

Introduction

In the process of the reformation, truth has come to light that has been hidden for centuries. It is my understanding in studying this subject of marriage and divorce very carefully, that this could be another truth that is to be added to the restoration of all things. It is my belief that every divine institution is to be restored in the time of the end.

In the beginning, God created two of His greatest institutions: marriage and the Sabbath. The majority of Christians have a misunderstanding of the Sabbath. Could it be that they have an incorrect understanding of marriage as well?

Immediately after God created Adam, God decreed “it is not good that man [or woman] should be *alone*.” He then gave Adam a wife, and pronounced His creation “very good”. Marriage and the Sabbath were designed to bring unification, happiness and therefore ultimate fulfillment for mankind. But when either of these institutions is treated with indifference, God’s ideal for mankind’s fulfillment can never be met. What is God’s will when His children find themselves in a marriage that is so broken that there is no longer any happiness and fulfillment in the relationship? There is no feeling that is more hopeless than sleeping inches from your spouse for years yet feeling that you’re completely alone. When marriage has reached this state, it no longer serves God’s original purpose, nor does it bring Him glory.

What Does God’s Law Teach About Divorce?

The question begs to be asked today, “...Is it lawful for a man to divorce (G630 “put away”) his wife for just *any* reason? And He answered and said to them, Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate. They said to Him, Why then did Moses command the man to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away? He said to them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so” (Matthew 19:3-8 NJKV).

Yeshua gave Moses the Ten Commandments complete with the Torah. This provision for divorce is found in the statutes which were given by Yeshua Himself to guard the Ten Commandments. A reading of the above Scriptures gives no indication Yeshua was overturning the provision that He gave through Moses.

Deuteronomy 24:1 (ERV) “A man might marry a woman, and then find some secret thing about her that he does not like. If that man is not pleased with her, he must write the divorce papers and give them to her. Then he must send her from his house.”

Let us examine this dialogue carefully. Yeshua pointed these men back to the beginning when God gave His gift of marriage. When Adam and Eve were united in holy wedlock they would have understood that this was a forever experience. Had the human race remained unfallen I

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do not believe we would be talking about divorce at this time. Since sin entered the world, God's ideal for man and woman has been compromised on every side. Because of this God has made provision in His law that empowers people to be forgiven for their wrong choices and start anew.

When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, marriage relationships broke down the same way they do today. Throughout their journey Yeshua was that "spiritual Rock that followed" the Israelites in the wilderness of Sin. It was Yeshua, through Moses, who was their guide and teacher as to right and wrong (see 1 Corinthians 10:4). Moses, through the direction of Yeshua, made the *command* to give a certificate of divorce because of the hardness of their hearts. Yeshua, the Prince of Peace, designed marriage to reveal the love of God and to bring the kingdom of heaven to earth.

I believe God was and still is sympathetic to the needs of two people who have come to the place where love and respect for each other has become non-existent. This is the place where loving each other mentally, spiritually and physically has become impossible.

Evidently marriage relationships back then came to the place where salvaging them was an impossibility and Yeshua was fully aware of that. I find it important to see what the Word of God—Yeshua—says as well as what He does not say. It must be noted that Yeshua did *not* reverse the instructions He had previously given to Moses. He intended marriage to be forever, but because of the fall of man, men's and women's hearts can become hardened. This hardening of the heart was an add-on, this was not from the beginning. Things had changed drastically; God's original plan had taken a turn. Men and women now had the capacity to fall out of love and lose the desire and in some cases ability to return to it. God understood this. Was it His plan? No, but does that mean it does not happen? No.

Therefore, God has made provision in His law by commanding that two people divorce if they have come to the place of hardness of heart toward each other. Or should I say, they or one of the two *believe* they have come to a point of hardness of heart. You see, their belief in having no hope is their reality, and it is no man's or woman's right to call in question that belief. The question is, who is responsible to determine at what point people separate and/or divorce? It cannot be brother, sister, mother, father, friend, pastor, priest, or barber and on and on. It must be between the individuals in the relationship and God, end of story.

Others can counsel, encourage and suggest but we *must* leave the decision with the individuals and be able to accept whatever decisions are made. We must not undermine the individuals in their decision, all we can do is pray that the Father's will be done. This is a decision no one can make other than the individuals that have made the covenant to be married. Yeshua instructed Moses to give this allowance under this situation. Furthermore, there is no indication that Yeshua, in Matthew 19 or elsewhere, did away with this allowance, not at that time, at the cross or after the cross. (Paul expands on this concept in 1 Corinthians 7 which we will examine shortly, but first let's keep looking at Matthew 19.)

Divorce, or Put Away? Is there a difference?

Matthew 19:9 (NKJV): And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

Matthew 19:9 (KJV): And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

The word in Matthew 19:9, sometimes translated as divorce, is G630, apoluo. It appears 69 times in the New Testament, only a handful of which are related to a marital separation. Here are three random examples of the typical use of the word:

Matthew 27:17 ... Whom will ye that I release (G630) unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus ...?

Mark 8:9 And they that had eaten were about four thousand: he sent them away. (G630)

Luke 13:12 ... Woman, thou art loosed (G630) from thine infirmity.

Question: Did Pilate divorce Barabbas? Did Yeshua divorce the four thousand He had just fed? Did He divorce the woman with the issue of blood? No, obviously not. G630 means to send away, and by itself is not equivalent to a lawful divorce. A biblical divorce is a two-step process that includes both a sending away, and a writing of divorcement:

Deuteronomy 24:1 When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then [first step] let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and [second step] send her out of his house.

The Greek term for writing of divorcement, (G647, apostasion) appears only three times in the New Testament, each time coupled with the need to put away the wife:

Matthew 5:31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away (G630) his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement (G647) [This implies that some were putting their wives away without a writing of divorce. The writing is what made it a legal divorce. Without the writing of divorce, the person was still technically married, as such, if either one married another, then they would become adulterers, in fact, they would become bigamous.]

Matthew 19:7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement (G647), and to put her away? (G630)

Mark 10:4 And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement (G647), and to put her away (G630).

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On the surface, one might think that G630 and G647 are related because they sound similar, but they are not. For those wishing to search this out, G630 comes from G575; G647 comes from G868.

A putting away, without a writing of divorcement, was the issue that was asked and answered:

Asked: Matthew 19:3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away (G630) [notice no mention of a writing of divorce] his wife for every cause?

Answered: Matthew 19:8-9: He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to separate from [G630 put away] your wives [notice there is no mention of giving a writing of divorce]. But from the beginning [when Moses first mentioned divorce] it [being separated without a writing of divorce] was not so. And I say to you, whoever separates from [G630 puts away] his wife [notice no mention of a writing of divorce], except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is separated [G630 put away] [again, no mention of a writing of divorce] commits adultery."

Perhaps the reason that sexual immortality was an exception for the need of a writing of divorcement is that the spouse had already moved on in adultery, thus rendering the certificate of divorce a moot process. Sexual union was considered like marriage. In today's time, this would be the same as a man moving out or sending his wife out of the home (becoming separated but not yet divorced). If, during the time between the separation and obtaining the legal writing of divorce, either one marries another person they are committing adultery. This is because without the writing of divorce they are still considered married.

This was the second time this question of a putting away without a writing of divorce came up. We saw the same discussion in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:31. Some translations are actually mistranslated in that they render G630 as "divorce" instead of "putting away", without a writing of divorce (G647). The King James Version does this in one of the three times the word appears in this passage:

Matthew 5:31-32 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away (G630) his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement (G647). But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away (G630) his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced (G630 – put away) committeth adultery.

Unfortunately, with the mistranslation of G630, people read this to mean something entirely different than what is being taught. They wrongly interpret it to mean that the only reason you can get a divorce is if there is adultery. What is being taught is this: The only time you can put away your wife without a writing of divorce is if she is already committing adultery, probably because at this point a writing becomes irrelevant because she has essentially married another already. However, if you put away your wife without a writing of divorce for any other reason,

and she remarries, she and her new husband are now committing adultery due to the lack of following the complete divorce procedure.

Is Remarriage After a Writing of Divorce the Same as Adultery?

Looking again at Deuteronomy 24:1-4, remarriage was allowed. The put away wife could remarry, and if the second husband divorced her or died, she was allowed to marry a third time, except not to the first husband. Nowhere is she called an adulteress or subjected to the stoning that was the punishment for adultery when she remarried the first or even the second time. Apparently, the first husband was also allowed to remarry, just not to the wife he thought unclean enough to divorce in the first place.

It is understandable this would be an abomination in the eyes of God. If a man were to declare that he found no favor toward his wife to the point of meriting divorce (what the Pharisees and Yeshua referred to as “hardness of heart”), and he sends her out to marry another, for him to want to take her back later as his wife is an admission that the original divorce was not for a valid reason, thus an abomination. This demonstrates the seriousness of the matter of divorcing. God does not declare that divorce can never happen, but if it does happen, it is final.

But it is important to note that remarriage to a new partner was never forbidden. God does not declare that a divorce means that you have to live alone the rest of your life, just because you made a mistake previously. A dysfunctional marriage that comes apart because two parties are no longer walking together is not the unpardonable sin, as some may make it out to be.

God Hates Divorce

Christians often make an almost accusatory statement that “God hates divorce” to those who are in the midst of one. While I am sure that divorce does not bring God pleasure, is that statement scriptural? The word in this passage again should be rendered “putting away” and does not include a writing of divorcement. God does hate you putting away your wife without giving her a divorce, but this statement is not the same as saying that “God hates divorce”.

Malachi 2:16 (NKJV) "For the LORD God of Israel says That He hates divorce (H7971, the Hebrew equivalent to G630), For it covers one's garment with violence," Says the LORD of hosts. Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously."

Malachi 2:16 (KJV) 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.

In fact, God Himself divorced Israel, with both a putting away and a writing of divorcement.

Jeremiah 3:8 And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away (H7971), and given her a bill of divorce (H3748, the Hebrew equivalent to G647); yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.

Here again we see two things at play: putting away, and a writing of divorce. It is the putting away without the legal finalization that God hated.

What God Has Joined Together

“Therefore *what God has joined together*, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:6). What does this Scripture mean? In order for God to join two people in holy matrimony they have to be joined according to His way and will, which is His standard. If a couple married while outside of the ways and will of God it is highly unlikely that He joined them together. It is much more likely they married according to their own or the world’s idea of matrimony. To say that God brought every married man and woman together would be a stretch. He brings those together who are united in Him.

The world’s concept of matrimony falls hopelessly short of God’s holy standard. Marriage has its origins in God’s Word. The definition and rules regarding marriage are also contained therein, some of these are in the form of laws. Anyone who is not subjecting themselves to these laws of God will be operating according to their own understanding and not God’s. When a couple marries outside of a knowledge of God and His law it cannot be said that God joined the two and made them one flesh. Therefore, God did not sanctify their union.

This is why Paul said in Romans 8:5-8 (ERV) “People who live following their sinful selves think only about what they want. But those who live following the Spirit are thinking about what the Spirit wants them to do. If your thinking is controlled by your sinful self, there is spiritual death. But if your thinking is controlled by the Spirit, there is life and *peace*. Why is this true? Because anyone whose thinking is controlled by their sinful self is against God. They refuse to obey God's law. And really they are not able to obey it. Those who are ruled by their sinful selves cannot please God.” Why? This is because they do not know the requirements of God, therefore do not subject themselves to God’s standard but instead live by their own world view.

What Does the Apostle Paul Teach About Marriage?

1 Corinthians 7 is full of instruction on marriage. Paul and the disciples taught by using the Old Testament. The teachings of Yeshua would have been taught as well, however, the complete writings of the New Testament were not in place at that time. Therefore, the Old Testament would have been the primary source for instruction for new believers. The texts quoted above from Deuteronomy would have surfaced in a study and teaching regarding marriage. Add to this the Scriptures that inform us that when the Jewish people went back to Israel after the captivity in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah they were *commanded* to put away their pagan wives.

Ezra 10:10-12 “Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, ‘You have transgressed and have taken pagan wives, adding to the guilt of Israel. Now therefore, make confession to the LORD God of your fathers, and do His will; separate yourselves from

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the peoples of the land, and from the pagan wives.' Then all the assembly answered and said with a loud voice, 'Yes! As you have said, so we must do.'"

When the Gentiles accepted the gospel they turned from the pagan practices of their forefathers, i.e. "the temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus" (Acts 19:35). The Gentiles also had yearly pagan festival celebrations that they gave up to take part in the Biblical festivals as laid out in Leviticus 23 (see also Galatians 4:8-10). Conflict came to families when husbands and wives were in disagreement as to accepting this newfound faith.

At times, as is today, a stalemate was encountered in the acceptance of these Biblical practices. In some instances when a spouse was not willing to accept the newfound faith it brought conflict into the home. When this conflict jeopardized the peace of the home and required action against one's conscience and conviction, it seemed necessary to leave a spouse to eliminate these challenges.

Paul, as he so eloquently does in his writings, addresses this challenge with which he was totally familiar. He instructs by admonishing believers to stay united *if* at all possible. In Yeshua's case He recognized the reality of a spouse or both becoming hardened in their positions against each other so that they may have to divorce. Yeshua, as we have seen, did not indicate that the New Testament teaching somehow did away with the provision in the law of Moses for a man to divorce his wife. Paul addresses this situation from a different angle than Yeshua but the end result is the same. His admonition was to stay together *if* at all possible but *if* it is not then a believer is not bound to stay. He counseled those who had become believers and then found themselves in an unequally yoked situation that disrupted the peace of the home. He tells them, if possible stay in the relationship if the unbelieving spouse is "willing".

1 Corinthians 7:12-15 "But to the rest [Gentile converts] I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace."

Let us have ears to hear and eyes to see. Most do not hear or see because of two reasons: first, their preconceived ideas, and secondly, they do not go deep enough into the teaching of marriage. I would like to look at one word and two terms in this passage: "willing", "not under bondage" and "God has called us to peace".

The word "willing" gives one the idea that if someone is "willing" to put up with someone by gritting their teeth hard enough they can turn their marriage into the most grueling marathon ever endured. Some believe this is what married couples are bound to do under any circumstances except adultery. I do not believe this text teaches this at all. I believe Paul is

more in line with Yeshua when He made provision because of hardness of heart. In the case of hardness of heart Yeshua made allowance for divorce.

The word “willing” in this text is a very poor translation of the Greek word used in the original text. The original word is Strong’s G4909. “From G4862 and G2106; to think well of in common, that is, assent to, feel gratified with: - allow, assent, be pleased, have pleasure.”

This clears up the inconsistency between what many believe Paul was teaching and Yeshua’s provision He gave to Moses which never changed. Paul was actually affirming what Yeshua had instructed Moses. If a spouse was “pleased”, or “gratified with”, “assented to”, or “had pleasure” in the marriage, then by all means, stay together! If the unbelieving spouse would not create unrest and/or conflict in the home and was content “to think well of in common” or “pleased”, or “gratified with” the believing spouse then by all means, stay in the marriage. If the unbelieving spouse “thought well of”, was “pleased”, and “gratified with” the believing spouse’s obligations and convictions of their new found faith, then by all means, stay in the marriage. However, if because of disagreement, life in the home is a constant battle and positioning for control then remove yourself from the marriage because “God has call us to peace” and not war within our marriages. It is not a Christian’s duty or obligation to be a *willing* receiver of mental and spiritual persecution in their own home. It would serve the devil’s purpose, and not God’s, if a marriage relationship continued indefinitely in a completely dysfunctional and combative environment.

Conclusion

Often in marriage, for a myriad of reasons, one or both parties lose the incentive to continue to develop their relationship. This more often than not leads to indifference in the marriage which begins a downward spiral in the relationship. Often one party of the marriage will seek to repair and restore the relationship but the other party has no interest to make things better. This leads to an unfulfilled and miserable relationship where hardness of heart ensues. The marriage deteriorates to the point that one or both parties end up lonely and completely frustrated. Yeshua’s provision in the law to separate for hardness of the heart is for cases such as this. Where one or both parties no longer invest time, energy and love into the marriage, God saw fit to permit the couple to divorce and to remarry if they so choose.

God, who is love, is not pleased when indifference exists in a marriage relationship. Why? It was not until Adam and Eve were one that God pronounced the creation very good. A couple that treats the marriage covenant with indifference gives no glory to the Creator through one of the greatest gifts He has given—marriage. The gift of marriage was the closest thing that God gave to man to reflect His glory, to exemplify that God is *indeed* love, and to be a shadow picture of Yeshua and His church (bride). If people do not treat this gift in the manner that it deserves, like all of God’s gifts, it will eventually be squandered, taken, or stole away. This provision in the law to divorce and remarry, that most do not even know exists, should be restored to its rightful place. I propose that if it was, both parties would be much more accountable to each other to

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make the marriage all that it could be. If they did, the marriage covenant between couples would do what it was intended to do, bring a happiness between couples unequalled by the closest of any earthly relationship. If this happened our Father in heaven would receive the glory He so rightfully deserves for the gift of marriage that He so freely gave.

Marriage is the analogy God gave to show His plan of redemption. Paul says in a number of places that the wife ought to obey her husband. When the shadow picture is considered, referring to Christ and His church, this makes so much sense. If Yeshua is to have a bride, she must show herself faithful in obeying her bridegroom, Yeshua. In an earthly marriage relationship, it is the husband's duty to represent his Master, Yeshua. If he in fact does this, then God expects the woman to fall into line and be submissive to her husband, as her husband is submissive to The Bridegroom (Ephesians 5:22-27).

Most people believe that the only reason to terminate a marriage is through adultery. Few can cope in a marriage that has a form of loneliness that is far worse than what a person endures when single. Living alone inside of a marriage is a torment beyond description. It is clear to me that God has made provision that such a marriage may be terminated. If the marriage covenant(s) have reached a point of hardness of heart, it is better that they divorce. Hence, by the words of Yeshua, "because of hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wife."

While we are our brother's and sister's keeper we do not make their decisions for them. Because God has made provision for divorce and remarriage, we must allow them their God-given right and be man or woman enough to leave the results with God. We need not burden ourselves to become judge and jury. All that we are commanded to do is pray for them and love them. Let Him that is without sin cast the first stone. For anyone who has gone through divorce, it is painful. Love and prayer is what is needed, not judgment.

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