

Divorce and Remarriage

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The Gospel of Luke

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Divorce and Remarriage

The purpose of this paper is to determine what the Bible teaches concerning divorce and remarriage. This purpose will be pursued by examining various views concerning the Biblical teaching of divorce and remarriage. There are various and differing views concerning several aspects of divorce and remarriage.¹ Some of the views will be presented on each aspect addressed and a conclusion drawn based on the evidence presented. The aspects of divorce and remarriage this paper will address are (1) What is marriage? (2) What is divorce? (3) Can one live in adultery? (4) Can the guilty party remarry? (5) What is the meaning of “not under bondage” in 1 Corinthians 7:15? (6) Does baptism remit the sin of adultery?

WHAT IS MARRIAGE?

The first aspect that must be addressed, concerning the Biblical teaching of divorce and remarriage, is the Biblical meaning of marriage. Without a proper definition of “marriage” there is no basis on which to discuss divorce and remarriage. In defining “marriage”, it should be understood the God employs the Greek work gamos to describe two different types of marriage relationships. Gamos is employed to describe (1) an unscriptural marriage, that is, one which is not authorized, and thus, condemned by God, and (2) a scriptural marriage, that is, one which is authorized – approved by God.² An example in which an unauthorized relationship is referred to as marriage is in Mark 6:17-18. This passage says Herod “married” Herodias, yet this relationship called “marriage” was condemned by John the Baptist saying “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife”. It should also be noted the Jesus Himself used “marry” to refer to an act resulting in a relationship, which violated his law. He said, “...and marries another woman commits adultery”, (Matthew 19:9).³ Some examples of approve relationships are referred to as marriage are seen in 1 Corinthians 7:10, 39 and in Timothy 5:14.

The unapproved marriage, according to scripture, is a marriage relationship comprised of two people in which one or both are not eligible for marriage. This ineligibility could exist as a result of (1) one or both who have been previously married and whose mate(s) are still living, having been put away for reasons other than adultery, or (2) those wishing to enter a homosexual relationship (Matthew 19:9, 5:31-32, Romans 1:18-32, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).⁴

The marriage approved by God is that relationship which follows the guidelines set forth in Genesis 2:24. There are three fundamental characteristics in this divine formula which

¹ Roy H. Lanier Sr., Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage (Shreveport, LA Lambert Book House), p. 1.

² Thomas B. Warren, Keeping the Lock in Wedlock (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press, Inc., 1980), p. 28.

³ Ibid. p. 29

⁴ Ibid. pp. 28-29

constitutes a scriptural marriage.⁵ First: Commitment – “For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother...” There must be commitment to one another. This commitment includes the sacrificial giving of self to one’s mate. It also includes the “leaving” or “giving up” of such commitment that one may have had with others.⁶ “This does not mean that the new human relationship which is established between a man and his wife has primacy over all other human relationships.”⁷

Second: Permanence – “...and shall cleave to his wife”. The word for “cleave” has a limited employment in the Old Testament. The meaning of this Hebrew word dabhaq is to, “cling to, stick to, cleave”. “It denotes the cleaving together of wet clods (Job 38:38) and the joining together of the scales of the crocodile (Job 41:17). Corresponding to this, the segholate noun debheq means the soldering of the scales on a breastplate (1 Kings 22:34)...dbq is not used to denote a material joining or merging.”⁸ The use of this word declares the permanence of the relationship instituted by God in marriage.

Third: Sexual union – “...and they shall become one flesh.” The physical union is not what, in and of itself, constitutes a marriage, but is a blessing which comes as a result of marriage.⁹

It is also clear from passages like Romans 13:1-2, Titus 3:1 and 1 Peter 2:12-13, that marriage must be in compliance with existing laws and customs of society involved. “These customs may, and do, differ, just as they did in the New Testament world; but a couple wishing to avoid condemnation by God for fornication or adultery has to conform to what their society says they must do to be considered married.”¹⁰ The word “marriage”, then, as it is used in this paper, will mean the relationship of a man and a woman taking each other as husband and wife, fulfilling such legal requirements as are necessary, and refers to either scriptural or unscriptural relationships.¹¹

WHAT IS DIVORCE?

With marriage thus defined, a basis is provided for the understanding of the term divorce. There are two words used for “divorce” in the Old Testament. The Hebrew word shillach is a verb form meaning “to send”, generally used in the context of sending away one’s

⁵ James O. Baird, And I Say Unto You (Oklahoma City, OK: B&B Bookhouse, 1981), pp. 4-6.

⁶ Harold Hazelip, “Marriage – Its Meaning”, Your Marriage Can Be Great, edited by Thomas B. Warren (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press, Inc., 1978), p. 94.

⁷ Baird, p. 4.

⁸ G. Wallis, “dabhaq,” Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, III, edited by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 80.

⁹ Roy Deaver, “The Physical Relationship Is Not What Constitutes Marriage”, Your Marriage Can be Great, edited by Thomas B. Warren (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press, Inc., 1978), p. 93.

¹⁰ Maurice W. Lusk III, Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage in the Teaching of Jesus and Paul, (Atlanta, GA: published by the author, 1982, p. 149.

¹¹ Baird, p. 7.

wife (Deuteronomy 22:19, 29).¹² The Hebrew word garash is said by scholars to primarily mean “to chase away” or “drive out (away)” without implying anything other than interrupting an existing relationship (Leviticus 21:7, 14; Numbers 30:9).¹³ The grounds for divorce under the Mosaic law are described in Deuteronomy 24:1, which the text calls, “...lit. nudity of a word or thing, i.e. anything filthy, some shameful act or circumstance...some uncleanness.”¹⁴ What the “unseemly thing” in Deuteronomy 24 included was not limited to adultery because the law provided that a wife found guilty of adultery was to be stoned to death.¹⁵ There was differing views among the Jewish rabbis as to what all was included in the grounds for divorce. Those who followed Shammai maintained that this meant nothing less than unchastity or adultery. The disciples of Hillel placed great stress upon the words, “if she finds no favor in his eyes”, (Deuteronomy 24:1), and contended that divorce should be granted for the flimsiest reason.¹⁶ It seems that divorce under the Old Law granted complete freedom to the divorced with the exception that a woman could not be reunited with her first husband after having been married to a second (Deuteronomy 24:4).¹⁷ Christ’s teaching concerning divorce rendered the Mosaic permission of divorce dead. “There could not be practice under it among His disciples”.¹⁸

Four terms are used to describe divorce in the New Testament. Apoluo occurs in Matthew 1:19; 5:31-32; 19:3, 7-9; Mark 10:2, 4, 11, 12; Luke 16:18 and is defined: “let go”, “send away one’s wife”, or “divorce”.¹⁹ The term used for “a writ of divorcement” is apostasion, occurring in Matthew 5:31; 19:7; and Mark 10:4.²⁰ The word aphiemi is translated “leave” in 1 Corinthians 7:11, 13, and can also be translated “divorce” in a legal sense.²¹ Corizo, translated “leave” in 1 Corinthians 7:10, can also be used as “separate (oneself), be separated of divorce”.²²

It is seen from Matthew 19:9, that the term divorce is used in both a scriptural and unscriptural sense. Even though a divorce may meet the legal requirements, it does not necessarily mean that it is approved in the eyes of God.²³ Divorce was never planned or intended by God in His purpose for marriage, as Jesus declares in Matthew 19:8.²⁴ God

¹² W.W. Davis, “Divorce in the Old Testament”, The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, edited by James Orr (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1939), II, 864

¹³ H. Ringgren, “garash”, Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, III, edited by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 68

¹⁴ John McClintock and James Strong, “Divorce”, Cyclopaedia of Biblical Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), II, 840.

¹⁵ McClintock and Strong, p. 840.

¹⁶ W.W. Davis, p. 864

¹⁷ Neale Pryor, “Divorce – Its Meaning”, Your Marriage Can Be Great, edited by Thomas B. Warren (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press, Inc., 1978), p. 99.

¹⁸ C. Caverno, “Divorce and the New Testament”, The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, edited by James Orr (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1939), II, 865.

¹⁹ W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 96.

²⁰ Lusk, p. 103

²¹ Arndt and Gingrich, p. 125.

²² Ibid, p. 890

²³ Baird, 8.

²⁴ J.D. Thomas, Divorce and Remarriage, (Abilene, TX: Biblical Research Press, 1977), p. 7.

does however allow an exception so that there is a divorce that is approved. That exception is if the one being put away has committed, or is continuing in, fornication (Matthew 19:9; 5:32).

The word divorce, then, as used in this paper will mean the legal dissolution of a scriptural or unscriptural marriage, which may or may not be divinely approved.

CAN ONE LIVE IN ADULTERY?

In answering the question “can one live in adultery?” it must first be determined: What is adultery? “The common connotation of adultery is that of voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and someone other than his or her mate.”²⁵ This concept springs from the intrinsic idea resting within the word adulteration which means to debase, make impure, not genuine, corrupt, defile, contaminate or putrefy, to violate or destroy the purity of something.²⁶

The term for adultery in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word naaph. Naaph has the intrinsic meaning of adulteration, rendering impure or illicit.²⁷ This same concept is carried over into the New Testament. Jesus states in Matthew 19:6, “What therefore God has joined together”, sunedzeugnumi refers specifically to the joining which is done by God, “let no man separate”.²⁸ This “separation” is the adulterating of, or making impure, that which is pure in the sight of God.

There are various ways to “adulterate” a marriage. Those joining themselves together in marriage without God’s sanction and authority are guilty of adulterating marriage.²⁹ It is, also, clear from Matthew 5:32 that a marriage can be adulterated by porneia. The lexical meaning of porneia is prostitution, unchastity, fornication, of every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse.³⁰ “In essence the term porneia is the generic term in the ancient Greek language for sexual immorality of every kind.”³¹ The term adultery, then, as used in answering the question “can one live in adultery?” will mean the “engaging in a sexual relationship with some one other than one’s lawful and/or legitimate mate”.³²

In answering the question “can one live in adultery?” that under consideration is not the act of involving oneself in an adulterous relationship, rather it is the relationship itself.

²⁵ Lusk, p. 47.

²⁶ Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1972), p. 12

²⁷ Lusk, p. 48-51.

²⁸ Deaver, Physical, p. 92.

²⁹ Lusk, p. 52.

³⁰ Arndt and Gingrich, p. 693

³¹ Lusk, p. 106

³² Ibid, p. 47

In Matthew 19:9 the word moichatae, commits adultery, is in the present tense, which denotes durative or linear action, that is, continuous, uncompleted, progressive action.³³ To be able to “live in adultery”, then, is a valid concept.³⁴ “Occasionally in the Greek, the present tense refers to something which occurred at one time only.”³⁵ Hall has advanced this view, that is, moichatae, as used in Matthew 19:9 conveys punctiliar, or one time, action.³⁶ If such is the case, adultery cannot be a state that one can live in. Scholars, however, maintain that the Greek present tense usually means progressive action and when a present tense verb is used to express punctiliar, or one time, action, it is used with the aorist tense and the context will clearly point out the punctiliar action.³⁷ Such is the case here.

If committeth adultery in Matthew 19:9 refers to a one time action, at what point would that one time action, which is sinful, take place? Is it at the completion of the marriage ceremony or is it at the time the couple first has sexual union? If we say that it is at the time of the marriage ceremony, we give a definition for adultery which is not supported by the meaning of the word. If we accept the first sexual union of the couple as the one time action which was adultery, we find ourselves in an unusual predicament. We are saying the first time the couple had sexual relations after their marriage ceremony they committed adultery. Was it also adultery the second time? If so, the relationship continues to be sinful as long as the couple lives together in sexual union. If the second time they had sexual intercourse, the act was not sinful, and stood approved before God, what made it approved? It would have to be the first act of adultery because nothing else has changed in the relationship. Therefore, by one adulterous act an individual can change a disapproved marriage into an approved one. It is illogical to maintain that by committing a sin one can make sinless following acts of an identical nature.³⁸

The argument that one cannot live in adultery because it is a single act is also repudiated by Colossians 3:7 which says, “In these, immorality and fornication”, which can adulterate marriage, “you once walked when you were living in them”. Paul, also, teaches the actuality of “living in sin”, including adultery in Ephesians 2:1-3 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. In Ephesians 2:1-3 Paul says “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked... Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh”. Paul lists a number of sins in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 among which is adultery and fornication. “Such were some of you”, verse 11, which in the Greek is imperfect tense. According to Dana and Mantey, “the imperfect tense is used to denote

³³ W. H. Davis, Beginner's Grammar of the Greek New Testament, (New York: Harper & Row, 1923), p. 25.

³⁴ Thomas, p. 15.

³⁵ Baird, p. 77.

³⁶ Thomas, p. 47.

³⁷ H. E. Dana and J. R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, (Toronto, Ontario: The Macmillian Company, revised 1957), pp. 181-185.

³⁸ Baird, p. 77-78.

action in progress in past time”.³⁹ Accordingly, this passage says they were “living in adultery”.⁴⁰

“In Matthew 19:9 Jesus speaks of one party in an approved marriage (relationship) leaving this relationship and beginning a second relationship (marriage) which is clearly termed adulterous.”⁴¹ Since the kind of action considered (marriage) is continuous, and the marriage (relationship) is adulterous, this certainly implies that the parties involved are continuing in an adulterous relationship.⁴² The only conclusion that remains is that the Bible teaches that all those who participate in a marriage relationship in violation of Matthew 19:9 are “living in adultery”, and will be lost forever unless they repent by discontinuing the relationship.⁴³

CAN THE GUILTY PARTY REMARRY?

The question, “Can the guilty party remarry?”, does not draw the same conclusion from all, yet can be clearly understood from the Scriptures.

There are some who believe that the guilty party can remarry.⁴⁴ Those who are of this persuasion argue that, “if the marriage bond is broken for the innocent party that it of necessity is broken for the guilty party”, thus, leaving both the innocent and the guilty party free to seek a new marriage.⁴⁵

The view that the guilty party can remarry is a view that could lead to deliberate collusion and also completely contradict Christ’s teach in Matthew 19:9. “If a husband and a wife definitely want to be put away from each other and form another marriage, what’s to keep the man from (1) committing fornication, (2) having himself divorced by his wife, and (3) marrying another woman?”⁴⁶ In an effort to be freed from a marriage and have a scriptural remarry, is this collusive plan logical if the guilty party is free to remarry?

If the guilty party is free to remarry, why did Christ even address this subject at all and why did he use the word “except” which is absolutely restrictive (Matthew 19:9)? “Except” in John 3:5, means that baptism is the only means of entrance into the kingdom, and “except” in Matthew 19:9 means that fornication is the only grounds upon which there can be a divorce and remarriage.⁴⁷ A man putting away his wife because of her fornication has the right to remarry because, God’s law gives him that right by allowing

³⁹ Dana and Mantey, p. 187.

⁴⁰ Pat McGee, “Can One Live in Adultery?”, The Spiritual Sword, III, (3), edited by Thomas B. Warren (Memphis, TN: Getwell church of Christ, 1972), p. 15.

⁴¹ Baird, p. 78.

⁴² Lusk, p. 55.

⁴³ McGee, p. 16.

⁴⁴ Thomas, p. 44

⁴⁵ Roy Deaver, “The ‘Guilty Party’ Is Not Free (In God’s Sight) To Marry Again”, Your Marriage Can Be Great, edited by Thomas B. Warren (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press, Inc., 1978), p. 370.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 382

⁴⁷ Deaver, Guilty Party Is Not Free, p. 374

the innocent one to scripturally break the marriage bond and contract a new marriage without guilt. This right of scriptural divorce and remarriage is not allows “except for immorality”, and even though the marriage bond is scripturally broken it does not cancel the obligation of God’s law which has been given as the responsibility of every person.⁴⁸ One who marries a “having-been-put-away” person, and those entering into marriage without a scriptural authority to do so, enter into adulterous or adulterated relationships (Matthew 5:32; Mark 10:12).⁴⁹ Matthew 5:31-32 teaches that the innocent person put away for reasons other than immorality, is not given the right of remarriage. Since God’s law does not allow one who has innocently been put away to scripturally remarry, it is inconceivable that God would allow a fornicator, one justly put away, to scripturally remarry.⁵⁰

The intensity of Christ’s statement in Matthew 19:9 seems clearly indicated by the reaction of the disciples in Matthew 19:10. The conversation began with a question as to the permanence of the marriage relationship.

Jesus’ response referring them to Genesis 2:24, dealt with, perhaps, the most imposing passage of the whole of Scripture on the subject of the man and wife relationship. Then his pronouncement on the consequences of a man putting away his wife (dissolving the relationship) and marrying another (seeking to establish a new relationship) clearly presses upon his questioners the seriousness with which God holds man to his commitment to the marital relationship, and the seriousness of the consequences of taking those relationships lightly. Clearly, the immediate context would indicate that the most natural understanding of he aitia would be “If thus is the relationship of the man to the woman...; (i.e., if a man’s relationship to his wife is such [indissoluble, except for fornication]), then it is not advantageous (sumpherei – present indicative of sumphero – confer a benefit, be advantageous or profitable) to marry.”⁵¹

Jesus clearly indicates that some must choose celibacy, remain unmarried for life, rather than adulterate themselves by entering into an unscriptural marriage.⁵² Can the guilty party remarry? Yes, because civil law allows it, but not without entering into an ongoing adulterous relationship. Can the guilty party remarry? Yes, but “the wages of sin is death”, (Romans 3:23).

⁴⁸ Thomas, p. 57.

⁴⁹ Lusk, p. 44.

⁵⁰ Roy Deaver, “The ‘Guilty Party’ Cannot Remarry”, The Spiritual Sword, III, (3), edited by Thomas B. Warren (Memphis, TN: Gerwell church of Christ, 1972), p. 10

⁵¹ Lusk, pp. 56-57.

⁵² Ibid., p. 58

NOT UNDER BONDAGE

The phrase “not under bondage” in 1 Corinthians 7:15 creates controversy in the study of divorce and remarriage. Some maintain that “not under bondage” refers to the marriage bond, and thus, means that a deserted believer is free to remarry without guilt or condemnation.⁵³ Others teach that “not under bondage” does not refer to the marriage bond and, therefore, does not give scriptural permission to remarry.⁵⁴ Before the scriptural meaning of “not under bondage” can be established, it is first necessary to investigate two additional aspects of scripture involved in the argumentation on this passage. The additional aspects necessary to investigate are (1) What does Paul mean in saying, “I say, not the Lord”, (1 Corinthians 7:12)? And (2) Are non-Christians amendable to the law of Christ? Both of these questions must be answered, because they form the basis of the view held by James D. Bales that “not under bondage” refers to the marriage bond.

Based on Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 7:12, “I say, not the Lord”, Bales says that the Lord had not given any instructions pertaining to mixed marriages during His personal ministry.⁵⁵ He also says “...since Paul said Christ did not deal with mixed marriages, one has no authority to bind Matthew 19:9 on this deserted believer”, (1 Corinthians 7:15).⁵⁶ Bales advocates the right for the deserted believer to remarry because he says no one should interpret 1 Corinthians 7:15 so as to make it fit 1 Corinthians 7:11 and Matthew 19:9.⁵⁷

In 1 Corinthians 7:12-17, Paul is answering a question concerning the legitimacy of marriage between a believer and unbeliever.⁵⁸ Jesus did not address Himself to the question of marriage in Matthew 19:3-12, but to the question of divorce for any cause; therefore, Paul says “The Lord did not speak to the question of marriage between believers and unbelievers, but I will”.⁵⁹

If Bales is saying that Jesus did not speak concerning the validity of a mixed marriage, he is right. For Bales to say that this is the only place in scripture pertaining to mixed marriages, and therefore the deserted believer is not bound under Matthew 19:9, does not make sense.⁶⁰ If 1 Corinthians 7:12-15 is the only passage in the New Testament which is applicable to mixed marriages and the divorces thereof, then, a Christian man, married to a fornicating, unbelieving woman, or vice versa, cannot leave the unbeliever as long as the unbeliever chooses to remain in the marriage. “This would be true because 1 Corinthians 7:12, 13 binds the Christian to remain with the unbeliever who desires to stay

⁵³ James D. Bales, Not Under Bondage (Searcy, AR: published by author, 1979), p. 92.

⁵⁴ Baird, p. 47.

⁵⁵ Bales, p. 62.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 67.

⁵⁷ Ibid., P. 92.

⁵⁸ Lusk, p. 114.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 116.

⁶⁰ Bales, p. 30.

in the marriage and does not mention the exception of fornication. Only Matthew 19:9 does that!”⁶¹

It is obvious that any message set forth by Paul is in reality the Lord’s message, for this is the very meaning of inspiration.⁶² Paul said, concerning virgins, “I have no command of the Lord”, (1 Corinthians 7:25), yet Jesus clearly taught concerning virgins in Matthew 19:4-5. To say that “I say, not the Lord” means that deserted believers are not accountable to Matthew 19:9 is a contradiction to the teachings of Christ. Any interpretation of any passage with contradicts Matthew 19:9, is an erroneous interpretation, thus, the doctrine that 1 Corinthians 7:15 gives another ground for divorce and remarriage because Christ did not address the validity of mixed marriages in Matthew 19:9, is a false doctrine.⁶³

Are non-Christians amenable to the law of Christ? Bales says “no”. “Christ’s legislation in His personal ministry was for those in His covenant who were married to one another. Therefore, it is unscriptural for us to extend to include mixed marriage (Paul did not), or to marriages of two people outside the covenant.”⁶⁴ If Christ’s teachings on marriage and divorce do not apply to those outside of the covenant, then non-Christians are not amenable to the law of Christ. Bales uses this argument on the fact that 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 speaks to Christians married to Christians and follows the teaching of Matthew 19:9. “Since Matthew 19:9, and other passages in the Gospels, are appealed to in 7:10-11 it follows that Matthew 19:9 cannot be laying down the marriage law for all marriages in the world and in the church.”⁶⁵

This argument, those in mixed marriages are not under the law of Christ, is invalid for the following reasons: First, “God ordained and instituted marriage for all human beings – not just for his covenant people”, (Genesis 2:24).⁶⁶

Second: Jesus, in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, was addressing an audience containing not one single Christian. “If the argument is valid that this teaching applies only to those to whom it was immediately delivered, then it would be applicable only to those who are not Christians, as non-Christians composed the audience in the context of Matthew 5:32 and 19:9.”⁶⁷

Third: If the laws regulating marriage are binding only on church members, as Bales teaches, it would follow that God does not join in matrimony those who are not Christians. That would mean all non-Christians who have a “marital type” relationship are just mating like so many animals in the eyes of God. This is an unthinkable position

⁶¹ Baird, pp. 52-53.

⁶² Roy Deaver, “Difficult Texts from First and Second Corinthians”, Difficult Texts of the New Testament Explained, edited by Wendell Winkler (Hurst, TX: Winkler Publications, 1981), p. 238.

⁶³ Roy Deaver, “Some Errors on 1 Corinthians 7 Set Forth and Refuted”, Your Marriage Can Be Great, edited by Thomas B. Warren (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press, Inc., 1978), p. 451.

⁶⁴ Bales, p. 8.

⁶⁵ Bales, p. 172

⁶⁶ Thomas, p. 56

⁶⁷ Lusk, p. 62.

to hold in view of the institution of marriage in Genesis 2:24 between two non-Christians, Adam and Eve.⁶⁸

Fourth: The very fact that Jesus said in Matthew 19:8, “but from the beginning it has not been this way”, proves that Christ’s laws for marriage and divorce are for all men. There have not been Christians from the beginning, yet, there have been marriages from the beginning.

Fifth: Christ clearly enjoins His teaching of Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 on all persons, believers and unbelievers alike, by the use of the universal terms “everyone”, (Matthew 5:32), and “whosoever”, (Matthew 19:9).⁶⁹

Sixth: To say that all men are not amenable to the law of Christ, including the laws concerning marriage and divorce, denies that Christ is the King of Kings, and has authority over all flesh (Revelation 19:16; John 17:2).⁷⁰ It also contradicts the imperative to preach the gospel to every creature of every nation (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19).⁷¹ It logically follows that if all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Christ, then all men on earth, believers and unbelievers, are amenable to His authority.⁷²

Seventh: If all of mankind are not amenable to the law of Christ, then faith, repentance, and baptism would be for persons who are already saved since these are the only one subject to obeying commands of God.⁷³ An alien could never obey the gospel, because he would not be subject to the law of Christ.⁷⁴

Eighth:

It cannot be rationally argued nor logically established that God has one set of moral standards for the non-Christian and another set for the Christian. The moral standards inscribed in the NT scriptures are the standards of conduct for all men (Christians and non-Christians alike); and if divorce for any cause and remarriage to another is wrong for anyone, it is wrong for everyone – if it is wrong for the Christian, it is just as wrong for the non-Christian.⁷⁵

Having investigated the erroneous basis on which Bales defined “not under bondage” a clear understanding of the scriptural meaning of this phrase in 1 Corinthians 7:15, can be attained in contrast to Bales arguments.

⁶⁸ Lanier, p. 3.

⁶⁹ Lusk, p. 62

⁷⁰ Thomas B. Warren, “All Men – Including Non-Christians – Are Amenable to Christ’s Law on Divorce and Remarriage”, Your Marriage Can Be Great, edited by Thomas B. Warren (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press, Inc., 1978), p. 366.

⁷¹ Calvin Warpula, “The Law of Christ is Addressed to All Men”, The Spiritual Sword, III (3) edited by Thomas B. Warren (Memphis, TN: Getwell church of Christ, 1972), p. 4.

⁷² Lusk, p. 63.

⁷³ Warpula, p. 5.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 8.

⁷⁵ Lusk, p. 63.

Bales holds to the position that the deserted believer is free to remarry, because Matthew 19:9 is not applicable to mixed marriages.⁷⁶ This argument has already been proven false, because teachings in the Scriptures are unmistakably clear, and conclusively convincing. All of mankind throughout the world are accountable to the laws of Christ. Since all of mankind is amenable to the laws of Christ, then all of mankind is, therefore, amenable to the marriage laws of Christ.⁷⁷

Bales also argues that the context of 1 Corinthians 7:15 proves that “bondage” refers to the marriage bond.⁷⁸ The Greek word for “bondage” here, is dedoulotai which is a form of the word douloo. The word douloo, in its various forms, is found 133 times in the New Testament, yet, not one time, unless this text is an exception, is this word used of the marriage bond.⁷⁹ It should be noted, however, in this same chapter, Paul does mention the marriage bond, but uses the word deo, which occurs 44 times in the New Testament. The lexical meaning of deo is “to bind” or “to tie together” and is sighted in this context as speaking of “binding by law and duty”, as in the marriage bond.⁸⁰ It is not logical that Paul would use deo twice in this chapter when undoubted reference is made to the marriage bond, and then change the word to douloo in verse 15, unless he wished to leave the impression that he was not referring to the marriage bond.⁸¹

Bales gives another argument in support of “bondage” referring to the marriage bond. “The very bondage this believer is under if the unbeliever does not leave is the one he or she is not under if the unbeliever left.”⁸² This argument is not valid because the tense of the word that is translated “bondage”. “Dedoulatai is the perfect indicative passive of douloo, and conveys the idea of completed action with continuing effect or significant results.”⁸³ The significance of Paul’s use of the perfect tense with ou, “not”, in the expression “not under bondage”, rests in the fact that the bondage under consideration here is an enslavement the brother or sister has never been in and is consequently not now in; hence, it could not have reference to the marriage bond.⁸⁴

Another point Bales makes in his argumentation is that Paul did not say the believer deserted the unbeliever was to remain unmarried or be reconciled.⁸⁵ Paul, however, did not need to say remain unmarried or be reconciled, for he already stated that in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11.⁸⁶

Bales forces his argument on those who disagree with him by saying, “You do not have the legislative authority to put this deserted believer in bondage in any way to the

⁷⁶ Bales, p. 67.

⁷⁷ Warpula, p. 8.

⁷⁸ Bales, p. 68.

⁷⁹ Baird, p. 47.

⁸⁰ Arndt and Gingrich, p. 178.

⁸¹ Lanier, p. 14.

⁸² Bales, p. 72.

⁸³ Lusk, p. 119.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 120.

⁸⁵ Bales, p. 64.

⁸⁶ Jerry F. Moffitt, Bale’s Position Explained and Denied (Austin, TX: published by author, 1982), p. 38.

unbeliever”.⁸⁷ He also believes that “... Paul said desertion by the unbeliever so changed the believers situation that the believer was free, and since free, this left the believer with the right to remarry if the believer so desired”.⁸⁸

These arguments **are not supported** by the Scriptures as is evident by the following.

First: If the deserted believer of 1 Corinthians 7:15 has the right to remarry, this would make two ground for divorce and remarriage. Jesus **gave us only one**, therefore, if Paul gives another one, then Paul and Jesus are in contradiction. **It would also render the “except” in Matthew 19:9 meaningless.**⁸⁹

Second: “Why would the Lord refuse to give the right of remarriage to the innocent party, unjustly put away, but grant the right of remarriage to the deserted believer?”⁹⁰ If the deserted believer is free to remarry, the Lord deals unequally and unfairly with people in the same situation. Jesus taught that the one divorced for other than immorality could not remarry despite any hardships, yet, would He let the deserted believer be allowed to remarry? If so then the law of the Lord is harder on the party unfairly put away than it is on the deserted party.⁹¹ Is the Lord a respecter of persons?

Third: “If the believer/unbeliever marriage is not bound by Matthew 19:9, then all Christians would be tempted to marry non-Christians so they could dissolve any marriage which turned out unsatisfactory and still have God’s approval for a remarriage.”⁹² Viewed from a practical standpoint, it would be wiser for believers to marry unbelievers since no one really knows what a marriage will be like until he/she enters into it.

From the argumentation presented it is clear from Scripture that the phrase “not under bondage” does not refer to the marriage bond. What Paul does mean is that the believer is not so bound to the unbeliever that he/she must give up Christ to hold the unbeliever. He is teaching the believer that, though it may mean a life of celibacy, the bond that binds to Christ is stronger than the marriage bond (Luke 14:26; Matthew 10:37).⁹³ The meaning of 1 Corinthians 7:15 is that any believer married to an unbeliever was to let the unbeliever depart if he/she chose to do so, based on the reasoning that the marriage was not a state of enslavement to be maintained at any cost.⁹⁴ The believer has no obligation, and has never had, to yield to pressure to give up his/her Christianity to preserve a marriage.⁹⁵ This, as has been shown, is not license for the deserted believer to remarry.⁹⁶

⁸⁷ Bales, p. 64.

⁸⁸ Bales, p. 92.

⁸⁹ Thomas, p. 62.

⁹⁰ Deaver, Difficult, p. 249

⁹¹ Lanier, p. 17.

⁹² Baird, p. 53.

⁹³ Lanier, p. 15.

⁹⁴ Lusk, p. 118.

⁹⁵ Deaver, Some Errors, p. 445.

⁹⁶ Moffit, p. 38.

DOES BAPTISM REMIT THE SIN OF ADULTERY?

The final point of controversy to be addressed in this paper is, “Does baptism remit the sin of adultery”? There are some who teach that baptism does wash away the sin of adultery.⁹⁷ In order to establish the scriptural answer to this question, it is necessary to establish what the Scriptures teach concerning repentance.

“It seems that people easily understand repentance and its results (reformation of life – ceasing all sinful practices, getting out of all sinful relationships (except in the one topic of divorce and remarriage).”⁹⁸ On this topic people want to say that a man may steal another man’s wife and by merely saying “I’m sorry I did it and I will not do it anymore”, he is given the God-approved right to keep her as his wife.⁹⁹ These people would have the action of repentance to be mere sorrow. There is a “godly sorrow” but repentance is not “godly sorrow”, rather “godly sorrow worketh repentance” (2 Corinthians 7:10).¹⁰⁰ Expressing sorrow is the only action that can be taken in repenting for such a thing as a murder, because it is a past fact of history that cannot be changed. An adulterous relationship is not a past fact of history and, therefore, repentance can not be made.¹⁰¹

The Greek word which is translated “repentance” is metanoia. The lexical meaning is “a change of mind” or “a turning about”, as the beginning of a new religious moral life.¹⁰² Repentance leads to reformation of life which involves cessation of sinful practices and severance of all relationships which are in violation of the will of God (Matthew 3:8; Romans 6:21; 1 John 3:6-10; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Acts 8:5-13; 19:18-19).¹⁰³

It is clear from the Scriptures that repentance is necessary in order for baptism to wash away one’s sins (Matthew 3:8; Acts 2:38; 26:20). Some people affirm that repentance from an adulterous marriage, and hence, forgiveness of this sin by baptism, can be accomplished without the severance of the adulterous relationship.¹⁰⁴ These people give various reasons in support of this view, some of which will be stated and examined.

One reason given in support of this view is that adultery is a one time act, therefore, godly sorry, and the commitment not to repeat the action which resulted in the adulterous relationship is all that is necessary for repentance.¹⁰⁵

In refutation of this argument note that it has already been established in this paper that adultery is not a one time action in the case of marriage. An adulterous marriage

⁹⁷ Baird, p. 77.

⁹⁸ Warren, Keeping, p. 241.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 241.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 241.

¹⁰¹ Rubel Shelly, “Baptism Does Not Sanctify an Adulterous Union”, Your Marriage Can Be Great, edited by Thomas B. Warren (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press, Inc., 1978), p. 354.

¹⁰² Arndt and Gingrich, p. 512.

¹⁰³ Warren, Keeping, p. 321.

¹⁰⁴ Bales, p. 156.

¹⁰⁵ Baird, p. 77.

continues to be adulterous as long as the relationship, which first produced the adultery, continues to exist. Repentance, by its definition, is not accomplished, unto salvation, by a person in an adulterous relationship until that relationship is severed. Since one must both repent and be baptized in order to receive the forgiveness of sins, the immersion of a person refusing to discontinue an adulterous relationship would not result in the forgiveness of his sins.¹⁰⁶

Another reason given, in support of the view that baptism remits the sin of adultery, comes from 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. It is affirmed that this passages teaches that those who were involved in adulterous relationships and then baptized, were accepted without making any change in the relationship.¹⁰⁷

In understanding the truth of this argument the following explanations are given: First: The Greek word *ἔτε* translated “were” in 1 Corinthians 6:11, is in the imperfect tense. The Greek imperfect tense is used to denote action in progress in past time.¹⁰⁸ Paul said “such ‘were’ some of you”, which means they “had been” involved, past time, in the sins listed. The real key here, however, is in the three occurrences of the word “but”. The three-fold “but” emphasizes strongly the contrast between their past way of life and the consequent demand which their changed moral condition makes upon them.¹⁰⁹ Paul is telling them that those who are categorized in this list of sins will not be saved.

Second: “If 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 proves that those in an adulterous marriage were accepted when baptized without dissolving the relationship... it proves that the idolater, when washed, sanctified, and justified, did not have to give up worshiping idols.”¹¹⁰ This is true because whatever is said of adulterers is said of the effeminate, abusers of themselves with men (homosexuals), the thief, the drunkard, and the whole of the list. It is obvious that 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 does not teach that baptism remits the sin of adultery any more than it teaches that baptism remits the sin of homosexuality.

Another reason given in support of the view that the adulterous relationship need not be severed to obtain forgiveness of sins by baptism comes from 1 Corinthians 7:20. Some would have this verse teach that if one has been divorced, for other than the cause of fornication and remarried, he is to remain in that condition after baptism.¹¹¹ The legitimacy of this argument can be determined by examined by examining the context of this verse.

The conditions of life being address in verses 18-22 are circumcision or uncircumcision and freeman or bondservant. The context does not circumference one single sinful

¹⁰⁶ Shelly, p. 552.

¹⁰⁷ M.H. Tucker, ..And Such Were Some of You, But You Were Washed...”, Your Marriage Can Be Great, edited by Thomas B. Warren (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press, Inc., 1978), p. 461.

¹⁰⁸ Dana and Mantey, p. 187.

¹⁰⁹ Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, “The First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians”, The International Critical Commentary, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912), p. 119.

¹¹⁰ Tucker, p. 461

¹¹¹ Baird, p. 80.

condition, as God wants no one to remain in sin.¹¹² This passage of scripture teaches that one may abide in his per-conversion situation so long as it is not such as to inherently involve one to sin, and allows him to exercise his spiritual obligation to the Lord.¹¹³ Those who advocate that one can maintain his/her adulterous relationship because he/she was in that situation when called, must also admit that (1) a man married to six wives when called can remain in polygamy and (2) those who were called while involved in a homosexual relationship can continue that relationship. Baptism is not some sort of magic which performs marriage ceremonies for these kinds of people, nor for adulterers.¹¹⁴

Baptism removes past sins upon repentance, turning away, from them. “Obviously, therefore, if the person with whom one had sex relations was not approved of God before baptism, that same person would not be approved for this purpose AFTER baptism. If a union is adulterous before baptism, that same union will be adulterous after baptism.”¹¹⁵

CONCLUSION

Based on the evidence presented, it is clear that God ordained and instituted marriage. In so doing He designated conditions upon which the eligibility of those desiring marriage rest. God, through Christ, allowed one exception to the permanency of marriage. That exception is adultery, but only the innocent party whose mate committed adultery, while in the marriage union, is free to remarry. Any person who is, or shall become, divorce for any other reason, does not have, nor shall obtain by any method, the right to remarry anyone, except the one from which they were originally divorced. By the Word of the Lord they must remain celibate as long as the one from who they were unscripturally divorced lives.

¹¹² Baird, p. 80.

¹¹³ Shelly, p. 554.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 552

¹¹⁵ Thomas, p. 16.

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