**Marriage, the Marriage Bond, and Divorce**

**Introduction**

1. The devil is seeking whom he may devour daily (**cf. 1 Peter 5:8).**
2. He is cunning, and one of his most successful ways of keeping others from salvation is the blessed institution of marriage. (Devil is using something good to destroy us.)
   1. Many have been inclined to follow the Lord until they realize their marriage situation is sinful.
   2. While Jesus would expect one to ***“forsake all that he has…[to be His] disciple” (Luke 14:33***), the sacrifice is too great for some.
3. We must understand and teach the truth of God’s word on the subject of marriage and divorce. Souls depend on it.
4. Marriage
5. The Institution in its Original Context
   1. Pharisees testing Jesus – **Matthew 19:3**
   2. Jesus’ response – **Matthew 19:4-6**
      1. NOTE: **(vv. 8-9)** – not His original response to their initial question, but to their persistence in testing Him.
         1. I.e. as Jesus saw it, His response in **(vv. 4-6)** is sufficient.
      2. **(v. 4)** – Jesus’ appeal to the example (historical account) of the creation of male and female. **(cf. Genesis 1:27)**
      3. **(v. 5)** – Jesus’ appeal to the direct statement/command of Moses (Divine commentary).
      4. **(v. 6)** – Jesus’ necessary inference based on the text.
   3. He made them male and female **(v. 4):**
      1. Made the man first – **Genesis 2:7**
      2. Impressed the man with his need for a helper – **Genesis 2:18-20**
         1. NOTE: God did not expect for Adam to find a comparable helper.
      3. Made woman FROM man – **Genesis 2:21-23**
         1. **(v. 23)** – Adam understood the thrust of what God had done.
         2. ***“This is now”*** – "this is now (p̱a‘am lit., this time) bone of my bones," (Keil and Delitzsch)
            1. ***“This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (ESV)***
            2. **I.E. IN CONTRAST TO ALL HE SOUGHT BEFORE (VV. 20).**
   4. Man shall leave his parents, be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh **(v. 5):**
      1. ***“Therefore”*** – based on that creation, exactly as recorded, the following is the God stated purpose/intended outcome.
         1. ***“FOR THIS REASON” (Matthew 19***:***5)***
         2. NOTE: Adam had no parents – inspired writing of Moses – PRECEPT OF GOD CONCERNING MARRIAGE FOR ALL TO FOLLOW IN HUMAN HISTORY.
      2. ***“leave his father and mother”*** – necessary conclusion – NOT A PERMANENT ORDER.
         1. This union of parent to child by design is NOT THE DEEPEST, MOST INTIMATE, AND PERMANENT PHYSICAL RELATIONSHIP.
      3. ***“be joined to his wife”*** – indicative of permanency.
         1. Joined – *ḏâḇaq* – properly, to impinge, i.e. cling or adhere (STRONG)
            1. Joshua nearing the end of his life speaking to leaders in Israel – ***“but you shall HOLD FAST to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day.” (Joshua 23:8)***
         2. Greek **(Matthew 19:5**) – *proskollaō* – “a strengthened form of *kollao* (to glue or cement together), with *pros*, “to,” intensive” (VINE)
            1. “to adhere to closely, be faithfully devoted to, join” (BDAG)
      4. ***“they shall become one flesh”*** – a consummation of the unity for which they were created.
         1. No longer two, but ONE.
   5. What God has joined together, let not man separate **(v. 6):**
      1. **By His very design** – specifically made woman for the purpose of complimenting man.
      2. **Joined** *– syzeugnymi* – “to yoke together” (sun, “with,” zugos, “a yoke”) (VINE)
         1. ***“WHAT God has…”***
         2. WHAT did He join together? – ***“THEY”*** – THE SPECIFIC (as the institution continues through humans occupying the earth) man and woman who left parents and were joined to each other.
      3. **Permanence** – man is not to separate.
         1. MAN – was created, and therefore merely a part of God’s design.
         2. GOD – was the author/designer of this union and does the joining.
            1. Man is merely a part in God’s design.
            2. Man must comply with God’s design, NOT ALTER IT, OR SUSPEND IT.
6. The Rule
   1. **The Rule – One man, one woman, for life.**
   2. NOTE: It is not until the Pharisees persisted that Jesus brings in the exception.
      1. The exception is not to be viewed as “a way out.”
      2. **It is not to be viewed as a part of the rule – RATHER, AS A DISTINCT RULING CONCERNING THE VIOLATION OF THE FIRST RULE.**
         1. ***“from the beginning it was not so” (v. 8)* – divorce is not by God’s design.**
   3. **Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18** – divorce mentioned as an absolute prohibition – no mention of the exception of fornication.
      1. Emphasis on the whole design of marriage.
      2. Not designed with an escape plan, or option of reversal.
7. The Subjects of the Rule
   1. **(v. 4)** – ***“at the beginning”*** – is meant to include everyone.
      1. Marriage itself is an INSTITUTION DESIGNED INSEPERABLY FROM THE CREATION OF HUMANITY ITSELF.
      2. Not Jewish, not Christian, not cultural, etc.
   2. **Matthew 19:9** – ***“whoever,”*** then, is used to show the sin of divorce because the RULE (one man, one woman, for life) of marriage applies to all!
   3. Some have suggested that Christ’s law on marriage only pertains to Christians – this couldn’t be further from the truth!
8. The Marriage Bond
9. God Has Joined Together
   1. **Matthew 19:4-6** – Marriage – God’s part and man’s part.
      1. ***“man shall leave his father and mother”*** – man does.
      2. ***“and be joined to his wife”*** – man does.
      3. ***“and the two shall become one flesh”*** – man does.
      4. ***“God has joined together”*** – God does.
   2. While man and wife join themselves together, there is a joining God does.
   3. I.e. when a man and a woman have the right to join together in marriage, God will join them together in a binding relationship that is not to be separated **(v. 6).**
   4. Bound by God’s marriage law – **Romans 7:2-3** (using illustration during explanation of being freed from Old Law to be married to Christ)
      1. **(v. 2a)** – bound as long as he lives (**cf. Matthew 19:6** – let not man separate).
      2. **(v. 2b)** – in death, God releases one from the marriage bond.
      3. Implications of law:
         1. **(v. 3a)** – marries another man while husband lives – adulteress – because still bound to living husband.
         2. **(v. 3b)** – if her husband dies, she is released from bond by God and can marry (then be bound to the other by God).
10. A Distinction Between Marriage and the Marriage Bond
    1. **Romans 7:3** – indicative of a real marriage, yet unlawful (adulteress) because not bound.
    2. Bound and lawfully married – **Romans 7:2**
    3. Unmarried but bound to another – **1 Corinthians 7:10-11**
       1. **Recognition that some would divorce even though Paul (and Jesus) said it is wrong.**
       2. **Don’t do it, but if you do, your options are reconciliation or remaining unmarried**.
    4. Unmarried but bound to another (**v. 9b** – reason for adultery is the divorced one is bound to the one who divorced them); Unmarried, but free from prior bond, so free to marry another – **Matthew 19:9**
       1. Exception allows for divorce.
       2. Divorce wife and marry another = adultery. Unless the divorce is for fornication.
    5. Bound to first mate, but unacceptably married to another – **Mark 6:17-18; Romans 7:2-3**
       1. **The marriage exists. It is real, but it is not lawful.**
       2. **The marriage and the bond are not the same.**
    6. **Conclusion** – mere marriage does not form the bond, but God does by joining two together who have a right to be married.
11. Only God Can Separate
    1. God does all binding and loosing – ***“whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16:19,*** NASB)
       1. God is the only one who can form the marriage bond.
       2. God is the only one who can loose the marriage bond.
          1. I.e. no person, thing, or circumstance looses the marriage bond.
          2. However, there are circumstances upon which God has revealed He is willing to loose one from the bond of marriage.
    2. Upon death, God looses the marriage bond – **Romans 7:2b, 3b**
    3. Upon fornication (adultery, infidelity, sexual immorality), God has granted an exception for divorce for the innocent party where He will loose the innocent from the marriage bond (making them free to remarry) – **Matthew 19:9**
       1. However, the one who is divorced is not loosed from the bond, and is not free to remarry – **Matthew 5:32**
12. Divorce
13. Divorce Has Never Been God’s Will
    1. How could one argue the point at all with the words of God in mind? – **Malachi 2:16** – He hates divorce.
    2. Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce? – **Matthew 19:7-8**
       1. NOTE: Jesus’ original response said nothing about the passage these are alluding to – implying it is not suitable to answer their question – yet Jesus must deal with it as they bring it up.
       2. **(v. 8b)** – from beginning wasn’t so – i.e. IT HAS NEVER BEEN GOD’S WILL.
       3. **Command?** – **(v. 7) – Deuteronomy 24:1-4** gives no command for divorce but takes it for granted as a thing already occurring.
          1. **(v. 8a)** – because of your hardness of heart permitted.
          2. **Hardness of heart** – a description of one who is not in compliance with God’s will.
             1. **This very description indicates divorce is not a part of God’s intended will.**
          3. **Permitted** – *epitrepō* – to allow someone to do someth., allow, permit (BDAG)
             1. Does not necessitate approval, or permission.
             2. Merely is suggesting GOD WAS ALLOWING SOMETHING THAT WAS ALREADY HAPPENING TO CONTINUE.
             3. **Cf. Acts 17:30** – God did not approve of idolatry but allowed it to persist (overlooked).
       4. Moses’ words offer a “hypothetical syllogism” – IF THIS HAPPENS (not that it is approved of God) THEN THIS IS THE CONSEQUENCE – **Deuteronomy 24:1-4**
          1. **(vv. 1-3)** – series of several “and” (7x) statements…
          2. **(v. 4) –** followed by a “then” statement.
          3. NOTE: (**vv. 1-3**) constitute a mere hypothetical without reference to it being correct behavior. **(v. 4)** is the consequence, thus restraint, based on the events occurring. (**I.e. IF you do this THEN…)**
          4. HIS WORDS REPRESENT AN EFFORT ON GOD’S PART TO REDUCE AN UNGODLY PRACTICE THAT WAS ALREADY OCCURING.
14. There is One God-Given Exception for Divorce
    1. **Matthew 19:9** – Jesus says the only exception where God allows for divorce is fornication.
       1. ***“And I say to you”*** – speaking from His own authority, establishing Kingdom law that is in line with that which God set up in the beginning **(vv. 4-6).**
       2. Sexual immorality – *porneia* – unlawful sexual intercourse (BDAG)
          1. Unlawful? – **Hebrews 13:4** – outside of marriage.
       3. **Mark 10:11-12** – to divorce and remarry is to commit adultery (exception not mentioned).
          1. ***“except for sexual immorality”*** – implies – **“whoever divorces his wife FOR SEXUAL IMMORALITY and marries another DOES NOT commit adultery”**
    2. Emphasize the exception as the CAUSE/REASON – **Matthew 5:31-32**
       1. ***“for any reason except sexual immorality”*** – i.e. it is not simply that sexual immorality has occurred, BUT THAT IS THE EXPRESS REASON FOR THE DIVORCE.
          1. NOT – husband/wife has divorced their spouse for a reason other than sexual immorality though sexual immorality had occurred.
          2. NOT – husband/wife forgave and reconciled with their spouse upon sexual immorality, but further down the line decides to divorce them for a different cause but cites sexual immorality. (God knows.)
    3. NOTE: Sexual immorality is NOT what looses the marriage bond.
       1. **Matthew 19:6** – implication – only God can separate.
       2. ***“whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16:19) – ONLY GOD HAS THE POWER TO LOOSE.***
       3. When fornication has been committed, and the innocent party decides to divorce their spouse for that cause, THEN GOD LOOSES THEM FROM THE BOND OF MARRIAGE.
          1. NOT – Upon fornication the marriage bond is immediately loosed.
          2. NOT – Divorce for a cause other than fornication, but then come to knowledge of past or present fornication with other spouse so the bond is loosed, and you are free to remarry.
          3. NOT – Divorce for a cause other than fornication, remarry into an adulterous relationship, but realize it is not adulterous because of discovery of adultery by prior spouse. (Because fornication itself does not loose the bond.)
    4. Proper response – **Matthew 19:10-12** – do not marry if you cannot accept the stringent marriage law. (**cf. 1 Corinthians 7:9**)

**Conclusion**

1. We must uphold marriage in our hearts as the sacred institution God created it to be.
2. Marriage is a lifetime commitment, and the termination of it bears eternal consequences.
3. We must not go beyond the law of Christ regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage.