

# Divorce and Remarriage

by Ramon Carroll



What does the bible really teach about divorce and remarriage? There has been much division, condemnation, and speculation from many concerning this doctrine. What I will attempt to do is give a clear and precise teaching on what the scriptures actually teach concerning the topic of divorce and remarriage. What I will present are the teachings from the scriptures which the two major groups involved in the discussion base their understanding of this topic. I will point out the fallacies that have been taught concerning the doctrine while trying to present what both groups

believe to the best of my ability. We must be mindful that there are variations of the teaching within each camp. So I am by no means claiming to *fully* know what everyone who holds either view believes. This article is based on my own personal experiences and discussions I have had with others from both camps. I pray it would be a blessing to all and that eyes would be opened to the truth.

All scripture references will be in **bold**, while definitions will be in italics. Also, definitions for certain words are included in the endnotes. Many of the scripture passages presented are lengthy and for that reason I will reference the passages, quote the main points, and request that the faithful reader would go back and read the entire context to ensure that what is being taught is indeed sound doctrine.

The two major groups who have been involved in this debate since after the time of the apostles are these:

**Group #1:** Is what we will call what has become known as the “Marriage to death camp”. They believe divorce is only permitted in cases of “fornication” but neither spouse can remarry unless the other dies.

**Group #2:** This group believes that divorce is allowed for other reasons than adultery or sexual immorality, but the **ONLY** reason for remarriage is adultery, sexual immorality, or death.

The following is the most used text by the groups I have come in contact with when discussing the topic of divorce and remarriage:

**“But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.” Matthew 5:32**

The first group that has become known as the “marriage to death camp” teaches that based on Jesus’ words above, the only reason for divorce is if the MALE spouse, during the betrothal<sup>1</sup> period of the Israelite custom, find that his wife to be, had been unfaithful or lied about her virginity. They insist that this scripture does NOT permit divorce after the marriage has been consummated and the couple has lived together. The belief is based on **Deut 24:1** which says:

**“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: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give *it* in her hand, and send her out of his house.”**

This was the teaching many of the Jews at that time had been following. Most of the people in Jesus’ day were interpreting the text based on one of two schools of thought:

- A. The one view was from the school of Shammai.
- B. The other was from the school of Hillel.

The understanding of the word “uncleanliness” is what caused the most disagreement as the Hebrew word “*ervah*” (#6172 ) has many possible definitions. Those definitions include *nakedness, nudity, shame, nakedness of a thing, indecency of a thing, improper behavior (figuratively), disgrace, blemish, and uncleanness of a thing.*

Shammai taught that the word only meant infidelity. Meaning that one of the individuals was sexually unfaithful.

Hillel argued that the indecency of a *thing* is what deserved more attention. He went on to teach that if a man were to find ANY imperfection that he found in his wife.

Another Rabbi named Akiva concurred with Hillel. He himself went so far as to teach that it was permitted to divorce your wife if you found another woman to be more attractive/pleasing than she was. This is the background and setting in which Yeshua was preaching the gospel of the kingdom. The question was put to him in **Matthew 19:3**

**“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?”**

Yeshua’s response to THIS question is what has been overlooked in the midst of our modern day abuse of the exception clause. Understanding what was asked of Jesus and also what the views were of his day, sheds much more light on the answer that Yeshua gives. He answers in verse 9 the same way he did when he earlier taught on the subject. Anyone reading his answer and

understanding the two schools of thought would have immediately understood that he was confirming what Shammai had taught. Though he points out why the command was given and that divorce was never part of God's plan for marriage, he certainly endorses Shammai's teaching on what the law actually taught concerning divorce. Two questions that now arise are these. Did Shammai believe that "infidelity" was only committed during the betrothal period? Also, was remarriage permitted in such cases where one spouse was unfaithful? To find out we must revisit the original teaching in Deut 24.

We ended with Deut 24:1 but the teaching on the subject does not end there. After the bill of divorce is given, as confirmed by Jesus, for the cause of infidelity, what is allowed and what is prohibited according to the scriptures? **Deut 24:2** reads,

**“And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's *wife*.”**

Here we have a clear example of the permission to remarry even in the case of the “guilty party”. The woman here is permitted to go and be another man's wife. What is implied also is that the man may marry another woman since the marriage was dissolved lawfully. During the time of Yeshua's ministry it is very well possible, even likely, that many had suffered from a spouse being unfaithful and had remarried. One thing that is being taught today, that was not included in Jesus' teaching, is that if you are in your second or third (etc.) marriage ( at the point when you hear the marriage to death camp's teaching), you must divorce your current wife/husband and leave whatever family you have for you are in an unlawful marriage. If this was the conclusion that Jesus was coming to, why would he not come out and say it plainly? Why leave it up for the people to decide what to do if they found themselves in such a state? I dare say that even those who were following the teaching of Hillel were not instructed to divorce their current wife if they had previously put their wives away for the wrong reason. Jesus corrected their misconceptions and condemned their previous practice of committing adultery. From that point on they would be guilty of committing adultery themselves and they would be guilty of causing the spouse to commit adultery if they persisted with such actions.

What the “marriage to death camp” teaches today is that you are in a state of perpetual adultery after you have come to this knowledge and you do not divorce your current wife. They say “She is not your wife. You were never really married” This was not included in the teaching of Jesus and would not have been the conviction of any of the adherents of either school of thought.

### **Problem#1:**

One major problem with the freelance teaching of this group is that they, at times, teach totally contrary to the law. I myself have heard many teach that if you find that you have been guilty of adultery you are to leave the current spouse you are with and return to your husband. But is this what the law taught? Remember that Shammai's understanding of Deut 24 was confirmed by Jesus. We have also seen that the divorced and the divorcee were permitted to remarry. Now we

must see what the teaching was concerning returning to your previous spouse. **Deut 24:3-4** states:

**And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before Yahweh: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which Yahweh thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.”**

We see that the law completely forbids the woman who has been legally divorced and legally remarried to another man, to return to her previous husband, even in the case of the death of the current husband. Is she permitted to marry another man other than the previous husband? Based on the first teaching of this law, she is. There is no prohibition here except for her returning to the previous husband. The irony is that the marriage to death camp, for the most part, teaches that this is exactly what must take place! They teach boldly that either the divorced party must remain alone or return to their first spouse. In the case of separation, not divorce, this is the logical and biblical teaching. If a woman departs from her husband or if a man departs from his wife and they remain alone without marrying another, they are indeed permitted and should be encouraged by all the saints to be reconciled to one another.

Paul gives his godly counsel in such matters when he says things like in **1 Cor. 7** (please read full context):

**“And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.”** And... **“But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.16 For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?”**

Here Paul takes the liberty to expound upon the topic. Yeshua did not teach on this specific scenario and Paul recognized that. In expounding on Yeshua’s teaching he did not overstep or contradict the messiah. His counsel is to do everything within your power to dwell in peace with your spouse though they be an unbeliever. If the spouse decides to depart (separate) you should let them leave. If in this case the party who leaves does not want to return, insists on divorce, and marries another, the believing spouse is not in bondage in such cases. Why should the believing spouse who did no wrong be bound to live without a helper or a head the rest of their lives if that is not the power and gift that they possess from God as Paul alludes to in **1 Cor 7:7** where he says,

**“For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.”**

What Paul says here is in line with how Christ responded to his disciples after the very same teaching. After hearing the teaching the disciples replied in **Matt 19:10**:

**“His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with *his* wife, it is not good to marry.**

To this statement from the apostles Jesus replies in verse **Matt 19:11-12**,

**"But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save *they* to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs,<sup>2</sup> which were so born from *their* mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive *it*."**

The saying that Yeshua is referring to is not his own teaching but the true understanding of the apostles. It is better not to marry. Jesus makes it clear that this statement of the apostles is easily received by those whom he names, those to whom it is given. We know this is referring to the apostle's statement and not his own teaching because he immediately begins talking about Eunuchs when he had not mentioned them before. Eunuchs are the ones that Paul would have referred to as having the same gift as he did.

## **Problem #2:**

Continuing in **1 Cor 7:20-28 (please read full context)**, Paul goes a little further into his counsel for the married and the unmarried alike. He touches on something that the marriage to death camp is not known for mentioning. Here again we will find that they teach the complete opposite of what the scriptures do concerning the topic at hand.

**20 “Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called....” 24 “Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God...” “27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. 28 But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.”**

Here we see Paul again expounding on the teaching of Yeshua. The question that people are left with is, “What if I find myself in my second or third marriage after I have come to the knowledge of the truth and been saved?” Paul's counsel by permission of the Lord is to **“let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called”**. The teaching of Paul is in line with the teaching of Yeshua, given that the previous divorce was indeed a lawful one. We should not be led to believe that Paul would contradict Yeshua. You should not, having come to the truth, be led to divorce and abandon your family. That is not what Yeshua or his apostles taught. When people want to teach that any divorce and remarriage is forbidden they usually choose to

quote from Luke. Luke's gospel is the more abbreviated teaching so they use this one instead of the teachings in **Matthew 5** and **Matthew 19**.

Anyone who has been studying the scriptures, and especially the gospels for any amount of time, should know that a basic principle is that you use the more complete account to shed light on the areas in scripture that may seem more obscure. The people who teach that remarriage is never permitted know this as well. That is why they will usually take you to **Luke 16:18** which reads,

**“Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from *her* husband committeth adultery.”**

Jesus' previous teaching is not contradicted here by Luke. Marriage to death believers would not say it contradicts, but they will argue as if Luke is contradicting Matthew.

### **Problem #3:**

Another text that is invoked when this topic is discussed is found in **Romans 7:2-3:**

**“2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.3 So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.”**

It is often argued that this passage clearly teaches that the only legal reason to remarry is if the spouse is dead. What is usually done is the focus is drawn towards the death of the spouse and drawn away from the point of Paul's teaching. First and foremost, Paul never mentions anything about divorce in this passage. He simply says if a woman be married to another man while her husband is alive she shall be called an adulterer. It is not hard, or even uncommon, for women to leave their husbands without obtaining a divorce and marry another man. Everyone who knew her would call her an adulterous because she had not been released by her husband who was still alive. Of course after the husband dies there is no cause for her to be called an adulterer anymore. According to what the law teaches (**Deut 24:2**), if she was given a bill of divorce by the husband she could be married to another and not be rightly called an adulterer. As another brother pointed out, "If she were divorced, according to the teaching of the law, whoever calls her an adulterer would be falsely accusing her."

### **Problem #5:**

The same brother mentioned above pointed out something that I had not considered before. Based on the conversations he and I have had with these individuals who misunderstand Yeshua's teaching **Deut 22:13-22** totally contradicts **Deut 24**. Some of them may claim that

Yeshua is teaching what was wrong with the people's understanding of the law and that it needed to be corrected, period. But to claim that is a bit of a stretch, for within two chapters it makes the law contradict itself. Here is what **Deut 22:13-22** states (please read full context):

**“If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her,<sup>14</sup> And give occasions of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid:<sup>15</sup> Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate:<sup>16</sup> And the damsel's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her;<sup>17</sup> And, lo, he hath given occasions of speech against her, saying, I found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city.<sup>18</sup> And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him” **22** “If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel.”**

The brother astutely pointed out, that according to verse **22**, if there were never a cause for divorce and remarriage other than death, two chapters later where remarriage **is** permitted (**Deut 24:1-3**), it would mean that the second man whom the woman married would be stoned along with her on their wedding night. For how can a woman who was never allowed to remarry go and be another man's wife without bringing immediate death by stoning upon both of their heads? Verse **22** obviously does not apply to Deut 24, and since that is the case, it should be clear that not all cases of remarriage are adultery. The argument that “except for fornication” is referring to the “betrothal period” raises more questions and causes more problems as you have probably already noticed.

## **Problem #6:**

If “fornication” only referred to the woman being unfaithful during the time of betrothal, are we to believe that the woman or man whose spouse is unfaithful after years of marriage falls under a different set of rules? Not only is this illogical but the teaching is completely absent from the scriptures. Many argue that the betrothal period ends when the marriage is consummated, meaning, when the couple has sexual relations they are thereby confirmed in marriage. Do you notice the issue with claiming that the betrothal period is the only time where you can divorce? First of all, you cannot divorce someone who you are not married to. To be married, according to the people who teach “marriage to death,” is to have consummated the marriage. After that point the betrothal period is over. So in both Deut 22 and Deut 24 the man takes the wife and marries her/goes into her. The betrothal period is **over** at this point, by their own confession. Some may argue that he found some uncleanness in her or found she was not a virgin before they consummated the marriage. A major issue with that line of reasoning is that the two main ways to find out whether or not someone is a virgin is to have sex with them or to have someone with knowledge tell you the person is not a virgin. Which begs the question, "How would they know,

have they lain with the woman?" If they did, what does the law command them to do? If you would like to know read **Deut. 22:23-29** and then ask yourself, "How likely would it have been that a man who had lain with a virgin would confess it during the time of her betrothal?"

### **Problem #7:**

Another issue with the argument that "fornication" is only referring to the "Jewish betrothal period" is that we are led to believe the only man or woman who is able to obtain a divorce is someone who is Jewish. Did the rest of the world fall under the Jewish laws and customs? No. So how would people who had never known or understood the "Jewish betrothal period" have understood what that meant? They most likely would not.

We have talked to multiple people who hold this doctrine about the counsel they would give to people who had been married multiple times prior to coming to the knowledge of the truth. We have received a wide range of answers. I will take this time to address some of them.

1. One of the most common answers is usually preceded by a, "Well.... you know....," which tells me they have some reluctance to say what they are about to say. They proceed to explain how they believe that none of the marriages after the first marriage were true marriages in the eyes of God. Therefore, if you were to ever marry again it would be to the previous spouse only. The brother I mentioned above talked with someone about this and the person boasted about how he snapped at some man telling him, "That is NOT your wife and those are NOT your kids!"

2. Believe it or not this next answer is actually one that I have read about. Some teach that marriage is a sort of a sacrament and that not even death can break its bond. Yes, that is right. Even after your spouse is dead you are not to marry as death itself is not an excuse for you to find another spouse. I am not making this up!

3. I have also heard it taught that the marriage is still a marriage yet an adulterous one that you cannot get out of. One of two things are advised by people who teach you to remain in an "adulterous marriage". One group teaches that the husband is to find another place for either he or his family to live. He is to take care of his family from a distance and abide alone in another house of his own. Who is going to purchase a second home, second car, second stove, second refrigerator, etc? You guessed it. The man. I guess such a man can just hope and pray that he comes into a large sum of money to manage this new found financial burden.

The second group advises the man to sleep in another part of the home. He is to remain married to his wife and be a father to his children. He is forbidden from not only having sexual relations with his wife, but also from being sexually attracted to this woman whom he has been with for years. I think it is easy to see how this causes more problems than it solves, especially as it pertains to matters of the conscience. This man who has been convinced that he is not really married to this woman is instructed to remain married to her. He is to live with her, not lust after

her, spend time with the children, try his hardest not to show any affection to his wife who is not his wife. Okay. Some may be thinking that he can get over that. What about how the children are being raised? Are they actually experiencing the love of a complete family? Are they learning how they should abide with their spouse should they decide to marry? Wouldn't they begin to wonder why mommy does not ever really talk with daddy? Yes, when they are older you may be able to try and explain this whole debacle to them, but would the damage have already been done?

4. One person has suggested that not only should the man sleep in another room but that he should live in a different part of the house altogether. The same issues arise.

I always wonder though. Why do they assume that people have large houses that can be divided into two? Why do they assume that people can handle these heavy burdens being laid on them, not by Christ, but by zealots? Who are these people who get to come up with these solutions? Did Christ or Paul instruct them what to do or are they freelancing? After talking with these people about their own lives and relationships, something dawned on me. Many of the people who hold this doctrine have never themselves had to deal with the situation they are teaching about. By the grace of God many of these individuals married their high school sweethearts. They never really experienced an ignorant and wild period of their lives where they made too many foolish mistakes. Many of them have never been married and don't desire to be married.

It is easy to speak about being with one person your whole life when you HAVE been with one person your whole life. It is easy to speak about being alone when you have never experienced what it is like to be with someone. One thing that is most disturbing about the arguments I hear is this - that those who don't agree with the fallacious teaching of the "marriage to death camp," are simply lacking self-control, don't truly love the lord, are sex addicts and cannot give up their lusts etc. When their doctrine is met with opposition and they realize that their reasoning is not right, they resort to bully tactics. This is unfortunate for both them and others who may cross their paths.

I admire and greatly respect those who have never been married and choose to remain that way, those who have been divorced and choose to stay loosed from a spouse, those who in such a state have had a heart to honestly consider any of the options above. I admit that it takes great self-control, devotion, and determination to do any of those things. I also believe that the person who chooses to marry, is legally divorced and remarried, and the widow who has taken another husband can also possess all of these virtues. What I do not admire are those who presume to be teachers of the word wrongfully and haphazardly teaching falsehood concerning this doctrine of "marriage to death" regardless of the circumstances.

In conclusion, the teaching on marriage and divorce is a sensitive subject because we are dealing with emotions vs. truth of the scriptures. Those on both sides of the argument are prone to allowing their emotions lead them in a different direction than what the scriptures clearly teach. I believe that if we are going to get to the bottom of what the scriptures plainly teach on any given

subject, we must be able to set our emotions aside for the sake of reasoning with one another. Understanding how sensitive a subject this is in our day, those who endeavor to teach the word of God must handle it with care and faithfulness. We must never allow for favoritism to creep into our hearts, a preference of one translation/text above another simply because it favors our preconceived notion, nor should we allow for any of the holy men of the scriptures to teach things contradictory one to another. Anytime we find someone guilty of doing any of these things, a red flag should go up. It is an obvious sign that the person is out to win an emotional argument instead of trying to reason and come to the truth. Such an attitude stems from pride. The doctrine of divorce and remarriage is not a hard doctrine to understand or accept if you have a love for the truth and a heart determined to follow the Lord. Simple teachings like this become complicated when professing teachers neglect to do due diligence in studying the word. Yeshua's teaching on the topic is this: Any man who divorces his wife for any other reason than sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery in the event that she goes and marries another. The man to whom she would go would also be guilty of adultery seeing as the wife was not divorced for a legal reason. While some would not apply the "except for sexual immorality" to the remarriage part of Yeshua's teaching, it is clear from the scriptures that Yeshua himself did mean for the exception to apply to remarriage as well. If this was not his intention then he would not have mentioned remarriage at all. It would have been enough to say that "whoever divorces his wife causes her to commit adultery." This is how his teaching has been interpreted but it is clearly not what Yeshua taught.

I pray that those who presume to teach God's word would do so faithfully and not slothfully. I also pray that those who, previous to knowing this truth, who divorced and remarried would heed the teaching of Christ and not put away their wives for any reason than sexual immorality, and even in such cases would make divorce the FINAL option. There are other options than divorce and just because Yeshua gives permission, it does not mean that it is commanded to divorce one who has been unfaithful. Those who are in covenant marriages in the Lord should not even have divorce on their minds. If you both are Disciples of Christ, then your mindset should be, from the start that, "divorce is not an option". If any brother or sister should find themselves in a situation where they feel they cannot bear the infidelity, abuse, neglect, perversion, or ungodliness in a marriage any longer, then I would suggest a time of separation in hopes that your spouse would come to their senses or come to the Lord. Divorce has finality to it that separation does not. For that reason I would not counsel any brother or sister to hastily divorce their spouse no matter what the situation might be. I pray that those reading would be encouraged to seek after the Lord more diligently and also to remain faithful to him in all things. God bless you all.

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### Quotable:

In his commentary on Matthew John Gill writes 5:33 "Christ does not infringe, or revoke the original grant, or permission of divorce; only frees it from the false interpretations, and ill use, the Pharisees

made of it; and restores the ancient sense of it, in which only it was to be understood: for a divorce was allowable in no case, **saving for the cause of fornication**; which must not be taken strictly for what is called fornication, but as including adultery, incest, or any unlawful copulation; and is opposed to the sense and practices of the Pharisees, who were on the side of Hillell: who admitted of divorce, upon the most foolish and frivolous pretences whatever; when Shammai and his followers insisted on it, that a man ought only to put away his wife for uncleanness; in which they agreed with Christ. For so it is written

“The house of Shammai say, a man may not put away his wife, unless he finds some uncleanness in her, according to ( Deuteronomy 24:1 ) The house of Hillell say, if she should spoil his food, (that is, as Jarchi and Bartenora explain it, burns it either at the fire, or with salt, i.e. over roasts or over salts it,) who appeal also to ( Deuteronomy 24:1 ) . R. Akiba says, if he finds another more beautiful than her, as it is said, ( Deuteronomy 24:1 ) "and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes. The commentators F11 on this passage say that the determination of the matter is, according to the school of Millell; so that, according to them, a woman might be put away for a very trivial thing: some difference is made by some of the Jewish doctors, between a first and second wife; the first wife, they say F12, might not be put away, but for adultery; but the second might be put away, if her husband hated her; or she was of ill behaviour, and impudent, and not modest, as the daughters of Israel. Now our Lord says, without any exception, that a man ought not to put away his wife, whether first or second, for any other reason than uncleanness; and that whoever does, upon any other account, **causeth her to commit adultery**; that is, as much as in him lies: should she commit it, he is the cause of it, by exposing her, through a rejection of her, to the sinful embraces of others; and, indeed, should she marry another man, whilst he is alive, which her divorce allows her to do, she must be guilty of adultery; since she is his proper wife, the bond of marriage not being dissolved by such a divorce: and **whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery**; because the divorced woman he marries, and takes to his bed; is legally the wife of another man; and it may be added, from ( Matthew 19:9 ) that her husband, who has put her away, upon any other account than fornication, should he marry another woman, would be guilty of the same crime.”

Anabaptist teaching:

**What is a Marriage?** A marriage is a covenant relationship between two people that is recognized by the society in which they live. There are three types of marriages: (1) A marriage of a man and a woman, both believers and followers of the Lord Jesus, that occurred in the Church in accordance with the Word of God and is approved by God. (2) A marriage of a man and a woman who were not followers of the Lord Jesus at the time of the marriage but, being of sound mind and free to marry, have, of their own free will, made vows of fidelity with each other. Such a marriage may be recognized by God as a valid marriage in his sight. (3) A union of two people in circumstances other than above. This could include marriages between close relatives, bigamous marriages, homosexual marriages, forced marriages, marriages involving an underage, or mentally ill or drugged person or marriages involving a person who is not free to marry. Such a union is not recognized by God as a marriage. The Jews in the Old Testament were given a number of rules to

determine a valid marriage, such as involving close relatives, violated women, divorced wives and marriages to slaves and foreign women. Note that divorce and bigamy was allowed. The New Testament has a little to say about what constitutes a valid marriage, one is that a church leader must have been married only once. All people, believers and unbelievers alike, are created by God. Are only marriages between believers put together by God? No, God loves all that he has created, he created the world and placed man in it according to his plan, and his plan was and is that his will should be done on earth as it is in heaven. As his will extends even to the smallest things, it surely includes determining who should marry who. However, as we well know, God has given man a choice to obey or disobey God and man's choice is all too often not in accordance with God's will. Are all marriages that are recognized by society or the government also recognized by God? No, for there are many situations where people marry, even homosexual marriages, that are legal in the eyes of the government but obviously have not been put together by God. This is a key point in understanding divorce and remarriage.

**Four Points Concerning Divorce and Remarriage** Let us examine the following four points to see if they are supported in the Word of God: (1) Godly marriages, marriages approved or recognized by God, are considered to be put together by God and are permanent while both are still living (Luke 20:34-36); therefore remarriage results in adultery (Mt 19:9). (2) However, ungodly marriages, couples joined together outside of the providence of God, are not marriages in his sight; therefore a civil divorce and a new marriage that has been put together by God is allowed. An ungodly marriage may be just two people living together in fornication, regardless of the legal status given by the government or the society in which they live. (3) The Church, guided by the Word of God as revealed by the Holy Spirit, is the final judge of whether or not a marriage is of God; however, in gray areas of remarriage, the Church must consider the belief of the couple as to whether their previous marriage was of God or not. In many cases it will be obvious that the marriage must have been put together by God. (4) The Church, guided by the Word of God as revealed by the Holy Spirit, has the power to declare a marriage godly, even if one or both were involved in a previous ungodly marriage (Mt 18:18).

**God's Toleration** What do we see here in this teaching of the Lord Jesus concerning marriage and divorce? For one thing, we see that God has tolerance for the weaknesses of mankind as he did allow divorce. Is there any other area of human activity where God is so tolerant? Has his tolerance ended? Consider that Jesus said, "Let anyone accept this who can."

**Godly Marriage** Another item to note is that Jesus said, "What God has joined together, let no one separate." If all couples were joined together by God, then he would not have need to say this, but since he did, he is saying that only those that are joined together by God should not be separated by man. This obviously implies that those couples that are not joined together by God can be separated.

**Ungodly Marriage** What is an ungodly marriage? Any marriage that has not been put together by God. Take, for example, homosexual marriages, are they joined together by God? We would all say a loud NO. But now there is an effort to make homosexual marriages legal in some states. If they

become legal in the eyes of the state, will they become legal in the eyes of God, who is higher than the state? Of course not, we will loudly say. If a homosexual legally married to another homosexual later divorces, repents of his sin, and joins the Church, can he be married in the eyes of God? We would obviously say yes as we did not recognize the homosexual marriage, even though it may be valid in the eyes of the state, it was not valid in the eyes of God. What about heterosexual unions that are questionable? Take the case of a child bride, which is legal in some countries. Her parents marry her off to an adult man in exchange for money or other advantages. The child bride has no say in the matter and may be too young to really know what is going on. Is that couple joined together by God and their marriage valid in God's eyes? We would probably say no, it is not.

Ante Nicene Quotes:

Tertullian writes on divorce in A.D. 207 and says:

"I maintain, then, that there was condition in the prohibition which He now made of divorce; the case supposed being, that a man put away his wife for the express purpose of marrying another. His words are: "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband, also committeth adultery, put away," that is, for the reason wherefore a woman ought not to be dismissed, that another wife may be obtained. For he who marries a woman who is unlawfully put away is as much of an adulterer as the man who marries one who is un-divorced. Permanent is the marriage which is not rightly dissolved; to marry, therefore, whilst matrimony is undissolved, is to commit adultery. Since, therefore, His prohibition of divorce was a conditional one, He did not prohibit absolutely; and what He did not absolutely forbid, that He permitted on some occasions, when there is an absence of the cause why He gave His prohibition. In very deed His teaching is not contrary to Moses, whose precept He partially defends, I will not say confirms. If, however, you deny that divorce is in any way permitted by Christ, how is it that you on your side destroy marriage, not uniting man and woman, nor admitting to the sacrament of baptism and of the eucharist those who have been united in marriage anywhere else, unless they should agree together to repudiate the fruit of their marriage, and so the very Creator Himself?"

He later states circa A.D. 217

"If you are bound to a wife, do not seek to be loosed. If you have been loosed from a wife, do not seek a wife. But even if you have taken a wife, you have not sinned." [1 Cor. 7:27, 28]. He says that because to a man who had been loosed from a wife prior to his believing [in Christ], his wife will not be counted as a "second wife." Because she is his first wife after his believing."

Methodius writes in A.D. 290:

"To the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they can remain even as I am. But if they cannot contain themselves, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn." Here Paul also persisted in giving the preference to continence....He challenged his hearers to this state of life, teaching that it

was better that a man who had been bound to one wife should from then on remain single, just as he did. On the other hand,... on account of the strength of animal passion, Paul allows "by permission" one who is in such a condition to contract a second marriage.... He allows a second marriage to those who are burdened with the disease of the passions, lest they should be wholly defiled by fornication."

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<sup>1</sup> Betrothed- **3565**. *numphe noom-fay'* from a primary but obsolete verb *nupto* (to veil as a bride; compare Latin "nupto," to marry); a young married woman (as veiled), including a betrothed girl; by implication, a son's wife:--bride, daughter in law. (Equivalent to our fiancé or engagement period)

<sup>2</sup> Eunuch- Heb 2135 *eunouchos yoo-noo'-khos* from *eune* (a bed) and 2192; a castrated person (such being employed in Oriental bed-chambers); by extension an impotent or unmarried man; by implication, a chamberlain (state-officer):--eunuch.