

# Authentic Christians

Lesson 11 – Matthew 5:31-32

## 1. **Divorce (Four passages: Deut. 24:1-4, Matt. 5:31-32, Matt. 19:1-12, & 1 Cor. 7)**

- The tragedy of divorce:
  - Divorce, unfortunately, has touched almost everyone in our local church – parents, siblings, friends, coworkers, acquaintances, etc., are a few of the people we know who have suffered through the pain and agony of a divorce.
  - No one wins through divorce ... in many cases one life of misery is traded for another; the issues may change but the heartache often remains the same.
  - There are a multiplied number of reasons a couple might divorce – it's our intention over the next several weeks to look at the teaching of Scripture to see what God thinks of it.

*Present some helpful resources for those who would like to study the issue of divorce.*

- The discussion of lust and adultery naturally led to a question re: divorce and the teaching of the Pharisees (those who sat in Moses' seat – Matt. 23:1-3).
- Jesus uses the issue of adultery to address their misguided teaching, their misinterpretation of the Law and their twisted emphasis on the term "uncleanness" found in Deut. 24:1-4.
- **IMPORTANT:** Deut. 24:1-4 is not necessarily an exposé of the issue of divorce although we might be able to glean some important details about its practice.
  - The passage regulates a perverted human attempt to annul or cast aside a God-ordained covenant; it doesn't condone it, the passage only regulates it.
  - The regulation included a "certificate" in order to certify the "legitimacy" of a woman's separation from her husband for something "indecent" – she had to prove her "singleness" was not the result of any sin that required a stiffer penalty.

*"It served a variety of purposes. It was a legal document and therefore served as a deterrent of hasty action on the part of the husband – it would serve to restrain frivolous, thoughtless and rash dismissal. It would also be a testimonial to the woman of her freedom from marital obligations to her husband who sent her away. And it would be a protective instrument in the matter of the woman's reputation and well-being, particularly in the event that she married another man." (Murray, Divorce, pg. 9)*

*"Writing the bill made the divorce a legal matter ... the bill protected the one who received it from false accusations, misunderstandings, etc., and clearly set forth her status as unmarried ... the one who divorced another had to a) personally b) put the bill into the other party's hand ... the person divorced must be sent from the home." (Adams, Marriage, Divorce & Remarriage, pp. 28-29)*

- The regulation defined two distinct reasons for the woman's two divorces: Divorce #1: uncleanness (objective – something recognized as indecent) & Divorce #2: hatred (subjective – dislike or hatred of her by the husband).
- The point of the regulation was to protect the woman from being treated as a contractual asset or a sexual toy – if she were legally divorced because of “uncleanness” and then married to another, she could not be reclaimed or remarried by the first husband if the second marriage ended in a divorce because of “hatred”.

*“When a woman was subjectively or invalidly divorced, she was entitled to a financial settlement. She received back the dowry, which was a monetary or material gift given by the bride's father for her security in the marriage. Generally, she also would receive some compensation from her husband's resources (i.e. divorce payments). This means that divorce without objective grounds was costly for the husband.” (William Heth in Remarriage after Divorce in Today's Church: 3 Views, pg. 64)*

*Why would the first husband want her back, then .... hmmm?*

- **IMPORTANT:** The regulation assumed remarriage – nowhere in the Law is the woman that is given the certificate of divorce prohibited from remarrying nor was the second husband rebuked for marrying the woman who was given the certificate (the same thought is found in Matt. 5:32).
- The regulation does not refer to adultery by name (or any other sexual lewdness demanding death), for good reason ... an act of adultery (if properly punished) effectively ended the marriage relationship by death!
- Sometime between Deut. 22:22 and Matt. 1:19 adultery ceased to be a capital crime.
- The word “uncleanness” (NASB & ESV – “indecent”, CEV - “something disgraceful”, NLT – “something wrong”, NCV – “something bad”) has always been up for debate, but there are several things we can deduce from its use in this passage and others:
  - It was a verifiable indecency (perhaps publically known and recognized as indecent), thus the certificate – this doesn't legitimize the complaint since a husband that “hated” his wife could also issue a certificate; it only means that the indecency could be verified by others.
  - The indecency fell short of a capital crime (adultery brought death), but God allowed for its presence to legitimately/legally break the marriage covenant. (Cp. Jer. 3:1-10)
  - We know that this indecency caused irreparable harm to the original marriage relationship and gave justification and God's permission for the offended spouse's divorce.
- Our text (**Matt. 5:31-32**) provides the first NT glimpse into the issue of divorce:
  - There are two important observations of this passage: 1) this passage only deals with divorce on the part of the man, not the woman; and 2) the passage makes no mention of remarriage.
  - The emphasis in this passage is NOT on the exception, but is on the fact that the husband may not divorce his wife for any OTHER reason than *porneia*.

πᾶς ὁ ἀπολύων τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας

**All who divorce/send away their/his wife except for the “word”/reason of *porneia*/fornication**

ποιεῖ αὐτὴν μοιχευθῆναι

**make her be adulterated/suffer adultery**

καὶ ὃς ἐὰν ἀπολελυμένην γαμήσῃ, μοιχᾶται

**and whoever marries the one sent away/divorced is committing adultery**

- The text clearly says that a husband who divorces his wife for any other reason than *porneia* literally “makes her to suffer adultery.”

*“The man is not said in this case to commit adultery; his sin is rather that he becomes implicated in the wrong of adultery on the part of his dismissed wife.” (Murray, Divorce, pp. 21-22)*

- The text implicates the man in the matter of divorce – the woman is not an adulteress simply because of the divorce, she is only made to “suffer adultery” (implying remarriage).
- To “suffer adultery”, then, must point to two things:
  - a. This woman can only become an adulteress when she violates a covenant of marriage that is still in vogue by marrying another man or sinning sexually with another man;
  - b. Adultery, then, is the only God-given grounds for dissolving a marriage relationship.
- It follows, then, that if the woman commits adultery by violating a covenant of marriage still in vogue, then the man who divorces his wife also commits adultery if he remarries after divorcing his wife for illegitimate (non – *porneia*) reasons (double indemnity – party to his former wife’s adultery & adulterous if he remarries).
- **OBSERVATION:** The OT did not provide for divorce in the case of adultery – Jesus did; meaning He set aside (abrogated) the Mosaic penalty for adultery and legitimized divorce for adultery.

*Why? (Jesus is establishing/inaugurating a kingdom that is bigger than the Jew; many of the Mosaic penalties were temporary and specific to God’s dealings with the Jews)*