



DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

By Bill Subritzky

1. Is marriage indissoluble?

Some Christian writers take the view that marriage cannot be dissolved except at death. However they have to admit that Jesus did allow divorce on the grounds of adultery. They argue that the word "adultery" really means "fornication" which refers to the woman having sex before marriage and therefore was not a virgin.

They say it does not refer to adultery on the part of a married person.

This is referred to in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 22:13-19). When a man found out that the woman he had married was not a virgin she could be stoned to death.

Whatever is the truth of the matter, Jesus pointed out that marriage is not indissoluble because He allowed it on the grounds of adultery. This is the case whether or not you believe the word adultery refers only to premarital sex by one of the partners or adultery after the marriage.

2. God allowed divorce.

The book of Ezra (chapters 9 and 10) not only permitted the Jews to divorce the non-Jewish wives they had married but God commanded them to divorce. He wouldn't allow them to remain married to them.

Obviously the Bible endorses divorce.

3. Death penalty for adultery in the Old Testament.

In Genesis 38 we read the story of Judah who, not realising her identity, had sex with his daughter-in-law Tamar who was betrothed (not yet married) to his son Shelah. When Judah heard that as a result of this intercourse she was pregnant he commanded her to be burned. Later he learned that she had become pregnant through him. She was not put to death. This story illustrates that even though the marriage had not been consummated the penalty for adultery was there.

If a woman committed adultery, both the man involved and the woman were put to death. (Deuteronomy 22:22-24). The penalty for adultery was death even when the woman was only betrothed.

4. The New Testament.

Jesus said, "But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery." (Matthew 5:32).

Jesus said, "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)

Obviously the only ground for divorce referred to here is sexual immorality.

5. Meaning of the word poeneia.

The Greek word "poeneia" means any kind of sexual immorality. Whether the person is married or unmarried, whether it is a man with a woman or man with man all is included in this one word "poeneia."

Examples:

(a). Acts 15:20 refers to a decree which was made by the Council of Jerusalem as to what would be required of Gentiles who came to Jesus. It was decided that they would not be required to be circumcised. However, they had to abstain from things polluted by idols, sexual immorality, things strangled and blood.

The word used here for "sexual immorality" is "porneia".

Obviously they were referring to married as well as single people committing adultery.

(b). "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles – that a man has his father's wife!" (1 Corinthians 5:1).

Again, the word used is "porneia". It covers adultery and incest.

(c). "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

The first sin referred to i.e. fornicators is "porneia", i.e. any kind of sexual immorality whether with people or with animals.

Today's world has changed the word fornication to premarital sex to make it respectable. This doesn't change God's point of view at all.

(d). Jude chapter 7 speaks about Sodom and Gomorrah. The sin referred to is homosexuality. The word used is "porneia". This word covers every form of sexual deviation including incest, adultery, homosexuality and bestiality; intercourse with beasts.

Jesus was saying that any of these are grounds for divorce.

6. Is a Christian free to remarry after they have been divorced for scriptural reasons?

Nowhere in the scriptures does it say that a person could be legally free to divorce and not legally free to marry.

Divorce includes the right to remarry.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 says, "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, when she has

departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife, if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance."

The language indicates that he is no longer her husband, he is her former husband. Divorce terminated the relationship and the husband has made her legally free to marry another man. Moses would never have made a regulation that caused a person to commit adultery. As far as the Law of Moses goes, freedom to divorce included freedom to remarry.

7. New Testament and remarriage as it relates to believers.

The Bible says, "Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you." (1 Corinthians 7:27-28).

To be divorced on the grounds of scripture and remarry is not sin.

8. Keep your marriage vows

"Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife." (1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

9. Marriage to an unbeliever.

"But to the rest 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." (1 Corinthians 7:12).

This is the case of a man who comes to faith and his wife is an unbeliever. As long as she is willing to live with him he shouldn't divorce her. The same applies to the woman.

"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." (1 Corinthians 7:13-14).

One Christian partner to a marriage is sufficient for the children to be set apart by God.

10. The Bible approves divorce if an unbeliever departs.

"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." (1 Corinthians 7:15)

11. Christians who become unbelievers after they are married.

There is a common teaching in the Church that once we are saved we are always saved. This should be so. However there are over 60 scriptures which clearly indicate that a believer can

lose their salvation.

Examples:

(a.) "having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck," (1 Timothy 1:19)

(b.) "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons," (1 Timothy 4:1).

(c.) "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." (1 Timothy 5:8). (Also in 1 Corinthians 7:15).

12. Who is a believer? The answer is a person who believes in, has faith in, trusts, clings to, relies on and obeys Jesus.

John the Baptist said, "And he who believes in (has faith in, clings to, relies on) the Son has (now possesses) eternal life. But whoever disobeys (is unbelieving toward, refuses to trust in, disregards, is not subject to) the Son will never see (experience) life, but [instead] the wrath of God abides on him. [God's displeasure remains on him; His indignation hangs over him continually.]" (John 3:36) (AMP).

Jesus said, "He who believes in Me [who cleaves to and trusts in and relies on Me] as the Scripture has said, From his innermost being shall flow [continuously] springs and rivers of living water." (John 7:38) (AMP).

"Jesus said to her, I am [Myself] the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in (adheres to, trusts in, and relies on) Me, although he may die, yet he shall live;" (John 11:25) (AMP).

"And whoever continues to live and believes in (has faith in, cleaves to, and relies on) Me shall never [actually] die at all. Do you believe this?" (John 11:26) (AMP).

13. Further examples of believers who by practicing sin can become unbelievers.

Those whom God will not forgive unless they themselves repent from unforgiveness.

Jesus said, "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:14-15).

Clearly if we do not forgive, we are not forgiven by God. We are disobeying Scripture and become unbelievers.

14. The scripture says that those practicing the following sins will not inherit the kingdom of God i.e. they become unbelievers.

"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived.

Neither fornicators (sex outside of marriage)

Nor idolaters (putting other things ahead of God)

Nor adulterers

Nor homosexuals

Nor sodomites

Nor thieves

Nor covetous
Nor drunkards
Nor revilers (cursing other people)
Nor extortioners (taking other people's money by threat)
will inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

"Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience."
(Colossians 3:6).

Now the works of the flesh are evident which are
adultery
fornication
uncleanness
licentiousness
idolatry
sorcery
hatred
contentions
jealousies
outbursts of wrath
selfish ambitions
dissensions
heresies
envy
murders
drunkenness
revelries and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I told you in times past, that **those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**" (Galatians 5:20-21).

"But the cowardly,
unbelieving,
abominable,
murderers,
sexually immoral,
sorcerers,
idolaters,
and all liars
shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Revelation 21:8).

15. Others who become unbelievers.

(a.) Those who do not continue in His goodness.

"Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but towards you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you will be cut off." (Romans 11:22).

(b.) Those who reject the faith

“This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.” (1 Timothy 1:18-20).

(c.) Those who fall away.

“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.” (Hebrews 6:4-6).

(d.) Those who become entangled in the pollutions of the world.

“For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.” (2 Peter 2:20-21).

If a person persists in the above conduct thereby becoming an unbeliever, and refuses to repent, then the Scripture clearly says that they will not inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:10).

16. Result of sin.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23).

17. Letting the unbeliever depart.

"But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace." (1 Corinthians 7:15).

18. A believer is free to remarry after a divorce which has happened in accordance with Scripture.

“Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; ” (1 Corinthians 7:27-28).

19. Those who were divorced before they became Christians.

The Bible says that the only sin that will not be forgiven is blaspheming the Holy Spirit i.e. attributing the works of the Holy Spirit to Satan. (Matthew 12:31).

Adultery and any other sin can be forgiven except blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

(a.) A person who becomes a believer in Christ is justified from all things by Jesus Christ. Justified means "just as though they had never sinned."

"Therefore let it be known to you brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:38-39).

Note. You could not be forgiven adultery under the Law of Moses but by believing in Jesus Christ you can be justified from everything that you could not be justified from under the Law of Moses.

(b). The repentant sinner can be sanctified, washed and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God.

Scripture says, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you were. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

This means that when we come to true repentance in Jesus Christ our sins are washed away by His blood, we are set apart, made holy to God and justified just as if we had never sinned.

We have been made righteous with God's righteousness and our guilty past has been washed away just as though we had never sinned.

20. Conclusion

The former unbeliever is therefore free to remarry when they become a born again Christian even though they have been previously married.

21. Judging others.

We must always be careful that we do not rush to judgement on matters of divorce for as the Scripture says, "For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgement." (James 2:13).

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