

Sorting Out Divorce And Remarriage

To understand the importance of the commands of Jesus regarding divorce and remarriage, we need to evaluate the status of the different parties. First, the Lord's instructions with regard to the man (Matthew 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18). The man who divorces his wife for some other cause than fornication does not have a right to remarry. If he does, he commits adultery.

Second, the Lord's instructions with regard to the woman. It is the same as for the man but is mentioned only in Mark 10:11-12. The woman who divorces her husband for some cause other than fornication does not have a right to remarry. If she does, she commits adultery (Romans 7:2-3).

Third, the Lord's instructions regarding the innocent, dismissed party (Matthew 5:32; Mark 10:11). We have two reasons why a man should not divorce his wife, except for fornication, and marry another. First, "*causeth her to commit adultery*" -- if he divorced his wife for other than the scriptural cause, he exposes his wife to sinful temptation (1 Corinthians 7:8-9). Think of the jeopardy a man puts a woman in, when she married because she did not have self-control and the man destroys the marriage for something other than the scriptural reason for divorce. If she seeks to satisfy her desires outside of marriage, she sins, or if she marries again, she sins. Jesus says that it is wrong for a man to open his wife to such jeopardy. Second, "*committeth adultery against her*" -- this shows the seriousness of the sin of adultery. He not only sins against God, but against his wife, and to obtain forgiveness, he must repent and confess his sin to both. Some think that as long as they can hide their unfaithfulness, everything is all right; on the contrary, they have sinned against their companion, and if they want to be saved eternally, they must repent and ask for forgiveness.

Fourth, the Lord's teaching concerning the third party (Matthew 5:32; 19:9; Luke 16:18). The third party who either marries one who was divorced without scriptural grounds, or marries one who was divorced because of guilt of fornication, commits adultery. This definitively proves that there are consequences for everyone involved in an adulterous relationship.

Fifth, the Lord's instructions regarding the guilty party -- the one who is guilty of committing adultery against his married companion. The guilty party does not have a right to remarry anyone they please as seen in the expression, "*... Whoso marrieth her that is put away doth commit adultery.*" The only instance in which the innocent one is free to remarry is a reconciliation (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

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