

Marriage and Divorce (Part 2)

Mark 10:1-12

August 25, 2013

Introduction

The Pharisees tried to trick Jesus when He was in Perea (across the Jordan). They opened with the question of divorce, hoping to get Jesus to lip and state that divorce was wrong. They did this because John the Baptizer was arrested because of his preaching against Herod's marriage to Herodias, and Herodias did not like this. The Pharisees taught that a man could divorce his wife for all and any reason. In other words, the Pharisees practiced a no-fault divorce.

However, Jesus answered with a question, "What did Moses say about divorce?" Moses did talk about the certificate of divorce in **Deut 24:1-4**, but it was a situation where the wife was sinning and unrepentant (indecent). Moses never commanded that people could divorce with impunity. The only command that Moses gave was the man could not remarry the woman he had divorced when she had remarried another man, regardless of how that other marriage ended (through death or divorce). God said that if a man remarried that woman, then it was detestable to God. Moses was, in effect, saying, "Be careful about divorcing your wife because you cannot have her back if she marries again."

Jesus then emphasized that God created marriage even before the law. It was rooted in creation when God join man and woman together to be one flesh. Jesus said that this is sacred and holy, and do not let anyone separate the union of husband and wife. This bond was to be life-long until death.

The disciples further question Jesus

Mark 10:10-12 *When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. 11 He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. 12 And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."*

Note that in Mark there is no exception to the divorce. Mark is emphasizing that marriage between man and woman is permanent. If a man divorces his wife and marries another has committed adultery against his "ex-wife" for any and all reason (vice versa for the woman divorcing her husband). In God's eyes, the divorce is sinful and not valid. In God's eyes, that marriage is still on going. In God's eyes, you have made a covenant with God as a witness with your wife for life until death separates you.

For believers, God has set the standards very high, and He expects us to honor our holy vows. This is no different from the high standards of being Jesus' disciple. Of course, in a fallen world, sometimes, as believers, we fail to meet His standards and sin. Of course, sometimes people make mistakes in marriages and cause problems. So we ask today, does God allow divorce for other reasons? If divorce is allowed, does He allow us to remarry? Let us look in the whole counsel of God's word and see what God has to day in His word.

I. What Does the Old Testament Say About Divorce?

Malachi 2:16a *"I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel.*

- This is clear enough—God hates divorce

Malachi 2:10-14 *Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our fathers by breaking faith with one another? 11 Judah has broken faith. A detestable thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the sanctuary the LORD loves, by marrying the daughter of a foreign god. 12 As for the man who does this, whoever he may be, may the LORD cut him off from the tents of Jacob—even though he brings offerings to the LORD Almighty. 13 Another thing you do: You flood the LORD's altar with tears. You weep and wail because He no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. 14 You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the*

witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.

- Malachi was a prophet at about the same time as Ezra and Nehemiah (440 – 425 BC)
 - 597 BC—Babylon pillages Jerusalem and temple, many Jews captive (**Ezekiel**)
 - 587 BC—Babylon destroys Jerusalem and Temple, many Jews captive (**Daniel**)
 - 536 BC—Jews go back to Jerusalem and rebuild
 - 516 BC—Temple rebuilt (**Haggai / Zechariah**)
 - 458 BC—Ezra arrives and reinstitute Temple worship according to Law (**Ezra 1-10**)
 - 445 BC—Nehemiah becomes governor and rebuilds wall (**Nehemiah 1-12**)
 - 433 BC—Nehemiah goes back to Persia, then later comes back to govern again (**Nehemiah 13**)
- He preaches against a horrible situation—priests divorcing their wives to marry foreign wives

Ezra 9:1-2 *After these things had been done, the leaders came to me and said, "The people of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the neighboring peoples with their detestable practices, like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians and Amorites. 2 They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials have led the way in this unfaithfulness."*

Nehemiah 13:23-24 *Moreover, in those days I saw men of Judah who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon and Moab. 24 Half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod or the language of one of the other peoples, and did not know how to speak the language of Judah.*

- Problems—marrying women from nations around them
- ½ of children could not speak Hebrew!
- Huge influence over the Israel population
- God has strictly forbidden intermarriage

Deuteronomy 7:1-4 *When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you— 2 and when the LORD your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. 3 Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, 4 for they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods, and the LORD's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you.*

- Why? By intermarriage, ungodly influences—lead others to worship false gods
- It is easier for flesh to indulge in sin than to live a holy life because of our sinful nature

Ezra 10:1-3 *While Ezra was praying and confessing, weeping and throwing himself down before the house of God, a large crowd of Israelites—men, women and children—gathered around him. They too wept bitterly. 2 Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, one of the descendants of Elam, said to Ezra, "We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women from the peoples around us. But in spite of this, there is still hope for Israel. 3 Now let us make a covenant before our God to send away all these women and their children, in accordance with the counsel of my lord and of those who fear the commands of our God. Let it be done according to the Law.*

Ezra 10:10-11 *Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, "You have been unfaithful; you have married foreign women, adding to Israel's guilt. 11 Now make confession to the LORD, the God of your fathers, and do His will. Separate yourselves from the peoples around you and from your foreign wives."*

- Sending away women and children = divorce--this was a mass divorce

- God hates divorce...is this a contradiction? No, but it is a lesser of two evils
- God hates idolatry even more
- They were in danger of abandoning God
- If unchecked, then it would have been disastrous for the nation of Israel

Note: Of course, the women and children were provided with supplies, clothing and shelter. There is no reason to think that they were sent to the desert with nothing to die. This action is actually merciful to the women and children. In **Numbers 25**, we see that God killed 24,000 people because the men married or had sexual relations with Moabite and Midianite women. The women led the men astray to worship false gods.

Malachi 2:15-16 *Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are His. And why one? Because He was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. 16 "I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment," says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.*

- To whom is God speaking? Priests—believers
- God hates divorce because
 - God has joined man and woman in one flesh
 - Their union belongs to Him
 - Their union is to produce godly children for the safety and blessing of His people
- God is saying—stay married and honor your vows

II. What Does the New Testament Say About Divorce?

Romans 7:2-3 *For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. 3 So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.*

Note: Paul uses the marriage law analogy here that we can apply to our understanding of Scripture.

- Husband and wife are bound to each other for life (“bound” key word)
- Once spouse dies, then free to marry again

Matthew 5:31-32 *It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' 32 But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.*

- Marriage is broken through adultery
- Adultery was punishable by death

Leviticus 20:10 *If a man commits adultery with another man's wife—with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.*

- God does not punish the innocent party just because He spares the life of the adulterer

1 Corinthians 7:10-11 *To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. 11 But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.*

- This is for believers

Note: Paul differentiates between different people. He is not talking about those who are not believers and he talks about those who has an unbelieving spouse.

- Do not seek divorce
- Do not seek to remarry another except the original spouse
- This is a command not a suggestion

1 Corinthians 7:12-16 *To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. 13 And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. 15 But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.*

- If unbelievers marry and one spouse became a believer
 - Do not seek divorce—if spouse willing to live with other
 - God will pour out His mercy and grace and blessing on the home
 - If spouse wants to leave (unbeliever), then let him/her leave
 - No longer bound because the unbelieving spouse has broken the marriage covenant
 - Do not sacrifice your Christian principles to stay married

What about marrying again?

1 Corinthians 7:7-9 *I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that. 8 Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. 9 But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.*

- Paul here is answering questions from a letter
 - Probably a question about what about those who were divorced when they were not Christians
 - Note:** Make it clear that Paul addressed to different groups of people in this chapter.
- Paul says something interesting here: he says unmarried and widows
- Who are the unmarried?
 - Never married?
 - No, these are virgins (see **7:34**—Paul lists them differently)
 - Not widows
 - Divorced men and women (see **7:10**)
- If you are unmarried or widow (or virgin)
 - Remain single if you are able—it is God's gift
 - Easier to do Lord's work (good advice)
 - For Paul, being single was a priority because you can do God's work easier than when married
 - However, if you are burning with desire (sexual)
 - Get married
 - God is gracious to allow us to remarry for our protection

1 Corinthians 7:27-28 *Are you married? Do not seek a divorce. Are you unmarried? Do not look for a wife. 28 But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.*

1 Corinthians 7:34 *An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband.*

1 Corinthians 7:39 *A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord.*

- If you remarry, you must marry a believer—this is a command from God

Final Thoughts

What is a church to do? For believers, we encourage and pray that the two reconcile their differences and honor what God allows for divorce (adultery). We encourage them to remain married. If they divorce each other, then remain unmarried for the Lord. Of course, we live in a fallen world where Christians divorce and remarry apart from God's word. What do we do? God is gracious and forgives all our mistakes and sins when confessed. Then we tell such people to remain married as a commitment to God and to each other per Scripture:

1 Corinthians 7:17, 20, 24

17 Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.

20 Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him.

24 Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to.

As the Body of Christ, we are to encourage and celebrate marriage and discourage divorce to the best we can. We do this for the Glory of God.