

“LET NOT MAN PUT ASUNDER”

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In Matthew 19:4-6, Jesus Christ says, *“Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”* Close to 50% of new marriages in the United States today end in divorce. One third of all marriages end in divorce within their first 10 years. About 25% of American children 16 and under live with a stepparent. Therefore, it should not be surprising that this doctrine taught by Christ is not a very popular one these days. In fact, this doctrine has been rejected by a rather large number of our own brethren. False doctrine on this issue has so infiltrated our brotherhood that there are surely many souls that have never heard the truth taught on this subject. It is not uncommon to hear of brethren who “re-studied” the issue and changed their minds about it (not for the better), usually in response to a divorce occurring in their own lives or perhaps a family member’s. Not a few brethren have shamelessly embraced false doctrine in an effort to attract new members, since so many prospects are already in a second or third (or more) marriage.

The old paths of marriage

In Jeremiah 6:16, God told His people Israel, *“Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.”* Paths do not get any older than the ones God established in the very beginning. In the second chapter of the entire Bible, God created the first man (Adam) and woman (Eve), and then instituted marriage and the family. Genesis 2:21-24 says, *“And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”* What we read here is not a complicated concept: one man is to marry one woman and they are to remain married as long as they both shall live. God did not authorize divorce, remarriage, polygamy, “same-sex” marriage, or any of the other corruptions that vex our souls in today’s wicked, wicked world. Therefore, what Jesus spoke in Matthew 19:4-6 is not actually a new doctrine at all. Christ was merely restoring the arrangement that God had made in the very beginning. Concerning the practice of divorce, Jesus said that *“from the beginning it was not so”* (Matt 19:8). Sadly, the Israelites told the prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 6:16 that they would not walk in God’s old paths. So also their fathers had rejected God’s doctrine of marriage in the Book of Genesis.

God hates divorce

The Pharisees of Jesus’ day were also guilty of rejecting the “old paths.” They

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attempted to justify their own practice of divorcing their wives “for every cause” (Matt 19:3) by appealing to Deuteronomy 24:1-4. That passage reads: “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. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man’s wife. 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 the Lord: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.” The Israelites made the mistake of concluding that God *approves* of whatever He *allows*. They conveniently forgot about the time in the wilderness that God allowed them to have the meat they demanded, but were then smitten with a “very great plague” (Num 11:4-33; Psa 78:26-31). God also gave them the king they demanded, but never approved of it (1 Sam 8). It was over 2,500 years after the creation that God *permitted* divorce under the Law of Moses (Deut 24:1-4). That He did not approve of the practice is discernible from His statement that a man who divorced his wife could not marry her again. She was *defiled* by him, and could marry any other man except for him, showing that the fault lay with *him*, not her. God only permitted divorce because of the hardness of the people’s hearts (Matt 19:8; Mark 10:5). God had not changed His views on marriage. In fact, Malachi 2:16 says, “*For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the Lord of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.*” To repeat, the Creator of all things says that he *hates* divorce! He would not accept the offerings of the men who divorced their wives: “*And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand. Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.*” (Mal 2:13-15). As Jesus restored God’s original law, he said, “*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*” (Mark 10:9). Any religious doctrine or practice that is newer than what Christ taught is not good, because *all truth* was revealed by in the New Testament (John 16:13; 2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:3). Therefore, any effort to pervert the teachings of Christ and say that divorce and remarriage for any cause is acceptable in God’s sight is sinful and must be opposed by all who are his true disciples.