

Authentic Christians

Lesson 12 – Matthew 5:31-32

1. Review

- Our purpose is to examine each significant passage and understand them before putting the details together and coming to a conclusion (biblical theology vs. systematic theology)
- Deuteronomy 24:1-4 only regulated divorce, it didn't promote it or condone it.

“This passage clearly teaches that a woman who is divorced and marries another man is so completely and permanently severed from her first husband that, if divorced from her second husband, she can marry anyone else but can never again marry her first husband.” (Thomas Edgar, Divorce and Remarriage: Four Christian Views, pp. 154-155)

- Deuteronomy 24:1-4 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).
- Matthew 5:31-32 says that a husband who divorces his wife for a reason other than *porneia* literally “makes her to suffer adultery.”
- 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.

2. One more passage: Matthew 19:1-12

- **Matt. 19:1-12** details both the contemporary Pharisaical interpretation (Hillel's interpretation) and the divine perspective/interpretation of Deut. 24:1-4.

“As respecting divorce and its implications this is on all accounts the most pivotal passage in the New Testament. It occupies this crucial position particularly for the reason that it is the only passage in the New Testament in which we have the combination of two clauses, namely, the exceptive clause ... and the remarriage clause.” (Murray, Divorce, pg. 33)

- The question posed to Jesus centered on the comment “for just any reason (NKJV)” which was how Rabbi Hillel understood the implication of the Hebrew word for “uncleanness”.
- **PRIMARILY** Jesus emphasizes the original institution of marriage by God (vv. 4-6): one man and one woman are brought together by God, and they voluntarily enter a mutual covenant that contains 1) certain responsibilities to one another, 2) divine blessings on the spouse that carries out these responsibilities, and 3) the bitter consequences for violating these responsibilities.
- In appealing to the act of creation, Jesus clearly sees the institution of marriage as universal, encompassing and involving both believers and unbelievers with its obligations.
- Jesus makes clear that God instituted marriage, but man instituted divorce (vs. 6).

- **SECONDARILY** Jesus' answers the specific question posed to Him and again gives God's definition of the expression "uncleanness": *porneia* (general term for different kinds of sexual immorality).
 - a. Due to a heart that has been hardened by sin (perhaps through continuous thought and practice), God permitted through Moses the breaking of the marriage covenant.
 - b. The context of Matt. 5:31-32 points to LUST (universal condition of the unregenerate and unsanctified heart) as the culprit (thus the hardening effect) for the breakup – lust leading to adultery is such a heinous violation of God's will that the covenant of marriage cannot often sustain or survive the broken relationship between victim and perpetrator.
 - c. The shadow of lust also occurs in Deut. 24:1-4 – the original husband who discovered an "indecency" in his wife would be admitting to a desire (lust) for "greener grass" and his own insincerity IF he were to seek to remarry his original wife because she now had money.
 - d. **NOTICE:** Matthew 19:9 does not pass judgment on the individual who merely divorces and doesn't remarry – it accuses an individual of adultery if they do two things: divorce for a reason other than *porneia* & remarry.
- This passage clearly states that the man who dissolves the marriage covenant (except for *porneia*) and marries someone else commits adultery – in the event of *porneia*, there is no condemnation of the divorce or the remarriage..
- The exception (*porneia* or adultery) expressed by Jesus legitimately, biblically, and in almost all cases effectively terminates the marriage covenant unless the offended party is open to the perpetrator's repentance and reconciliation.
- This biblical truth (adultery as a legitimate reason to end a marriage covenant) is shared by believers and unbelievers alike!

Why do you think this is so? (people innately comprehend the sacredness of marriage, it is unlike any other human relationship [trust factor], and every person has to some degree or another the Law of God written on their hearts)

- Jesus deals with the issue of perpetrating a divorce (in His day a decidedly male prerogative); he doesn't address the issue of divorce from the perspective of someone who's the victim of divorce (in His day a decidedly female prospect).
- Comparison to Mark 10:1-12 & Luke 16:18
 - a. First discrepancy is in Jesus' & the Pharisee's use of the words command and permit (in Matt. 19 the Pharisee say that Moses "commanded" but Jesus says Moses "permitted"; in Mark 10 the order is reversed) – both are true reflections of the regulatory nature of the Law written by Moses.
 - b. Second discrepancy is the absence of an exceptive clause – the question put forth by the Pharisees implied divorce "for any cause"; Jesus makes the absolute statement that divorce cannot take place "for any cause" and if it does, the one divorcing is considered and adulterer.
 - c. Both passages must be supplemented by and interpreted in light of what Jesus stated elsewhere when the context is referring to the same or similar event.