

Marriage and Divorce: Matthew 19 3-31-13

Matthew 19 contains a great deal of material for our consideration. It answers the great questions about marriage. If we ask "What is Marriage", we find here that the answer is One Man, One Woman, One Life, and One God who creates marriage.

Marriage is a covenant (Because the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Malachi 2:14b). The Bible describes a covenant as a relationship that is the merger of law and a contract (also called a promise). The Bible teaches us too that it cannot be annulled or changed. Finally, the Bible makes it clear that a covenant is something in which those who break it will be punished.

What is the "Law of Marriage"? This is the series of commands given to husbands and wives in the New Testament. "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them." (Colossians 3:18-19) For men, this love means loving a wife like Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25-28). In an earlier lesson, we saw that the Bible tells us that Love = Sacrifice (John 3:16, 1 John 3:16). The "Law of Marriage" for a wife is the holy gift of Submission spoken of in places like Ephesians 5:22-24. Submission is the heart of being a Christian (Philippians 2:3-5); none can come to God unless they first submit.

What is the "Promise of Marriage". We see that in the beginning God said "It is not good that man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18a). We could sum this up with companionship. Too, there is the aspect of sexual intimacy, which is prohibited outside of marriage, but blessed within marriage (Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled Hebrews 13:4a).

Jesus used this information to teach those who questioned Him about God's mind towards divorce (and remarriage). God understands the sorrow of divorce firsthand; the Bible says He divorced Israel for infidelity (Isaiah 50:1). "For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence," (Malachi 2:16). Jesus made it abundantly clear; "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)

Let us look closely in this matter: Jesus said that the sin of remarriage was not divorce, but adultery. Since God is the one who defines marriage, that He calls this the condition of adultery says a great deal. Remarriage without cause is adultery. It is not a "one time" sin; adultery is living in sin. When someone is living in sin, the way they repent is by quitting.

Let us use our current debate on "gay marriage" as an example. Imagine two men marry in the eyes of the law. Are they married in the eyes of God? Imagine they adopt three children too. Now imagine that they read the word of God and are convicted of sin, and submit to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Will they be permitted to remain as they were called into Christ? We would answer this in the negative, that their "marriage" is not marriage in the eyes of God, but homosexuality. We know this because God said marriage was one *man* and one *woman*. It does not fit the definition. I Corinthians 6:9 says homosexuals cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. They must repent.

Is this so different that the man and woman who, being divorced, remarry? God does not call this a marriage, but adultery. Again, it does not fit His definition of marriage as being *one* man and *one* woman

for life. If they come to the Lord by obedience to the Gospel, they too would not be permitted to remain as they were called to Christ. The same passage which condemns homosexuality condemns adultery.

God's View of divorce is that it is terrible, and that the consequences of divorce and remarriage (and many other sins) are terrible. Might God compel some to "separate"? We can see that the answer is an obvious "yes". Even so, Jesus made it even more clear when He followed his teaching by saying "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." (Matthew 19:12)

Therefore, we MUST teach about marriage, divorce and remarriage. We need to communicate in every way that marriage is SERIOUS, and a matter of judgment. Marrying "In the Lord" is the best way; this means to marry in a manner that is defined by the Lord as marriage. (1 Corinthians 7:39)