

SCRIPTURAL TEACHINGS CONCERNING MARRIAGE,

DIVORCE, and REMARRIAGE

Part One

After Baptism

① There can only be one way of understanding the Truth concerning the Scriptural teachings on divorce and remarriage: that is, to approach the matter in the same way we would on any other important teaching of Scripture. The Truth is based on "First Principles", or fundamental teachings. Everything has a foundation to it. God's house is built on the foundation of the "Gospel of the Kingdom" and the "Name of Jesus Christ". Therefore, on the question of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, we must know what the Scriptural teaching is on the fundamental principle instituted by God on the matter of marriage itself.

② Let the Scripture testify what this is. In Genesis chapter 2, verse 24, we find this statement: "Therefore shall a man leave his Father and Mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be ONE FLESH." No one can question what this means. The principle is that, in God's sight, TWO have become one. Christ teaches this same principle in several places in the gospels. We turn to Matthew chapter 19, verse 3: "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him; Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" Before going into Christ's answer, we want to note two important things.

③ First, note the phrase, "TEMPTING HIM" (Greek "TRY HIM"). They knew there were two different beliefs on divorce. The School of Hillel allowed a man to put away his wife for any cause, whereas the School of Shammai only allowed divorce for adultery. To tempt Christ the Pharisees placed him in the position of having to decide which of the two interpretations of the law concerning divorce would be correct. Christ chose neither. This should teach us that both were wrong. If a man under the law could divorce his wife for adultery, the School of Shammai would have been correct, and Christ would have so stated.

④ Second, note the phrase, "Is it lawful". There can only be one understanding of this. They were asking Christ concerning the "Law of Moses." In the Law of Moses were there any teachings concerning divorce? What were they?

⑤ Here I would like to underline another point. The Pharisees asked Christ one question, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" The question of remarriage is not in the question.

⑥ Christ's answer to the Pharisees clearly teaches the true principle of marriage as taught in Genesis chapter 2, verse 24; therefore, it is God's real answer to any question on this important subject matter. In Matthew 19, verse 4, we find the following: "Have ye not read, that he that made them in the beginning, made them male and female, (v. 5), and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh. (v. 6) Therefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. WHAT GOD THEREFORE HATH JOINED TOGETHER, LET NOT MAN PUT ASUNDER." In Malachi 2, verse 15, last clause, and verse 16, first clause, we read: "Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously (unfaithfully or deceitfully) against the wife of his youth. For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away."

⑦ We see the principle set forth clearly. Once a man and a woman marry, they are joined together in the sight of God, and nothing should put them asunder. Asunder should be understood according to the subject matter. The question the Pharisees asked was "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?" Therefore, the term "put away" refers to divorce. The terms "put asunder" and "put away" are the same as divorce. All these terms are the exact opposite to being "JOINED TOGETHER".

⑧ Are there other Scriptures that support this teaching of Genesis chapter 2, verse 24, and Christ's teaching on the true principle of marriage? Yes! Romans 7, verse 2: "For a woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband SO LONG AS HE LIVETH." Again, 1 Corinthians 7, verses 10-11: "And unto the married I command, yet not I, BUT THE LORD. Let not the wife depart from her husband, BUT and if she depart, let HER REMAIN UNMARRIED, OR be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife." Again, "put away", or divorce her, or put asunder. Also we would like to emphasize Paul's reminder "Yet not I, but the Lord" commanded him to teach this.

Let's now look at two clear testimonies of Christ's concerning this matter. First in Luke 16, verse 18: "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery." In this testimony we have no questions from the Pharisees, as in Matthew 19, but we have the clear teaching of Christ to those who would follow him. The point we would like to emphasize is that any time Christ speaks to his disciples, (therefore to all His Household of Faith), he makes no mention of any permission to divorce, or to remarry. Therefore, the true principle of marriage, which is "let no man put asunder", should and must be upheld by all who are Christ's followers.

Second, in Mark 10, verse 10: "And in the house His disciples asked him again of the same matter." What matter? The matter of verses 2-9, on what was said between the Pharisees and Christ on the subject of divorce. Why? Because Christ would instruct his disciples with the true principles of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, acceptable to God. They are Christ's instructions to his true followers. Christ's answer to his disciples is (verse 11): "Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her and if a woman shall put away her husband and be married to another, she committeth adultery." To emphasize the fact that this is Christ's commandment to his followers, let us remember that under the law of Moses a woman could not put away her husband for any cause. Therefore, when Christ says a woman putting away her husband commits adultery (Mark 10:11), we know he is now instructing his household, who after his death would no longer be subject to the Law of Moses. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 7, verse 11, states that a woman who departs from her husband must remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. In Romans 7, verse 2, Paul says she is bound by the law of her husband so long as he lives, upholding the principle Christ sets forth in Luke 16, verse 18, and Mark 10, verse 11. Concerning a man, Paul upheld Christ's teaching in 1 Corinthians 7, verse 11 (last clause): "...and let not the husband put away (divorce) his wife."

To support the above conclusion, we would go to Matthew 19, verse 10: "His disciples say unto him, if the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry." What did they mean? We find the answer in verse 9. Rather than get into such a problem as revealed, then would it not be good to remain unmarried? Christ then said to them: "All men cannot receive this saying, SAVE THEM TO WHOM IT IS GIVEN." Let us pause and try to understand Christ's teaching. There are two classes of followers of Christ: First, those who obey His voice and commandment; these are those to whom it is given. And second, those who disobey the instructions of Christ -- namely, the men who cannot receive this saying. Again to emphasize his teaching, Christ shows that there are eunuchs -- some born so, others made so by men, and those who make themselves so for the Kingdom of God's sake. The ones who are eunuchs for the Kingdom of God's sake are those who have a wife who has departed or divorced him. He remains unmarried, because he is one of those to WHOM IT IS GIVEN." Christ said, last clause of verse 12: "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." The others are those who do not obey Christ because of the hardness of their hearts. These "cannot receive this saying."

We have quoted Paul in Romans 7, verse 2, concerning a woman being bound by the law of her husband, as long as he liveth. We would like to conclude this part of our consideration with what we believe establishes all we have said. Paul recaps his declaration in verse 2 by saying, verse 3: "SO THEN IF, WHILE HER HUSBAND LIVETH, SHE BE MARRIED TO ANOTHER MAN, SHE SHALL BE CALLED AN ADULTERESS." This applies to the man as well. A man cannot put away his wife, because SHE IS BOUND BY LAW AS LONG AS SHE LIVES, TO BE HIS WIFE.

If I could say anything about this, I would say, the Lord has spoken; therefore, it is for us to obey and receive the Word.

We still have to consider the matter of Matthew 19, verses 7-9, and Mark 10, verses 3-5, as also Matthew 5, verses 31 and 32.

First, Matthew 19, verse 7. After Christ had said in verse 6, "Let no man put asunder," the Pharisees said, "Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?" The Pharisees are still trying to tempt or try Christ.

The next verse becomes a very important verse to understand, because it is Christ's actual answer to the Pharisees concerning the only place found under the law, where divorce was permissible. It is found in Deuteronomy 24, verses 1-4. Christ's answer to the Pharisees was very emphatic. Matthew 19, verse 8: "And he saith unto them, Moses because of the HARDNESS OF YOUR HEARTS SUFFERED YOU TO PUT AWAY YOUR WIVES, BUT FROM THE BEGINNING IT WAS NOT SO."

TWO POINTS SHOULD BECOME CLEAR TO US. FIRST, the phrase "HARDNESS OF YOUR HEARTS." I have never believed that God would be pleased with HARD HEARTS. We read in Hebrews 3, verse 8: "Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." (v. 12), "Take HEED, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." (v. 15), "While it is said Today if ye will hear his words, harden not your hearts." Proverbs 28, verse 14: "Happy is the man that FEARETH ALWAY: BUT HE THAT HARDENETH HIS HEART SHALL FALL INTO MISCHIEF." One might answer by saying, Christ said God "suffered them to do so." That does not mean THAT GOD WAS PLEASED WHEN THEY DID SO. If a man took a wife and found some uncleanness in her (or the "unseemly thing"), and he hardened his heart, God allowed the man to put her away by giving her a writing of divorcement. It was for the sake of the woman, so she would not have to become the wife of a man who had a hard heart to her, that God allowed the man to give her a writing of divorcement. She then could become the wife of another man. A man of God who had betrothed a woman to be his wife, would have a soft heart towards her and forgive any previous sin of uncleanness because God would forgive her if she sought forgiveness. There will be more on this phase of the matter later.

Let us now consider the second point on Matthew 19, verse 8. Christ reiterates "But FROM THE BEGINNING IT WAS NOT SO." Therefore what Christ really is teaching is that, under Moses' law, God allowed them to put away their wife for one certain cause; but if they wanted to please God, they would not want to do so -- they would forgive the wife for the condition stated in Deuteronomy 24, verses 1-4. I notice the word "suffered" means LET or PERMITTED. I would believe that God winked at it, but still it would not please him because of the condition of a hard heart. Let us always remember, the Law of Moses could not give life eternal. It cannot be binding on us now. The Law could only lead them to Christ. It is what Christ teaches THAT GIVES THE BELIEVERS LIFE. Christ's answers to the Pharisees were of a nature to answer those who were trying to catch him in a mistake; and we must understand Matthew 19, verses 3-9, and Mark 10, verses 2-9 on that basis. Christ's true teachings to his followers are given privately to his disciples in Matthew 19, verses 10-12 and Mark 10, verses 10-12; see Luke 16, verse 18, as well as Romans 7, verses 2 and 3, and 1 Corinthians 7, verses 10 and 11.

We will now come to Matthew 19, verse 9. This is the verse that many seem to interpret as allowing them to marry again, if they have divorced their wives, or the wife has divorced her husband for the cause of adultery.

Quote, "And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and marry another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away does commit adultery." Before going into the understanding of the exceptions, let us quote it without. "Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." If we examine this closely, we see the verse is in harmony with Luke 16, verse 18, and Mark 10, verse 11, as to what Christ said to his disciples in the house.

I believe we will all agree that there cannot be and must not be any contradictions in God's Word. Christ would not say in two places to his disciples that one cannot divorce and remarry, then in another place contradict what Christ said, if we understand 1 Corinthians 7, verses 10-11. Paul makes no provision for divorce or remarriage: "Let not the husband put away his wife." Also Paul's definite words in Romans of a woman's duty, and the man's duty to the law governing marriage. There is perfect harmony in "God's Word"; when men, because of personal desires, seek to subvert "God's Word" to satisfy their own desires or to excuse some who may be close to them, they only destroy that harmony. We repeat as all must agree, there can be no contradictions in God's Word. The desire for spiritual understanding will enlighten our minds on any teaching of scripture to God's children who have become God's children and have their hearts in the Lord; having no hardness in them, will then understand. A man and his wife in God's sight become no more twain, but one; and whatsoever God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. In the event for some reason a husband and a wife are not together in the same place for a given period, as long as both live, they must remain eunuchs for the Kingdom of God's sake.

How then are we to understand Christ's ascertainment, "Except it be for fornication." It is imperative for us to understand Christ is still talking to the Pharisees, who were tempting him and trying to catch him with the law. Why? Because they knew there was a place in the Law, namely, Deuteronomy 24, verses 1 through 4 where a writing of divorcement was allowed. They had said in verse 7: "Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, to put her away." Then Christ answers them. First: because of the hardness of their hearts, and Second: for fornication. Even under the Law of Moses a man could not put away his wife if it was for the purpose of marrying again, neither could anyone marry her that is put

away. In fact, once an Israelite took a wife, and took her into his house, as his wife indeed, there would be no provision to divorce her. The School of Hillel, as also the School of Shammai, both broke the law by their traditions. In other words they distorted the Law. Christ is giving them the only answer that would silence them, namely their hard hearts, to leave their wives for others, for adultery or other causes. Christ does not allow in his statement divorce for any cause whatsoever once a woman becomes a man's wife in very fact. Christ said, "Whatsoever God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

23 The word "except", according to Strongs Concordance, can mean "if not", "may", "more than", or "saving". According to Youngs Concordance, it means "if not", concerning Matthew 19, verse 9, or "If not it be for fornication". Therefore, the teaching of Christ was in accordance with Deuteronomy 24, verses 1 through 4, in stating that the only cause whereby a writing of divorcement could be allowed was for fornication, or pre-marital sexual relations.

24 Under the law, Christ was condemning the practice of violating the rights of the first wife and putting her away illegally (that is, for the ground other than unchastity, covered by Deuteronomy 24, verse 1), and then adding to his sin by marrying another woman to take the place of the wife he had wrongly put away. Christ said that such remarriage was adultery -- that is, adultery against the first wife. This means even under the law a man could not put away his wife at all, only for fornication or unchastity before marriage, and this only when he takes her he finds some uncleanness in her, or that she has become unclean because of the "unseemly thing".

25 Any repetitions found in this article is to impress the point of Christ's teachings.

26 Deuteronomy 24, verses 1 through 4: "When a man hath taken a wife and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes BECAUSE he hath found some UNCLEANNESS in her...." What then would be this uncleanness in a woman, that when a husband finds it out, would turn his heart, or harden his heart against her.

27 Let us look at Exodus 22, verses 16 and 17: "And if a man entice a maid that IS NOT BETROTHED, and LIE WITH HER, he shall surely endow her to be his wife. If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of Virgins." This maid then ceases to be a virgin, but she can become the wife of another man. In the event another man desires her, she can become his wife if she finds favor in his eyes. However, when it becomes time for the man to take her and marry her (note up to that time she would only be betrothed to him, which in Israel was considered binding as if she was his wife), when the man finds she is not a virgin, she could become the wife of another man. A case in point we find in Deuteronomy 22, verses 25-27: "But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her...for as when a man riseth against his neighbour, and slayeth him, even so is this matter: For he found her in the field, and the betrothed damsel cried, and there was none to save her."

28 Then in verses 27-29, we have the other matter of where a maid could lose her virginity as we showed from Exodus 22, verses 16 and 17.

29 Therefore, if the man that the maid in verses 22-25 is betrothed to turns against her because she has now ceased to be a virgin, if his heart is hardened to her, then he could give her a writing of divorcement and she could become the wife of another man.

30 Fornication, therefore, is unchastity, or pre-marital sexual intercourse. Therefore, Christ reminds the Pharisees that only for fornication or unchastity before marriage would Moses allow the Israelites to put away their wives. If we study Deuteronomy chapters 22, 23, and 24, we have much introduced about uncleanness, sex distinguished by apparel, confusion (chapter 22, verses 9-22); then uncleanness resulting from pre-marital intercourse (verses 22-30), including adultery or unlawful intercourse after marriage. In chapter 23 the unclean must not enter into the congregation; then this matter of the writing of divorcement where the man finds uncleanness in his betrothed wife is a continuation of this matter of unclean things objectionable to God (Deuteronomy 24, verses 1-4).

31 We would like to consider the two words found in Matthew 19, verse 9, namely, "fornication" and "adultery". The word "adultery" is found twice in this verse and FORBIDDEN ABSOLUTELY. The Greek word "adultery" is Moicheuo, whereas the Greek word "fornication" is Porneia, otherwise spoken of as whoredom. The fact that Christ in one verse, namely, verse 9, uses two entirely different words would mean that he means two different things. In the event Christ had said, "Except for

Moicheuo, or "adultery", we would then understand he meant the same as if a man married a woman that is put away, a wife; then he would commit Moicheuo, or "adultery"; but no, he said, "Except, or (if not) it be for fornication."

32 Some have said the uncleanness of Deuteronomy 24, verse 1, would not be unchastity before marriage; but that if a man's wife has had relations or committed adultery with another man, this would give the husband the right to divorce her, and she then could become the wife of another man. This, no doubt, would also be the interpretation of the Pharisees according to the School of Shammai. This could not be so because in Leviticus 20, verse 10, we are clearly shown: "The man that committeth adultery with another man's wife --- the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death." Whereas the woman mentioned in Deuteronomy 21, verse 1, could be given a writing of divorcement and she could become the wife of another man. In all cases where adultery is mentioned, taking place after marriage, the penalty is death. Therefore, Christ's answer to the Pharisees on their question concerning the writing of divorcement under the Law of Moses could not have anything to do with adultery.

33 Also, by the means of "Exception" or the "If not it be for fornication", Christ silenced the Pharisees, for they knew that they had no answer to Christ's correct interpretation of Deuteronomy 24, verses 1-4.

? 34 In regard to Matthew 5, verses 31-32, the answer is the same. Christ was talking to the Jews under the law, as well as to his disciples. The principles taught by Christ in his "Sermon on the Mount" is the fulfilling of the Spirit of the Law, still binding on us. We note, "It hath been said...." Yes, it had been said in Deuteronomy 24, verses 1-4, that a man could put away his wife when he married her, if he found this uncleanness by which she had lost favor in his sight; then giving her a writing of divorcement, she could then become another man's wife.

35 Some have used the case of the woman taken in adultery (John 8, verses 3-11). We should consider this -- Christ did not say, "Let her be divorced", but he said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (verse 7). In this statement Christ upheld the precept of the law. Christ forgave her and said, "Go, and sin no more."

36 With the passing of "The Law of Moses", we no longer have the provision of divorce and remarriage, as shown in Deuteronomy 24, verses 1-4. We are bound by the law of Christ as revealed in "His" precepts taught in Luke 16, verse 18, and Mark 10, verse 10, where Christ commands His disciples in "The House". Also Christ's statement in Matthew 19, verses 10-12, to His disciples.

37 One last point I am convinced of is that, if Christ does allow a brother or sister to divorce and remarry, we would read such in the writing of the Spirit through the Apostles. 1 Corinthians 6, verse 1: "Dare any of you...go to law before the unjust....?"

38 We have stated clearly in the article, there can never be any contradiction in the Word of God.

39 With this agreed on, let us consider I Corinthians 7, verse 27, first clause: "Art thou bound unto a wife? Seek not to be loosed." We are well aware that being bound means to be in bonds, or knit. This aptly describes one who is married. "Loosed" here means destroy, or melt (Strong's). This shows that Christ's words "Whatsoever God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" is Paul's meaning here also.

40 Now, the same verse 27, last clause: "Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife." The Greek word for "loosed" here is different from the word translated "loosed" in the first clause. This second clause, according to Strong's Concordance, would read "Art thou divorced from a wife? Seek not a wife." This clearly shows the teaching of Christ to his disciples in Mark 10, verses 10-11 in the house and Luke 16, verse 18. Read these again.

41 However some will say, what about the next verse in I Corinthians 7, verse 28: "But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned." Surely brethren and sisters would not believe that Paul in one verse would say clearly "Seek not a wife", then contradict this statement by saying, "But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned." This would be a contradiction. By a careful study of the whole chapter, including the following verses after verse 28, one can see the correct understanding.

42 Paul in verse 28 is continuing his teaching contained in verses 7-9. Paul here is showing that he would have all men as he was, that is, unmarried. So we will show the sense of this. Read carefully verses 7 and 8, then I quote verse 9: "But if they cannot contain, let them marry. For it is better to marry than burn." Verse 28 in the "Emphatic Diaglot" under the Greek says: "If even thou shouldst have married, thou didst not sin, and if a virgin should marry, she does not sin." When we read on through verses 29-34, we can see the clear teaching of Paul. In other words, after Paul has brought various things to our attention in verses 10 to 27, in verse 28 he reverts back to his teaching of verses 7 to 9. Then verses 29 to 34 still carries the teaching to a conclusion.

43 In conclusion of this whole matter of "Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage", one might ask if there is a way for any who are divorced, and has remarried, to be able to return to fellowship.

44 We need to understand that one who has remarried after divorce, using Christ's words in Mark 10, verse 11, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her", reveals that one who has remarried commits adultery, therefore remaining in this condition would continue to commit adultery.

45 Therefore the only way either one or both could be received back into fellowship is to first separate from the sinful union, and then after repentance could be received into fellowship.