

**“Divorce, and the Heart of God”**

**Matt 19:1-12**

**Scripture Ref: Deut 24:1-4; Gen 2:24; Gen 1:27-28; Eph 5:25-27; John 8:10-11; Rom 8:1-5**

1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth
  - a. And as He looked upon His creation, He said *“It is good”*
  - b. Then God formed man from the dust of the earth, and breathed into him the breath of life
  - c. And then God looked at the man and said *“it is not good... that this man be alone”*
  - d. So after God had formed every animal, God brought them before Adam, one by one, to name them.
  - e. And you have to wonder, as Adam named each one, *“Mr & Mrs elephant, Mr & Mrs wolf, Mr & Mrs chimpanzee.... Hmm, what is missing?”*
  - f. Gen 2:20 tells us *“So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him”*
2. Therefore, God put Adam into a deep sleep, and God removed a piece of Adam, and He used it to form Eve, and when Adam awoke and saw her for the first time, He said *“Wo-man!”*
  - a. *Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh (Gen 2:24)*
3. Why do I open with this? Because today we are going to learn some things about marriage, and the antithesis of marriage – divorce.
  - a. What we are going to look at today is not what man says, or society, or the courts, or the counselors... but what God’s word says about ...
    - i. The purpose of marriage
    - ii. The characteristics of marriage
    - iii. The destruction of marriage

**We begin with “The Argument”**

Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings, that He departed from Galilee and came to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. 2 And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there.

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?"

4. Like many who ‘argue religion’, these men were not seeking truth, but were only interested in defending their position

- a. See, in that day there were two schools of thought regarding marriage and divorce – both based on the same scripture in Deuteronomy:

*Deut 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, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house..."

- b. One Rabbi, Hillel, was more of a “progressive”, and he taught that according to this law of Moses, there were a multitude of reasons that a man could divorce his wife.
- i. According to Hillel interpretation of Deut 24, if a man found anything displeasing about his wife, maybe she burned his breakfast, or if he found another women more appealing,
  - ii. ...that would render his wife “unclean” and he could divorce her. (...OK, that could be one way of interpreting Moses words...!)
- c. Another Rabbi, Shammai, more of a conservative, taught that the uncleanness that Moses was referring to was sexual sin,
- d. and that it was the only reason that a man could divorce his wife.
5. “So Jesus” they are asking, “which is it? Under what circumstances can a man divorce his wife?” Are you with Hillel, or Shammai?
- a. And you know what? We could debate that all day long...
6. Here is the thing – the question itself reveals something about the condition of their hearts...
- a. The very fact that they are looking for the measure – just like Peter was looking for the ruler that would tell him when He could cut off his brother...
  - b. The question they were asking was looking for the ruler – the reason – that a man could justifiably divorce his wife.
  - c. ... it is like the guy that is looking for a fight: He really wants to hurt someone, and he is just looking for a reason to fire off
  - d. ... or the drunk that is looking for a reason to drink
  - e. ... and some people are in that place- they are looking at their husband or wife, and they are looking for a “good enough reason” to end the marriage.
7. But the thing is - if read the rest of what Moses taught, it becomes clear that Moses was not teaching that “if there is a problem you must divorce”

*Deut 24:2* ...when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife, 3 if the latter husband detests her and

*writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, 4 then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.*

- a. **What Moses was teaching was that if there were some irreconcilable problem – and I believe he was referring to sexual sin, and if the husband did divorce his wife because of it...**
  - b. **And if that women then married another man (which Moses did not condemn), and the second marriage ended up breaking up...**
  - c. **...then the first husband could not remarry the woman again.**
  - d. **Wow – that sounds pretty mixed up, doesn't it?**
- 8. That is why Jesus, in His response, goes back even further than Moses – back to God's institution of marriage (answer is not A or B)**
- a. **Jesus tells these men "I am not aligning with Hillel, or Shimmai; I am aligning with God.**

4 And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' 5 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'? 6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

- 9. In other words – let's go back further – to what God initially did – what God initially meant...**

7 They said to Him, *(if that is the case)* "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?"

8 He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives,

- 10. Jesus tells them: "Guys, Moses was not commanding you to divorce your wife, he was permitting you to – because of the hardness of your hearts..."**

- a. **The key is found in this little phrase that Jesus utters:**

...but from the beginning it was not so.

- 11. "In the beginning" – Jesus goes back to the beginning when God created man and woman, to the beginning when He ordained the institution of marriage:**

**Gen 2:24** *Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh*

**12. These scriptures tell us a few things:**

### **The Purpose of Marriage**

**13. When God created the earth, and the animals, and then man – He had a plan – a multifaceted plan, that I will give two points...**

- a. #1 - God instituted marriage in order that mankind would “populate the earth.**

#### **Gen 1:27-28**

*27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

- i. And the family unit would be the backbone that would allow each generation to not only procreate...**
- ii. But to pass on the collective knowledge of God and the world we live in to each successive generation**
- b. #2 –” Man was created “in the image of God” – in other words man would be a representative of God on the earth.**

#### **Eph 5:25-27**

*25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.*

- i. Similarly, marriage is a representation of the relationship between God and man**
- ii. We are the “Bridge of Christ” – presented to Christ ‘holy and without blemish”**

**14. We also see from Genesis...**

### **The characteristics of marriage**

**15. #1 - Marriage is a divinely appointed union: It was not created by man, but by God.**

- a. Because it was designed by God, man does not have the authority to change the structure – only God does.**

- b. Jesus said: “Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate”
  - c. In other words – only God can set the terms of when a marriage could be terminated
  - d. For which God gave ONE instance – adultery. (but more on that in a moment) not “irreconcilable differences” or “he doesn’t love me” or “she wont submit to me”
- 16.#2 - Marriage is a physical union: It is a union that is consummated by the physical sexual relationship between a husband and a wife.
- a. That is why sex outside the marriage is considered sin – it goes against God’s design.
  - b. As a Christian – one of the worst things you can do to your pre-marital relationship is start having sex.
  - c. Why? Because it pushes the relationship to a place that it is not yet ready for, because the commitment of the marriage vow has not been made.
  - d. You ignore other aspects of the relationship that you SHOULD be looking at, because you are physically involved.
  - e. And if the relationship ends, as many do, then the tear and pain is great because you have given yourself physically
  - f. Each time it happens, it hardens your heart -
- 17.#3 - Marriage is a union between one man and one woman: Marriage was instituted between Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve; enough said!
- 18.#4 - Marriage is a permanent union: God stated that the two “will become one flesh” – something that is joined into one cannot be separated.
- a. Well, actually you can separate something that has been joined, but it is painful, and it causes permanent scars.

## The Destruction of marriage

8 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.

- 19.Ok – so let’s clarify what Jesus I saying...
- a. God’s design for marriage was that it would be a divine union, a physical union, a union between a man and a woman, and a permanent union...
  - b. But – because of the hardness of your hearts, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives.

- c. In other words, God, knowing the limitations of man, understood that certain actions in the marriage are very damaging – specifically when one partner has a sexual encounter outside the marriage.
- 20. All Jesus is doing here is helping us to understand – If a divorce is done under any reason except adultery, then those people should not remarry.**
- a. If they do – they are living in adultery.

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."

- 21. See, Deut 24 doesn't say "you must divorce your spouse if that happens," or even "you should divorce your spouse if that happens,"**
- a. But "you are permitted to divorce your spouse" if that happens.
- 22. In other words, there might be a better way... maybe even though there is hurt and damage and even betrayal, there may be another alternative...**
- a. Perhaps with the new covenant of grace that was ushered in by Jesus, there could be a new way –
  - b. Lets see, if only we had an example from Jesus... wait – I remember one!
  - c. In John chapter 8, the Pharisees brought a woman caught in the act to Jesus, and they asked him "shouldn't we stone her?"

**John 8:10-11**

*He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" 11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."*

- 23. Let's see, Jesus did not stone this woman according to the OT law.**
- a. And He didn't tell her "go find your husband, because he needs to divorce you right away, you cheater!"
  - b. He said "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more"
- 24. In other words – because of Christ, we now have the power of forgiveness that can be applied to any situation -**
- a. And even in the case of a very painful revelation of sexual infidelity in the marriage, if there is repentance – there can be restoration!
  - b. Remember

**Eph 5:26-27** ...that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

c. Wait are we really “holy, without blemish?” YES – but ONLY – ONLY because of the blood of Jesus Christ, and the forgiveness found at the foot of the cross!

25. “But wait” you say, didn’t Jesus say “whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery”

a. “Well, years ago before I became a Christian, my marriage broke up. But they I remarried a man and we are trying to serve the Lord... I am condemned because of that?”

b. Well, to answer that – I would look to another OT example that we have...2 Samuel: David covets his general's wife Bathsheba, he sleeps with her, impregnates her, then in a terrible twist, sends Uriah into the heat of battle so that he is killed in order to cover up his crime.

c. God held him accountable for that – the son that was born died – but then something interesting happened. David and Bathsheba had another son, a son named Solomon, who became the greatest King that Israel had.

d. It seems to me that God is not a God of condemnation, but of restoration...

26. Maybe that is what Paul meant in Romans 8...

**Rom 8:1-5**

*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.*

**Mal 2:16**

16 "For the LORD God of Israel says That He hates divorce,

**1 Cor 7:12-16**

12 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. 13

*And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. 14 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. 15 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. 16 For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?  
NKJV*

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