

Lesson 69 – MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

Matthew 19:1-12

(Matt. 19:1-2) – Our Lord had been preaching and healing in and around Galilee for the better part of two years. Here, He goes into another region, “*JUDAH BEYOND JORDAN.*” Again, we are told that “*GREAT MULTITUDES FOLLOWED HIM; AND HE HEALED THEM THERE.*” Christ is the great Physician Who proved again His deity, authority, and power over all diseases. This shows that, as God in sinless human flesh, He had authority and power over sin, the source of all diseases. Our great Physician heals us of the sin that plagues us spiritually by being made sin for us that we be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). His willingness and ability to heal all physical diseases show us His willingness and ability to heal His people spiritually and eternally (Isa. 53:5).

(Matt. 19:3) – Our Lord was not only followed by the sick and needy sinners, but also self-righteous Pharisees who wanted to destroy Him and silence Him as His message of salvation by God’s free and sovereign grace based on the blood and righteousness of Christ exposed their false message of salvation by the works of men (John 3:19-20). They asked a question having in mind to trap and discredit Him – “*IS IT LAWFUL FOR A MAN TO PUT AWAY HIS WIFE FOR EVERY CAUSE?*” There were two schools of thought about divorce. Some believed a man could divorce his wife for any reason, while others insisted the marriage union could not be broken. Keep in mind that Herod Antipas had John the Baptist beheaded because John dared to rebuke the king for divorcing his wife and stealing his brother’s wife. No doubt, the Pharisees hoped that when Jesus denounced divorce, He would also incur the wrath of Herod and be executed.

(Matt. 19:4-6) – The Lord’s reply challenged their own knowledge of the law of God which they claimed to know, believe, and obey. He goes back to the beginning when the Lord God ordained marriage between “*MALE AND FEMALE.*” God’s Word allows for no other kind of marriage except in the case of one man and one woman. It is a most precious union (Heb. 13:4), and requires a full commitment of husband and wife for it to be successful. God ordained it for the happiness and continuance of the human race, and as a beautiful picture of the relationship between Christ and His church (Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 19:7). His people are His bride according to the purpose of His grace (Eph. 1:3-6), the purchase of His grace (Eph. 1:7), and the power of His grace (Titus 3:5-6). The bride of Christ, His wife, stands before Him cleansed from all her sins by His blood, and dressed in the robe of His righteousness by which she is justified and made holy and fit for Him, her Husband (Isa. 61:10; Rev. 19:8). Marriage was the first institution set forth in the Bible (Gen. 2:18-25), and no provision was made for dissolution of the union, i.e. divorce. The preservation of marriage, one man to one woman, is vital to the morality and well-being of society in general and to the church in particular. It requires self-denial by both

parties as well as love, commitment, and devotion as Christ loves and is committed and devoted to the safety, preservation, and eternal well-being of His bride.

It is a blessed union when a husband and wife both love Christ and one another as well. Their love will put each other first. The instructions that Christ gives in these verses was vital then, due to their loose divorce standards, even as it is today. Each man and woman ought to enter into the marriage union having the following mandate in mind – “WHAT THEREFORE GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER, LET NOT MAN PUT ASUNDER.”

(Matt. 19:7-8) – Moses did not “*COMMAND*” men to divorce their wives, rather, he allowed and tolerated it because of the “*HARDNESS*” and perversity of the “*HEARTS*” of the people. He granted divorce in certain instances in order to curtail a vile and liberal custom which had overtaken Israel – divorce for any reason. There was no provision in paradise for Adam to divorce Eve. God brought them together in wedlock, and they dwelt together until one of them died. Only death could end the marriage union (Rom. 7:1-3).

(Matt. 19:9) – Christ makes it clear that the only valid reason for divorce was (and is) immorality in adultery by either spouse, but even then, He was not saying that such a sin should immediately lead to divorce. There should be confession by the guilty party and forgiveness by the other. However, should this immorality become a pattern of behavior, the innocent one was free to divorce and then remarry if he/she chose to do so. If divorce happened, those who remarried and their partners were guilty of adultery. We need to add that immorality and unscriptural reasons for divorce are NOT unforgivable sins. We are all sinners, and, in essence, we are all guilty of the sin of spiritual adultery. But the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from ALL sin, including the sin of adultery. We must also add that the Holy Spirit led the Apostle Paul to give one other valid reason for divorce and remarriage and that is when one spouse is deserted by the other spouse (1 Cor. 7:10-15). This desertion can either be physical or emotional.

(Matt. 19:10-12) – The disciples reasoned in themselves that since all men cannot receive this instruction about marriage being a lifetime commitment, then it would be better not to marry at all. Christ mentions three groups who abstain from marriage. They are those who are castrated either from birth or surgically, or those who chose to abstain from marriage as did Paul (1 Cor. 7:6-9). This is not teaching that it somehow holier for a person to remain unmarried and celibate. This kind of thinking is self-righteous legalism. Also, Paul wrote that if we cannot contain our natural sexual desires, we are to fulfill these desires not in the sin of fornication, but in the holy estate of marriage (1 Cor. 7:9; Heb. 13:4). Remember, marriage is ordained by God, between one man and one woman, for life.