

Jesus' Teaching On
Marriage, Divorce and
Remarriage



The teaching of our Lord in regard to divorce and remarriage can be seen in Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-12; Mark 10:2-12 and Luke 16:18. There are a number of other Scriptures relating to the binding effect of Jesus' teaching and the time period wherein his teaching would be authoritative.

ANALYSIS OF MATTHEW 19:3-12

The Pharisees sought to put the master debater, our Lord, in an intellectual dilemma. They asked Jesus if a man could scripturally (with God's approval) put away his wife for every cause (v. 3). Jesus rebuked their ignorance of God's Word and quoted Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:24 implying that they had ignored the very law which they claimed to know well. Then He pointed out that God's original intention was that of one man-one woman-for life (vs. 4-6). Their flimsy reply is seen in reference to their misplaced allegiance (v. 7). He reveals the reason for the laxity of Moses' Law, then shows that "it" (the divorce practice) was not in God's original intention (v. 8). The "**beginning**" refers to the beginning of

the institution of marriage (cf. Gen. 2:18-25, Adam and Eve). The key verse in this passage is verse 9 where Jesus teaches His new, higher law in regard to divorce and remarriage:

"And I say unto you" - The one we are to listen to is not Moses or Abraham, but "I" (Jesus). He is now the authoritative leader in the religious realm (cf. Mt. 28:18; Col. 3:17 & Jn. 1:17).

"Whosoever" - This is a universal term. Therefore, Jesus' teaching is binding on Jew and Gentile, male and female, bond or free, two Christians, two non-Christians, or the Christian and the non-Christian who enter the institution of marriage. All are amenable (accountable) to Christ's law of marriage, divorce and remarriage in the Christian Age.

"put away" - This refers to divorce.

"fornication" - This word is from the Greek word *porneia* and is:

"...used of every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse" (*Ardt & Gingrich*); would include not only unlawful heterosexual human relations, but also the unnatural vices of homosexuality and bestiality. Under the law of Moses both of the latter were punishable by death (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; also Ex. 22:19; Lev. 20:15-16). And in Rom. 1:26-27, both male and female homosexuality (sodomy and lesbianism) are indicated as being even more reprehensible than heterosexual immorality." (Cecil N. Wright, *Analysis Of Matthew 5:32-33, The Spiritual Sword*, Jan. 1975. Vol. 6, Num. 2, p. 13).

"and shall marry another" - This refers to

contracting another marriage which is to a third party.

"committeth adultery" - This expression is from one Greek word *moichatai* and "This verb is in the present tense, the force of which is *continuous* action. It means: 'keeps on committing adultery.'" (*The Spiritual Sword*, Jan. 1975, p. 17).

"whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" - The third party is brought into an adulterous union as a result of marrying an **ineligible** person, ineligible according to the New Testament of Jesus Christ.

The reaction of the immediate disciples of Christ is seen in verses 10-12. The disciples understood the strictness of Jesus' teaching and suggested that celibacy would be better than being married (v. 10). Thus, the disciples' response evidences a lack of faith on their part. Next, Jesus taught that those who determine to do the will of God on this issue can do it, but those who choose to do the damning will of Satan will reject the teaching on this issue (v. 11). Jesus then listed three classes of Eunuchs (a *eunuch* is a neuter male).

- ◆ Those born with a physical defect.
- ◆ Those made eunuchs by men.
- ◆ "... and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake."

In this third category our Lord refers to persons who hear His teaching, determine to believe and obey His teaching, and thus rightly choose to live celibate lives to avoid living in adultery.