

Divorce and Remarriage

**The Churches of God used to teach a "strict" D&R doctrine.
Most now have a much more liberal interpretation of D&R.
But all, past and present, have based their teaching on one significant assumption.
What is that assumption? And is it validated by the Bible scriptures?**

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All quotes are from *The New Kings James Version*
of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

Introduction

We live in a world where divorce and remarriage is common. Statisticians admit it is impossible to come up with totally accurate rates for marriages ending in divorce. The latest statistics are from 2014 and they vary depending upon the source. Some statistics only count divorces for first time marriages. Other statistics count all divorces as many individuals marry and divorce multiple times. In the latter case, the statistics are 10 to 20% higher. The following statistics are based on the latter. The United States doesn't have the highest divorce rate; it is worse in much of Europe. The divorce rate is still high in the U.S. at around 50%. But Spain, Portugal, Luxembourg, the Czech Republic, and Hungary are worse off with divorce rates higher than 60%. Belgium has the highest rate of divorce at a staggering 70%. The lowest rates below 5% are in Chile and India. There are no statistics for most of Africa and some of South America. These are pretty high percentages for the U.S. and Europe, 5 to 7 out of every 10 marriages ending in divorce.

There are a lot of questions that could be asked: why, what are the causes, what are the consequences and what could be done to prevent such a large number? While these are good questions, that is not the main purpose of this article. Before we get to the main question of what does the New Testament teach on this topic, let us ask one other question.

Do two wrongs make a right? On the topic of "Divorce and Remarriage," the world would have us believe the answer is "Yes." Many enter into the marriage contract thinking that if their marriage turns out to be a "mistake," they will just get a divorce and try again until they "get it right". But what does the Bible say about this?

It is unfortunate that many individuals do end up marrying "the wrong person". They then see divorce as the only answer. But both of these situations are "wrongs" and they do not equate to a "right" in New Testament teachings. That is the evil that exists in this world. It is one of the many reasons this world so desperately needs the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to set things to be as they should. In short, for marriage, that would be the educating of young people on how to properly choose a mate. That would include council from their parents, relatives and church leaders. They would be taught God's purpose for marriage so that they would come to respect the sanctity of marriage. There would also be a long engagement period, without sex or living together, to truly get to know the other person and determine if they are indeed a good match. This doesn't happen much in this present age and this results in a lot of divorce and remarriage. What does the Bible say about all this?

The New Testament scriptures are few on the topic of "Divorce and Remarriage". There are many scriptures on marriage itself and other scriptures that state fornication, adultery and incest are sin and to be avoided.

The Gospels mention Jesus' teaching about "Divorce and Remarriage" three separate times. The first time is in Matthew 5:31-32. The second, much the same, is in Luke 16:18. The third and final time with more details is in Matthew 19:3-12, with a parallel account in Mark 10:2-12. Two times the Apostle Paul clearly addresses this issue in Romans 7:2-3 and 1 Corinthians 7:10-15, 39. These scriptures are often misinterpreted based on preconceived beliefs and personally desired conclusions. However, if one carefully reads these scriptures, their meaning is clear.

It is not the purpose of this short article to review and comment on all the discussions by various groups on this topic. The main purpose is to add two additional considerations for those who Biblically study this topic.

A Loving and Merciful God

Before we begin a study of the Bible verses on Divorce and Remarriage, let us remember that God is a loving, merciful and forgiving God. However, that does not give anyone permission to continue in sin. God's desire is that everyone repent so they can be saved.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

We are not saved by our works; we are saved by our faith in the grace of God. However, that doesn't mean we can live a life of sin, that we don't need works of obedience. The Apostle James tells us he will prove he has faith by his works. While our works don't earn us salvation, nothing does but the grace of God, if we truly love God, we will obey His commands.

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

James 2:18 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

John 14:15 If you love Me, keep My commandments.

Regardless of the mistakes we make in our lives, and we all do, as long as we repent, God will forgive us. When we repent, we should also change, change for the better, purging sin from our lives. With that in mind, let us now analyze the teachings of Jesus Christ our Messiah and Savior and the Apostle Paul.

Jesus' Third Teaching on D&R

Jesus' most complete teaching, the third time He discusses this topic, is in Matthew 19. Let's study that first.

Matthew 19:3 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?"

First, notice what question is asked. The Pharisees specifically asked if a man could divorce his wife for any reason. Some try to argue that this scripture can be used in the discussion about whether a marriage is valid or not, therefore determining if one can remarry or not. Even though they have a correct understanding that all

marriages are bound by God except when fraud has been committed, this scripture simply cannot be used to support that conclusion. They try to insist the Greek word "porneia" used later in verse 9, has to mean "fornication" and therefore Jesus is only referring to an invalid marriage where concealed fornication prior to the marriage had not been revealed to the marriage partner. Therefore, they conclude Jesus meant that only such a marriage could be dissolved by divorce, and hence, in such a case, remarriage was legitimate. That is trying to read a preconceived meaning into this scripture. The topic of what is a valid marriage was not an issue in Jewish society. Nor is it the topic of which the Pharisees questioned Jesus. Again, it is not the purpose of this article to rehash all possible topics relative to "Divorce and Remarriage". Suffice to say, the Bible is clear that if fraud has taken place in the initial marriage contract, and discovered in a relatively short period after the marriage, it is not a valid marriage. However, one cannot say several years later, let alone 10 or 20 or more years after the marriage that you have been defrauded and your marriage was never valid. When there is real fraud exposed shortly after the marriage, no marriage has taken place and the defrauded individual is free to marry, in reality, for the first time. But that is not the issue here with which the Pharisees wished to test Jesus.

There was an issue in Jewish society concerning divorce after a valid marriage. There were two general beliefs. One belief was that adultery was the only valid reason for a divorce. The other general belief was that any thing that displeased the husband was "just cause" for a divorce. Remarriage was not an issue for either group once one had officially divorced his wife. This is why the Pharisees asked this "trick" question of Jesus to test Him. They wanted to see whose belief He would endorse and then criticize Him no matter which side He chose.

Jesus, as always, surprised them with the wisdom of God in His answer. He first says that God, from the beginning, never intended for a husband and wife to divorce.

Matthew 19:4-6 And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made *them* at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

Why did Jesus quote from Genesis 2:21-24 in answering the Pharisees' question? There is more than one reason. Jesus' answer was a sarcastic rebuke to the educated Pharisees, why didn't they know the scriptures well enough to know the answer themselves. He also clarifies that their disagreement and argument is with God who first ordained marriage, not with Jesus Himself. Jesus in His answer focuses on the beautiful importance of marriage rather than ugliness of divorce. In addition, this answer that Jesus gave was emphasizing the strong bond between a husband and wife by making a comparison. A child has a strong bond between him or her and their parents who take care of them as they grow up. But the time comes when that bond changes, when a child becomes an adult and leaves his parents in order to establish an even stronger bond with a mate. Jesus quotes the scripture where the *King James* uses the word "cleave" and the *New King James Version* "joined". The Hebrew word used here means to cling, adhere, cleave fast together, be joined together and to stick. It is used like one would talk about "gluing" two objects together. When properly gluing two objects together, the bond would be stronger than the materials being glued, so much so that if there is a break, it will not be with the bond itself. The term is used to mean to so firmly adhere together that nothing can separate them. Jesus makes this comparison to emphasize that the bond of marriage is to be much stronger than the bond between parent and child.

Jesus confirms the unbreakable bond of marriage with His next two statements, "they shall become one flesh" and "what God has joined together, let not man separate". The woman is not property to easily be disposed of, but a being created in the image of God. The Pharisees were looking at marriage and divorce as a physical, legal matter. Jesus told them marriage was a spiritual covenant with God, a covenant that lasts a lifetime.

If we reexamine these verses, we will also see that Jesus gives four reasons why God in His original perfect design never intended a marriage to be broken with a divorce. 1) God created one male and one female in the beginning, not many males and many females where they would have been able to change mates. 2) A man is to leave his parent's family and cleave to his wife to start a new family of their own. 3) In marriage, a man and a woman are no longer two but become one flesh. 4) God joins a man and woman together in a covenant of marriage and mankind should not negate this with a separation of divorce. As God created male and female, He also created marriage. To divorce is to destroy or "kill" a creation of Almighty God. Jesus refers to marriage as an act of God, but He refers to divorce as an act of man.

Matthew 19:7-8 They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?" He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

Notice that the response of the Pharisees clearly indicates they understood Jesus was saying divorce was never intended as an acceptable event between a man and woman united in marriage. But this is not the answer they wanted to hear. The Pharisees were not interested in the original intentions of God for marriage, but justifying their own desires for divorce. Reread their question and note how they use the word "command," – they wanted to believe divorce was part of the laws from God. In this rebuttal, they cited Deuteronomy 24:1-4 where Moses laid down a process for divorce. Moses was the great servant and prophet of God in their eyes. They could not comprehend how he could have enacted laws that contradicted the will of God. But we must note that Jesus' answer states that Moses "permitted" or "allowed" divorce, not that it was part of the commandments and judgments from God. In fact, Jesus states it is just the opposite, that because of the hardness of the Israelite hearts, that is, their very sinful natures, Moses, not God, gave some guidelines for divorce because they would have done it anyway. Moses with this statement neither commanded nor condoned divorce. He simply recognized it as a reality that needed to be dealt with because the Israelites were not going to give up the practice. In reality, Moses did this to try and help protect the women of Israel. In ancient times, among the Israelites, only the husband could divorce his wife – the wife had no legal right to divorce her husband. Women were often treated as property, and treated poorly. In the case of divorce, they could be left with nothing. The guidelines for divorce by Moses were enacted to prevent hardships through the cruelty of their husbands who wished to "get rid of them." However, Jesus again lays down the foundational truth that God never wanted divorce when he created Adam and Eve.

Matthew 19:9 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."

The first half of this verse can easily be misunderstood. One must take into consideration the other statements Jesus made plus what the Apostle Paul wrote in his letters. The question is, did Jesus mean it is okay to remarry if your mate has committed sexual immorality, or, is it only permitted to divorce your mate if they have committed sexual immorality?

The Greek word translated "sexual immorality" here is "porneia". "Porneia" can have a wide range of meanings depending upon the context. This Greek word, counting both the verb and noun usages, is used 55 times in the New Testament. Its meaning can range from unchastity, harlotry, prostitution, incest and adultery to fornication. In general, it is probably best to say the word can represent any type of sex outside of marriage depending upon the context in which it is used. It is also used metaphorically for unfaithfulness to God – "spiritual harlotry" and "spiritual adultery". To limit its usage to "fornication" as in some older versions of English Bibles, would be inconsistent with its usage elsewhere in the New Testament. As stated before, two mistakes are made with this verse. First, some want to force the meaning of "porneia" to only mean fornication because they believe undisclosed sex before marriage is the only reason that allows a person to divorce and then remarry. To address this belief, as stated in the study of the previous verses, it must be remembered that the Pharisees did not ask Jesus about the validity of marriage but about divorce for any cause. Second, most

everyone else wants to believe if you have a mate committing harlotry, in all cases you can divorce them and then are automatically free to remarry. Both of these explanations are "forced" and invalid. The question is then, for what reason did Jesus use "porneia" to answer the Pharisees' question? There is a Greek word that Jesus could have used whose meaning is limited to "adultery". But Jesus did not choose to use this word. Why? The Pharisees asked the question, was it legal to divorce your established and valid mate for any reason. It would appear Jesus did not want to answer that question with a Greek word that meant only "adultery" – "moichao". It would seem adultery alone is not always a valid reason for divorce. Since the question was not about the original validity of a marriage, neither would the meaning of "porneia" in this context be "fornication". In this context the usage would have to the more dreadful meanings of this word: harlotry, whoredom, prostitution or incest.

Another point that should be taken into consideration regarding why "porneia" was used and not "moichao" is that a single act of sexually indiscretion or an "affair" of limited duration that has stopped, is not harlotry or whoredom in the truest sense. In such cases, hopefully the person who has committed such acts will repent and the mate should try and forgive and salvage, heal and reestablish the marriage. Harlotry and whoredom is a "life style" of unrestricted sex over an extended period of time and this is the only valid reason Jesus gave for divorce.

As will become clear in reviewing the other scriptures by Jesus and Paul on this topic, what Jesus meant is that He is only referring to divorce when He says it is permitted when your mate is committing sexual immorality over a long period of time. As Jesus goes on to say, whoever marries someone who is divorced commits adultery – no exceptions in this statement.

Before concluding with Matthew 19:3-11, let us look at the only parallel account in Mark 10:2-12. The first eight verse pretty much mirror Matthew's account. But let's look closely at the last three verses in Mark's account.

Mark 10:10-12 In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same *matter*. So He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

Note that this explanation occurs after the discussion with the Pharisees, an additional clarification for the disciples not included in Matthew's account. There are two points worth our attention in these verses. First, Jesus here does link divorce and remarriage together, as that is usually what happens. But He says, with no exceptions, that divorce and remarriage is adultery. He is not addressing divorce alone, which itself is permitted if a mate is engaged in a lifestyle of sexually immorality. The emphasis here is more on remarriage, which is always adultery if one has a living mate. Second, while in Israel it was only legal for husbands to divorce a wife, it was common among other peoples and nations for the wife to also be able to divorce her husband. Jesus expands His explanation here in Mark to cover both situations.

Continuing now and finishing the study of Matthew's account.

Matthew 19:10-11 His disciples said to Him, "If such is the case of the man with *his* wife, it is better not to marry." But He said to them, "All cannot accept this saying, but only *those* to whom it has been given:

It is obvious from the disciples' reaction, that what Jesus had just finished teaching was very strict, no remarriage with a living mate. Therefore, the disciples wanted to conclude that if you could not remarry after divorce, that you had to remain married to the same person your whole life, it would be better to never marry in the first place. The disciples would not have made a statement like this if they understood that Jesus' teaching liberally allowed for divorce and remarriage. Notice Jesus confirms the strictness of His teaching by saying

most individuals would not be able to accept and practice this teaching. In fact, only those who have an abundance of the Holy Spirit are able to live accordingly.

The Invalid Assumption

A major assumption that many, if not most, make in studying the Biblical topic of "Divorce and Remarriage" is automatically linking the two together. They reason that if there is a valid reason for divorce, then one is automatically granted the right to remarry. They assume a divorce actually breaks or dissolves the marriage contract with God as if that marriage never existed in the first place. However, in spiritual reality from all New Testament scriptures on these topics, divorce and remarriage are two completely separate issues. Yes, they are indeed often related, but they are two totally different events and must be understood separately.

A divorce does separate a man and a woman from living together. But, we are told in other New Testament scriptures by the Apostle Paul that all marriages are still in effect until the death of one partner. While automatic eligibility for remarriage after divorce may have, due to the hardness of their hearts, been true in Old Testament times, it is not validated by Jesus or the apostle Paul. In fact, their statements prove that remarriage is not allowed under any circumstances after a divorce along with the understanding that divorce itself is only allowed under a limited few circumstances. Jesus said that God winked at the hardness of the heart of Old Testament Israelites and overlooked their divorces. This would also be true of their remarriages. However, in his New Testament teaching, Jesus emphasizes that this was not the original intention of God for marriage. Both Jesus and the Apostle Paul give only one reason each for a divorce. But neither give any permission whatsoever for remarriage if one has a living mate. You can find the very few, who are in the minority, that understand and preach this in their teachings. If you look hard enough, you can find websites or commentaries that recognize this truth. Of course, the only determining authority is what God inspired in His Holy Scriptures.

For further clarification on this topic, let us examine Jesus' first statement regarding "Divorce and Remarriage".

Jesus' First Teaching on D&R

Matthew 5:31-32 "Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery."

This is Jesus' first recorded statement on "Divorce and Remarriage". The main thing that should be noted about this scriptural passage is the context in which it is found. This is the chapter where Jesus gives examples of how we are now required to obey the "spirit of the law" in addition to the "letter of the law". The prime example, and so relative to this topic, is found in verses 27 and 28:

Matthew 5:27-28 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, '*You shall not commit adultery.*' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

We should therefore ask ourselves the question, what is the "spirit of the law" for verses 31 and 32? When we read the statement "whoever divorces his wife causes her to commit adultery;" we should realize what is the "spirit of the law". To divorce your mate breaks the God-established marriage covenant and causes them to enter a state of "mental adultery" even before they have a chance to remarry, committing "physical adultery". In that sense, the act of divorce itself, even without physical adultery through remarriage, is now considered

"the spirit of adultery", with one exception – if your mate is now living a lifestyle of sexual immorality. Jesus again uses the Greek word "porneia" here to represent harlotry and whoredom.

There is a relatively new paraphrased translation of the Bible, *The Message*, by Eugene H. Peterson. It captures in modern day-to-day English the intent of this passage.

Matthew 5:31-32 (*The Message*) “Remember the Scripture that says, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him do it legally, giving her divorce papers and her legal rights’? Too many of you are using that as a cover for selfishness and whim, pretending to be righteous just because you are ‘legal.’ Please, no more pretending. If you divorce your wife, you’re responsible for making her an adulteress (unless she has already made herself that by sexual promiscuity). And if you marry such a divorced adulteress, you’re automatically an adulterer yourself. You can’t use legal cover to mask a moral failure.

Jesus’ Second Teaching on D&R

The second statement by Jesus on this topic is in Luke. It is our final analysis of His teachings on this topic.

Luke 16:18 Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from *her* husband commits adultery.

This passage emphasizes the consequences of remarriage more than the act of divorce itself. Therefore, there are no exceptions noted. All remarriages, when one has a living mate, are adultery.

In summary, Jesus Himself stated only one reason where divorce, and divorce alone, not remarriage, is permitted. That is if your mate is living a lifestyle of harlotry and whoredom. But divorce, regardless of the reason, does not break or nullify the marriage contract with God. The marriage contract between a man, a woman and God above is only breakable through death. Any and all remarriages after divorce while a mate is still alive is adultery. The act of divorce itself can be considered "the spirit of adultery" – unless you are divorcing your mate because they are already engaged in harlotry and whoredom.

The inspired scriptures written by Paul will clearly confirm these conclusions.

1 Corinthians 7

1 Corinthians 7:10-15 Now to the married I command, *yet* not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from *her* husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to *her* husband. And a husband is not to divorce *his* wife. But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such *cases*. But God has called us to peace.

1 Corinthians 7:39 A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

The vast majority like to concentrate on verse 15 and the phrase "not under bondage in such cases". They reason this means when an unbeliever wants to divorce their mate, the mate is not under the "bondage of marriage" and hence, then free to remarry. But that conclusion contradicts what the Apostle Paul was inspired

to write in verses 10 to 13 and verse 39. Prior to verse 15, Paul clearly states there should be no divorce in the first place, certainly not by the believer. He plainly states in verse 11 that if the unbeliever divorces the believer, in this case the wife is used as the example believer, the wife is to "remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband." Paul gives only two alternatives. Remarriage is not one of them! Paul summarizes this at the end of the chapter in verse 39. No ambiguity here. A clear, straight forward statement. "A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives ...". Only if her husband dies is she free to remarry.

What then did Paul mean in verse 15 about the wife no longer being "under bondage"? As we now see from Jesus' teachings and what Paul has said in the previous verses, divorce is forbidden except under two somewhat rare conditions: one, harlotry, and two an unbelieving mate who wants a divorce. Paul is saying in the second case, when the unbeliever wants a divorce, the believer is not obligated to stay with the unbeliever, living in the same home under such unfavorable and stressful conditions over which she has no control. Under these strictly limited circumstances, a separation for the sake of peace for the believer is permitted. Paul is not saying she is no longer bound in marriage and free to remarry. He is saying she is free to leave the stressful living conditions, but that she must remain unmarried or in the future, be reconciled to her husband. Paul confirms this with his statement in verse 39. This should be clear to anyone who is truly seeking spiritual truth on this topic and not an excuse to divorce and remarry.

The Apostle Paul added a second reason divorce was allowed because such conditions were not an issue at the time of Jesus' life upon this earth – a "mixed marriage" between a Christian believer and one who is not a disciple of Jesus. He refers to the principle of "peace," living in peace with others before God. A third reason for divorce in this increasing violent modern age can be based on Paul's teachings of living in peace. That would be under circumstances where the lives and safety of the children and mate are at risk. A mate must protect the children and themselves from physical and severe mental and emotional harm. If that means they must separate from their mate, they have an obligation to "preserve life," to be able to live in peace and safety on a day-to-day basis.

Romans 7

Romans 7:1-3 Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to *her* husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of *her* husband. So then if, while *her* husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.

The Apostle Paul inspired by the Holy Spirit clearly states the same laws as he did in 1 Corinthians 7:11 and 39. Marriage is "until death do us part". No exceptions. You may not be living together, you may legally be divorced, but your marriage contract before God is still valid and binding. Only when your mate dies is one released from the marriage contract. If you marry anyone else while your mate is yet alive, you are living in adultery.

Concluding Thoughts

We have a modern day saying when someone is publically relating their personal feelings on a subject, "tell me how you really feel!" Let's ask the question, how does God really feel about divorce? For the answer to this question, let's read from the book of Malachi, this time from *The Message* paraphrased Bible as it captures the meaning in clear, present-day English.

Malachi 2:13-16 (*The Message*) And here's a second offense: You fill the place of worship with your whining and sniveling because you don't get what you want from God. Do you know why? Simple. Because God was there as a witness when you spoke your marriage vows to your young bride, and now

you've broken those vows, broken the faith-bond with your vowed companion, your covenant wife. God, not you, made marriage. His Spirit inhabits even the smallest details of marriage. And what does he want from marriage? Children of God, that's what. So guard the spirit of marriage within you. Don't cheat on your spouse. "I hate divorce," says the God of Israel. God-of-the-Angel-Armies says, "I hate the violent dismembering of the 'one flesh' of marriage." So watch yourselves. Don't let your guard down. Don't cheat.

Several good points become evident from this paraphrased Bible. One, God is a participant in the marriage contract between a man and a woman. Two, one of the purposes of marriage is to produce Godly children. And three, most relevant to this article, God hates divorce, He hates the breakup of the one-flesh union of marriage. Strong words that should not be forgotten.

There are some decisions and experience in this life that last for a lifetime. If we are in an accident and lose a finger, arm or a leg, the consequences are permanent. It is similar in the eyes of God with marriage. Once there is a valid marriage with no deception, that marriage is binding for life, no exceptions. If for some reason a husband and wife can no longer live together and a divorce ensues, God's law is that both parties must remain unmarried or be reconciled. This is difficult for most individuals in this world to comprehend, let alone put into practice. Jesus Himself said it would be next to impossible for most people to accept such strictness. He also said some Christians would have to remain "single" under these circumstances for the rest of their lives in order to make it into the Kingdom of God. Let us remember the words Jesus spoke at the conclusion of His comments on divorce from Matthew 19.

Matthew 19:12 For there are eunuchs who were born thus from *their* mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept *it*, let him accept *it*."

This is not an easy lifestyle in this present world where sex, living together without marriage and all sorts of other related sins are promoted and approved of by most everyone. This scripture must be remembered when we are making decisions regarding doing what is right or giving in to wrong.

Some of the 12 disciples were married. Historical records outside the Bible indicate some of the 12 apostles remained single their whole life, serving God and the church as an unmarried person. The Bible does not tell us if the Apostle Paul was ever married. We do know he was single when he was an apostle ministering to the Gentiles.

1 Corinthians 7:8 But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am;

One should study this entire chapter. Marriage is a good thing. But there are times, when the world is in crisis and Christians are being persecuted, that it might be better to remain unmarried. We are not now in such a time, however, we might be in the near future. Who knows? Under such difficult circumstances the Apostle Paul tells us we can better serve the Lord and His people by remaining single if we already are.

1 Corinthians 7:32-35 But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please *his* wife. There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world—how she may please *her* husband. And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction.

Regardless of the difficulties in our lives, the challenges, the tests and trials, we must remember what our ultimate goal is, the Kingdom of God. We must be prepared to do whatever it takes to reach that goal, the gift of eternal life. The Apostle Paul tells us whatever we experience in this physical life, it is not worthy to be compared to the reward God promises His faithful and obedient disciples in a future life.

Romans 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Summary

This article has presented two additional considerations all should contemplate in their spiritual study of "Divorce and Remarriage". One, remarriage is not automatically granted in the New Testament even when there is a valid reason for divorce. Automatic remarriage after divorce is the major, but invalid, assumption upon which almost all Christians base their understanding of "Divorce and Remarriage". Jesus negated Moses' allowance for divorce with His New Testament teachings. Jesus also said anyone who marries one who is divorced commits adultery. This broke the automatic Old Testament allowance for remarriage after divorce. Paul's inspired writings clarify and confirm these teachings in New Testament times. The second additional consideration is that divorce breaks not only the "letter of the law" as God originally intended marriage from the beginning, but divorce also breaks the "spirit of the law", divorce itself is the "spirit of adultery".

We can ask another question, "Who is your authority? What churches or individuals say about the Bible? Or what the Bible says?" Unfortunately, they are not always the same. Most churches and religions permit divorce and remarriage. Yet, as we study the teachings of Jesus and the Apostle Paul as inspired by God our Father, we see remarriage after divorce is not permitted in New Testament times. Who will you listen too?

No, "two wrongs" do not make a "right" in living our lives before God. God hates divorce! But this world justifies and condones divorce and remarriage for any reason. Just as we are to be faithful to our great God and not commit "spiritual adultery" with other gods, so we should also be faithful with the mate of our youth and not break the "spirit of the law" of God-ordained marriage. It takes spiritual courage to live by all the laws of God.

Yes, God is a loving, merciful and forgiving God. He will forgive us of all past mistakes and sins when we repent. God does expect us to repent and change and obey His laws as we move forward in our Christian lives. Let us conclude with a few scriptures to remind us of the importance of obedience. May God give us all the willpower to obey His laws and doctrines as given by Jesus and recorded in the Bible. May the grace of God grant us the spiritual strength, knowledge and wisdom to live such a life and be an example to others.

Romans 2:13 for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified;

Romans 3:31 Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.

Galatians 5:19, 21 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ... of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

1 John 2:4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.