

What Jesus says about Marriage

Matthew 19:1-12

Introduction

1. **In the first two lessons of this series we have looked at the :
A-Guidelines of marriage.
B- At the Purpose of marriage.**
2. **In this lesson, we want to look at the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 19 in this regard.**
3. **This discussion takes us into an area where there is much debate.**
 - a. **This may be due to the pre-conceived ideas with which we approach the matter.**
 - b. **I will not answer all of the questions or settle all of the debates, but I do believe the passage is direct and fairly easy to understand.**
4. **There are three questions and three answers in the text (which are progressive in their nature), and we will explore it from that perspective.**

Discussion

I. THE FIRST QUESTION AND THE FIRST ANSWER

- A. **The Pharisees begin by asking Jesus about divorce for any reason (vs. 3).**
 1. **Jesus was in an area belonging to Herod Antipas, who had recently divorced his wife to marry Herodias, his brother's wife.**
 2. **This was, no doubt, a test question.**
 3. **The question is about the cause(s) for divorce, and not about divorce itself, for the Law contained specific instructions concerning divorce (Deut. 24:1-4).**
 - a. **The Jewish leaders hotly debated the meaning of "some uncleanness in her."**
 - b. **One school of thought (Shammai) said it was some scandalous thing, such as unchastity; and another school (Hillel)**

said he meant even the smallest of matters, such as burning the bread.

- B. **Jesus answers the question by referring them back to God's original plan for marriage (vss. 4-6).**
 1. **"At the beginning" takes us back to Genesis 2:21-25.**
 2. **It is clear that Jesus considered God's original plan as a continuing divine ordinance for marriage.**
 - a. **A man is to "leave and cleave," and divorce violates that.**
 - b. **He could hardly have been clearer in saying, "Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (cf. Mal. 2:16).**

II. THE SECOND QUESTION AND THE SECOND ANSWER

- A. **The Pharisees countered by asking about the allowances Moses had made (vs. 7).**
 1. **They still want to debate Deut. 24, and their reasoning is "If divorce for any cause is not acceptable, why did Moses make an allowance?"**
 2. **They were taking Moses' regulation as an encouragement of divorce, which is was not! It was, in fact, a discouragement of it.**
- B. **Jesus responded first by saying that Moses' allowance was due to the hardness of the peoples' hearts (vs. 8).**
 1. **The peoples' stubbornness caused this concession (cf. 1 Sam. 8:1ff).**
 2. **This concession was God's concession, for Moses was His spokesman.**
 3. **The Pharisees were more interested in the concession than in the original God-given principle, i.e., that marriage is to be permanent.**
 4. **Some would argue that people are still stubborn today and that God will still make concessions regarding divorce.**
 - a. **The only way we know He did in the case of Deuteronomy 24 is because Jesus told us so.**

- b. I would certainly be afraid to assume that He will do the same today, for there is certainly no indication that He will.
- C. Jesus continued by saying that He only recognized one reason for divorce, i.e., sexual immorality (vs. 9).
 - 1. Even though Jesus did affirm the original plan for marriage, He did proceed to give one reason for divorce (cf. **Matt. 5:32**).
 - a. The word is *porneia* and it means any kind of “sexual immorality.”
 - b. His statement is more in keeping with Shammai than Hillel, although it is not Jesus’ purpose to take sides in their argument.
 - 2. The term “except” is very significant, for it shows that the general rule is something else and this is the one exception to that rule.
 - 3. Fornication is an attack on the foundation of the marriage relationship.
 - 4. It is my understanding that only the “innocent party,” i.e., the one who had not committed fornication or contributed to the fornication of his/her partner has the right to remarry.

III. THE THIRD QUESTION AND THE THIRD ANSWER

- A. The third question is asked by Jesus’ own disciples (vs. 10).
 - 1. The disciples recognize this as a difficult teaching.
 - 2. In effect, they are saying, “If unchastity is the only grounds for divorce, would it not be better to remain unmarried?”
- B. Jesus gave them a stern and challenging answer (vss. 11-12).
 - 1. Jesus recognizes that not all men are suited for marriage and not all are suited to live a single, celibate life (cf. 1 Cor. 7:7).
 - 2. Some might choose to remain celibate for the sake of the kingdom, though it would certainly not be wrong to marry (cf. Heb. 13:4).

Conclusion

- 1. I am sure that this discussion has not answered all the questions or settled all of the debates.
 - a. There will always be “What if . . .” situations.
 - b. Many will continue to make emotional arguments.
- 2. Jesus still said what He said in Matthew 19, and it is pretty straightforward. In other words, it is what it is.
- 3. We must not lower or raise the divine standard!

References;

- 1- Zondervan: Illustrated Bible Backgrounds.
 - 2- International Bible Encyclopedia.
 - 3- William Barclay: Daily Bible Study.
 - 4- Kittels Theological Dictionary New Testament.
- Basic Outline: T Miller.

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