

## They Asked Jesus About Divorce

For many years there have been discussions, debates, articles written, and sermons preached on Marriage/Divorce/Remarriage. Why? For the same reasons Jesus was asked about it in Matthew 19. Writing and preaching on this subject tends to be an invitation to be either labeled as heartless or a heretic. No matter what you can be sure there will be disagreement. While a call for an open mind and an honest heart in dealing with this topic, many have already made up their minds. Of course, the heartless heretic is always the other person. The closed-minded individual is not me but the other person or persons. My aim is to teach what the Bible says. Like F.B Srygley, I tend to be a simple-minded person and when I see the truth I go straight at it.

"The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?'" (Matthew 19.4). We often dissect the answer Jesus gave but we must understand the question.

The reason for this question to "testing Him" as Sometimes people wanted to know the truth, other times they were trying to trap Jesus or expose Him as a fraud. In Matthew 16.1 they asked for a sign from heaven, the text uses the word "testing" showing their motive. In John 8 they brought a woman caught in adultery. Again, it was to test Him so as to accuse Jesus of doing something wrong. If He told them to stone her He would be in trouble with Rome since the Jews did not have the authority to enact the death penalty. If He did not prescribe the punishment under the Law of Moses they could accuse Him to violating the Law of God.

The question on divorce and remarriage tends to be emotional. We are talking about families, children, and relationships. No matter how Jesus answered this question somebody was going to be upset. The same goes for today. There are many different teachings on this subject. It is still emotional and people will be upset no matter how one responds.

"Is it lawful" is a vital part of this verse. To what law were they referring? Being Jews, they knew the Law of Moses and its teaching in Deuteronomy 24.1, "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, put it in her hand, and send her out of his house." Notice the question is not "what constitutes a divorce" but when was the divorce lawful. There was a standard practice of divorce and it included a legal part, the writing of divorce, and the ending of the relationship, sending her out of the house. Both things were necessary when divorcing a spouse.

Today we have a process where a person obtains a divorce. It includes a legal process which goes along with Romans 13 and obeying the laws of the government, and the severing of the relationship. Getting a "divorce" or "putting away a spouse" is the same thing said a different way.

The reason for the question beside the purely emotional aspect is the different schools of thought during the time of Jesus. Notice the reason for the putting away was "uncleanness". One school interpreted that to be almost for any reason. Another said it referred to sexual uncleanness. Adultery under the Law of Moses was punishable by stoning. Thus the debate during the time Jesus. He by passed the Law of Moses and goes back to God's intention in the Garden of Eden by quoting Genesis 2.24-25.

In short, His answer was no, it is not lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason. Notice His reason is because they are bound by the Law of God to each other. "Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19.9b). The general law is when a divorced person remarries they commit adultery, and the person who was put away remarries they commit adultery. "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery" (Mark 10.11-12). The reason is not

because they are not divorce but because they are still bound by God's law to each other.

Jesus did give one situation where a person can divorce and marry another and that is the cause of fornication, Matthew 19.9. Otherwise in Mark 10.2-12; Luke 16.18, Matthew 5.32, Romans 7.1ff a person commits adultery by obtaining a divorce and marrying another. Those who want to say that a divorce is not really a divorce unless and until adultery is committed is re-writing those passages. I find it interesting they have no trouble in understanding what the word divorce means when talking about two people who just decide to get a divorce due to some other reason but then have a problem when it involves fornication. They reason since they are still bound to each other, now they can really put away the other person for sexual immorality and get married. Such contradicts what Jesus plainly says.

Jesus says a man who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, Mark 10.11. He also says a woman who divorces her husband and marries another commits adultery, Mark 10.12. In Luke 16.18 Jesus says a man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery. That seems to include everyone (not including the exception in Matthew 19.9), the man or woman who divorces, the put away person, and the third party who marries a put away person. They all commit adultery. Not because they have not obtained a divorce but because the divorce was for an unlawful reason.

Jesus does give one exception to this rule and this is when fornication is the reason for the divorce. "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery." (Mt 19:9 emphasis mine D.T.) That exception does not disprove the rule stated in Mark 10.11-12, Luke 16.18, Romans 7.1ff.

Divorce is not redefined by sexual immorality but allowed because of it. - - Dennis Tucker