **Deut. 24:1**.
- D. Jesus avoided the dispute by returning to God's original plan in Genesis and not to Moses' teaching in Deuteronomy (**Gen. 1:27; 2:21,24**).
 1. God's original design did not embrace divorce, but rather emphasized the permanence of the marriage relationship (**Matt. 19:5**).
 2. God is not the author of divorce, but of marriage, and has always been against divorce (**Mal. 2:16**).
 3. Hence the statement: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (**Matt. 19:6**).
- E. Their response: "Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?" (**Matt. 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" (**Matt. 19:8**).

II. THE TRUTH (MATT. 19:9).

- A. **WHOSOEVER** - 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 WHOSOEVER applies to everyone.
- B. **SHALL PUT AWAY HIS WIFE** - This clearly refers to divorce (**Mal. 2:16; Matt. 5:32; 19:8-9**).
- C. **EXCEPT IT BE FOR FORNICATION** - This is the only exception to God's law concerning divorce and remarriage (save the death of a spouse, **Rom. 7:3**).
 - 1. Fornication - This is 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 (**Rom. 1:27; 13:9; Lev. 20:15-16**).
 - 2. This exception is also seen earlier in Matthew (**Matt. 5:32**).
- D. **AND SHALL MARRY ANOTHER, COMMITTETH 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 thee to have thy 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 WHOSO MARRIETH HER WHICH IS PUT AWAY DOTH COMMIT 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 which led to the divorce, then they have lost their rights of remarriage!
 - 2. Anyone who marries them commits adultery.

III.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 then "allright."
 - 2. We need to be reminded of the purpose of baptism: to cleanse us of our past sins (**Acts 2:38; 22:16**); to put on Christ (**Gal. 3:27**); and to be saved (**Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 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 is baptized Sunday morning, and returns to living in that adulterous relationship Sunday night, then they have not truly repented.
 - 5. Here is an illustration of the point: If a thief is baptized, and 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 STILL IS A SIN AFTER BAPTISM!
 - 7. The point: If a marriage was adulterous before baptism, it still is adulterous after

baptism.

- 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.
 - 2. When children are born in an adulterous marriage, they are a consequence 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 the situation.
 - 4. The couple must no longer engage in sexual relations.
- C. "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called" (**1 Cor. 7:20**).
 - 1. It is contended by some that a person should remain with whomever he is married to at the time of conversion, because Paul supposedly gives permission here. (Even if it is a fourth or fifth wife.)
 - 2. This is an abuse of this passage, for Paul has an honorable calling in mind. Surely this would not include homosexuals, murderers, rapists, etc.
 - 3. In fact, the calling referred to in **1 Cor. 7:20** is not referring to any calling in a negative or sinful sense.

CONCLUSION:

- 1. Who may get married? Those never married before; those whose spouses have died (**Rom. 7:3**); and those whose spouses have committed fornication.
- 2. One would truly need help to misunderstand God's simple teachings in this matter.
- 3. We may not like a "thus saith the Lord," but if we are to honor and obey the Most High God, we must respect what He says in His written word.