

Matthew 5:31-32

Marriage and Divorce

Introduction:

The Scripture makes it abundantly clear that marriage is a sacred covenant between a man and woman. The duration of marriage ends only at death. It is to be lifelong. The apostle Paul states this clearly in Romans 7:2-3 “For the married woman is bound by the law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the Law concerning the husband.” The Scripture also makes it abundantly clear regarding the behavior of husband and wife in Eph. 5:23-33. There is to be a sacrificial love, a husband must have for the wife even as Christ has sacrificed His life for the church, and there is to be a living submission of the wife to her husband as to the Lord. Our Lord Jesus in this context of Matthew’s Gospel, deals with those who seek to corrupt the marriage bond. Our Lord defends the creative order and design found in the book of Genesis 2:22-25. Divorce is a grievous violation of God’s creative order and destroys the marriage bond.

I. The Legislation of Moses Regarding Divorce – v.31

A. The Law of Moses – Deut. 24:1-4 cf. Matt. 19:3-9

1. Adultery punishable by death. (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 19:15; II Cor. 13:1)
2. The object was to control divorce – (William Barclay)
3. God hates divorce – Mal. 2:16

B. Certificate of Divorce

1. This certificate purpose was to keep men from divorcing their wives for frivolous reasons. Rom. 7:2,3
2. This certificate’s purpose was to protect women who otherwise would have to fend for themselves.
3. This certificate’s purpose once in the hand of the wife, entitled her to marry someone else.

C. The Pharisees and Scribes position on divorce: v.31

1. Stretched the certificate of divorce to be a command.
2. Insisted upon divorce for inadequate reasons.

II. The Legislation of Christ regarding Divorce

A. Our Lord is the primary authority

1. The parallel passage of Matthew 19:3-9, gives us the right understanding of this text cf. Gen. 2:22-25
2. The Genesis 2, passage is quite explicit about the sanctity of marriage – I Cor. 6:16
3. The matter of abandonment or desertion – I Cor.7:10-16
4. The conversion of one spouse and their children – Psa. 127:3; Gen. 9:9; 17:7; Acts 2:39

B. Paul’s Ground for Divorce

1. Abandonment – I Cor. 7:15

C. Jesus abrogates the temporary legislation of Moses – John 8:1-11

D. Church discipline –I Cor.5:6-13; II Cor. 2:4-10

Conclusion:

Our Lord is establishing the solemn and sacred union of marriage. To violate this sacred union through breaking of covenant vows is indeed sinful and will incur the judgment of God.