

Erroneous Divorce And Remarriage Doctrines

Introduction. A study of God's word will find that the institution of marriage has been under constant attack all throughout the time of the Bible. It began with Lamech (Genesis 4:19). Abraham certainly knew God's law of marriage, as well as Abimelech (Genesis 12:10-20; 20:1-7). It was a problem in the days of Moses, because certain behaviors had to be regulated. Even in the days of Jesus there were different beliefs on this subject. Jesus was asked His view in order to trap Him and put him at odds with the Jews (Matthew 19:3). Paul answered some questions about divorce and remarriage that the Corinthians had written to him (1 Corinthians 7). This lesson will present an overview of several of the current erroneous doctrines.

I. ***The Teaching Of Jesus Was Old Testament Doctrine***

- A. This doctrine contends that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were not supposed to be a part of the New Testament. They teach that unless the apostles taught the doctrine, we must leave it in the Old Testament. Because the apostles never made the exception allowance as did Jesus in Matthew 19, then that law is not binding upon us today.
- B. Some brethren have even taken the position that the Catholic church was responsible for putting a New Testament title page in front of Matthew instead of Acts where it belongs. They teach that we are guilty of allowing Catholic doctrines to influence us. If there is a particular Catholic doctrine that happens have a "thus saith the Lord," we accept it.
- C. May a testator express his will before his death?
 1. A testator often expresses at least part of his will before his death. This was no different with Jesus (Hebrews 9:16-17).
 - a) The fact that it has no power "while" the testator lives necessarily implies that it exists in some form while the testator lives.
 - b) Men write their wills before their deaths. The will may not be fully revealed until later, but it must exist and may be expressed before death.
 2. The Old Testament went out of force when Jesus died on the cross.
 - a) It was nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14).
 - b) It was abolished in Jesus' death (Ephesians 2:15).
 3. The New Testament went into force after the death of Christ (Hebrews 9:17). But some expressions of the content of the New Testament were definitely made before the death of Jesus. Note these examples:
 - a) Love for God (John 14:23-25).
 - b) The Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:28).
 - c) The new birth (John 3:5, 16).

- d) The building of the church (Matthew 16:18).
 - e) Teaching all nations (Mark 16:15-16).
- D. How do the writers of Acts-Revelation treat the words and actions of Jesus?
1. They indicate that Jesus' words and actions are binding on those of the New Testament. Note these examples:
 - a) Giving and receiving (Acts 20:35).
 - b) Suffering injustice (1 Peter 2:19-21).
 - c) Marriage (1 Corinthians 7:10, 12).
 - d) The Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).
 2. The apostles and prophets reveal that our salvation was first spoken by the Lord (Hebrews 2:3).
 3. We must consent to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 6:3-4). Therefore, they bound the words of Jesus!

II. ***The Alien Sinner Is Not Amenable To The Laws Of Christ***

- A. As many of you know, this is one of the more prominent positions. The main point of this teaching is that the ignorant cannot be held accountable for their promiscuity, but they can be held accountable for their unbelief. They would teach that a person who had previous marriages would be released from them by their individual baptism, thus making them a new creature. The new convert would then be taught that their current spouse is the one that they are bound to for life.
- B. Jesus taught that God's marriage laws transcended all laws, whether they be New Covenant laws, the Mosaic Covenant laws, the Abrahamic Covenant laws, and the laws of morality recognized by faithful Gentiles (Matthew 19:4-6). A study of authority will demonstrate that the sovereignty of God and the authority of Christ applies to all people (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-23).
- C. If the alien sinner is not amenable to God's marriage law, how then could one be judged a sinner? Yet there were sinners in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. Brethren get confused because they view marriage as a "church ordinance." But it is not an "ordinance;" it is God's law.

III. ***Baptism Changes An Adulterous Relationship***

- A. This argument states that since baptism washes away "all" sins, a person living in an adulterous relationship, when baptized, may remain in the now sanctified relationship. If God forgives all sins, why should He remember a past sin of adultery?
- B. Although it is true that sin is washed away during our baptism, certain facts must be noted:
 1. Baptism is preceded by repentance. There must be a sorrowful turning away from those things which are contrary to God, and

- starting a life of acceptable behavior.
2. Once a person is baptized, he is a new creature and his old sins and behavior should not continue.
- C. Baptism does not change a sinful relationship into a right one. All external relationships still are governed by God's laws. Baptism does not change a sinful act into a righteous one. What is sinful behavior before baptism is sinful behavior after baptism.
1. Baptism washes away the guilt of past sins, but does not wash away the guilt of future sins. How can you be forgiven for something that has not taken place?
 2. What has happened in the past has absolutely no bearing upon the condition of our soul. It is our present relationship that we are in which will determine our relationship with God (Ezekiel 18:25-28).
- D. Although we have liberty in Christ, we do not have license to keep sinning. According to Jesus, one is an adulterer or adulteress as long as the first spouse is alive except in the case where the first spouse committed fornication.
1. One will not know when he becomes a Christian everything that is sinful. But as he grows and develops and has an attitude of service to Christ, he will change all things in his life that is against God's laws. If he learns of any sin he is committing, he will remove it from himself (Proverbs 28:13).
 2. When the Corinthians became Christians, they turned away from their sins (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). "And such were some of you" indicates that they no longer were guilty of practicing the sins which they formerly practiced.

IV. ***Couples In Adultery Do Not Have To Separate***

- A. We are told that we have no New Testament example of anyone being told that he must separate from an unlawful relationship, either by the apostles or other inspired writers. Therefore, we should give up the sinful practice of telling people in a second (unlawful) marriage that they should separate.
- B. It has been further stated that Peter did not tell anyone on Pentecost that they had to give up their spouses. They lived in a time when divorce and remarriage was commonplace, and certainly some if not many of the three thousand must have been in this sinful relationship.
- C. Why should we highlight this one fact when in fact there are many matters Peter did not address on Pentecost? Do we assume by silence that the sinful practices were acceptable to God?
 1. Peter did not teach the people about the Lord's supper, did he?
 2. Peter did not discuss the qualifications of elders and deacons, did he?

3. Peter did not discuss the return of Christ, did he?
 4. What did he discuss? Let us notice what these false promoters are ignoring in Acts 2:40-41. What were those many other words? No one knows for sure. But even if Peter did not discuss adulterous relationships, the silence of the scriptures does not authorize or allow them in this passage.
- D. Every passage that demands repentance is a passage that demands adulterous couples to separate (2 Corinthians 12:20-21; Revelation 9:20-21).

V. **Mental Divorce**

- A. This doctrine states that a godly, put away mate, who did not want the divorce, has the right to remarry when their mate subsequently commits adultery after the divorce. But this position requires two divorces:
1. A legal or civil divorce.
 2. A mental act within the heart at some later point.
- B. The scriptures are not this ambiguous and wherever the terms "divorce" or "put away" are used in reference to a marriage they have a singular meaning. A divorce is a divorce in whatever society one may live. When one has been divorced they cannot turn around and divorce the person that has already divorced them. A person is either the one being divorced or the one doing the divorcing, they cannot be both at the same time.
- C. This position implies at least two pertinent points:
1. There can be no real divorce unless scriptural grounds are present. Now if there can be no real divorce unless scriptural grounds are present, why did Jesus say, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication ..." (Matthew 19:9)? The very fact that the exception clause is found in Matthew 19:9 is proof that two people can actually be divorced for unscriptural reasons but, nevertheless, they are divorced.
 2. One cannot be divorced or put away unless they mentally agree to it. But what passage teaches that in order for one to actually be divorced they must agree to it? What passage allows them to reserve themselves mentally from a divorce, claim to still be married and not be "really" divorced? One may indeed sin against his wife by divorcing her with unscriptural cause against her will but, nevertheless, is it not still a divorce?
- D. This position allows what has come to be called the "waiting game." If we may have the "mental divorce" at the end of a marriage, then why can we not have a "mental marriage" before the legal requirements are met? Indeed, is this not the very reasoning claimed by those who

insist that two people may cohabit as long as they have a "meaningful relationship" and plan to get married anyhow?

- E. Furthermore, 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 considers an unscriptural divorce. If reconciliation is not possible, they were to "remain unmarried." This command is proof that a divorce, even an unscriptural divorce, dissolves a marriage. Those who favor this divorce view would have us believe that Jesus did not mean what He actually said. They want us to believe that what Jesus meant is this: "... and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery, unless the divorced woman, who didn't want the divorce in the first place, waited until her ex-husband committed adultery, having kept herself pure and chaste in the intervening time, and then executed a mental repudiation of that ex-husband."

VI. **Remarriage Is Acceptable When The Unbeliever Departs**

- A. This error finds its basis in 1 Corinthians 7:15. Errorists say it teaches that the abandoned Christian is not under bondage to keep their marital vows; that is, they are no longer married in God's sight.
- B. However, the word "bondage" in verse 15 is not the same word "bound" in verse 39, which is the common word for marriage.
 - 1. The word in verse 39 is *deo*. Thayer says it means "to bind, tie, fasten, e.g., to fasten with chains; also, to put under obligation, e.g., to be bound to one (Romans 7:2)."
 - 2. The word in verse 15 is *douloo* and means "to be under bondage, held by constraint of law or necessity, in some matter" (Thayer, p. 158). It is the Greek word for "slave" or "bondservant."
- C. Verse 15 is simply saying that if the unbeliever departs, you are no longer obligated to him. You are not responsible to serve him or be in service to him.
 - 1. A wife is commanded to be in subjection to her unbelieving husband, but if he leaves, she is not under that subjection.
 - 2. That is, she is not obligated to follow after him and try to cook his meals and serve his needs.
 - 3. The teaching in verse 15 which says they can be remarried to someone else contradicts what Paul said in verses 10-11. It also contradicts the Lord who gave only one exception for divorce and remarriage (Matthew 19:9; 5:32).

Conclusion. These are only a few of the many erroneous doctrines. Some of these interrelate to each other as some of the teachers of one doctrine have adopted the ideas from other doctrines. Many of these people employ emotional arguments to teach that we who demand Bible authority for divorce and remarriage situations are hurting and causing unjust pain.

They teach that we are cruel to cause suffering by breaking up a home.

We all realize that the teaching of these kinds of doctrines eventually leads to a discussion of fellowship. If people end up in adulterous relationships because of false teaching, we violate the principles of the New Testament by extending fellowship to them. We furthermore violate those same principles by extending fellowship to those who teach false doctrine. May God give us the strength to be bold yet firm in our dealings with His truth.