

Jesus Teaches about Divorce

Matthew 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12

The Pharisees Test Jesus

19 Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings, *that* He departed from Galilee and came to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. ² And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there. ^{MK} And as He was accustomed, He taught them again. ³ The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for *just* any reason?"

Jesus Condemns Frivolous Divorce

^{MK 3} And He answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?" They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her." ⁴ And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made *them* at the beginning 'made them male and female,' ⁵ 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'?" ⁶ So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

⁷ They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?" ⁸ He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, ^{MK} wrote you this precept, and permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so."

^{MK 10} In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter. So He said to them, ^{MT 9} And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery against her; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery." ^{MK 12} And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.

Jesus Teaches on Celibacy

¹⁰ His disciples said to Him, "If such is the case of the man with *his* wife, it is better not to marry." ¹¹ But He said to them, "All cannot accept this saying, but only *those* to whom it has been given: ¹² For there are eunuchs who were born thus from *their* mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept *it*, let him accept *it*."

Questions:

1. Jesus is in the area of Judea beyond the Jordan (Perea, the territory of Herod Antipas). Why would this make the question about divorce more dangerous? (see Matt 14:1-12) What was the topic that got John in trouble with Herod?
2. Why were the Pharisees so interested in Jesus' view of divorce? What part of their question was meant to trip Jesus up?
3. Where does Jesus tell them to find their answer? (Mark 10:3) How does this protect Jesus and put the test back upon them? What important principle does this teach us about asking and answering hot questions?
4. The Pharisees cited Deuteronomy 24:1 saying "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and dismiss her".. how were they misquoting and distorting this verse? (Read the whole verse below)
(Deut 24:1 "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")
5. Where does Jesus then take them for the real answer to their question? (Gen 2:24) What is the conclusion Jesus draws from this original text on marriage? (vs 6)
6. The Pharisees immediately throw back what question to Jesus? What important does Jesus make between the Genesis original passage and the Moses passage? Which one is more accurate as the true will of God?
7. How does Jesus clarify the true bottom line answer to their question in vs 9? What does this tell us about the proper interpretation of the phrase they left out of Deut 24:1 "because he has found some uncleanness in her"?
8. Why does Jesus make the exception to the general no-divorce rule? What is there about fornication (sexual immorality) that make divorce a possible option for the Christian whose mate commits it?
9. What is the man (or woman) guilty of who divorces a faithful mate (despite whatever imperfections) and marries another guilty of? How should the verse be understood if the reverse is true and the mate is guilty of fornication?
10. What is the reaction of the disciples to Jesus' teaching? (vs 10) Jesus says "All cannot accept this saying".. does He mean not all can accept the teaching about divorce or their saying that it is better not to marry?
11. What does Jesus mean by the sayings about eunuchs in vs 11-12? Does this teaching agree with what Paul later teaches in 1 Cor 7:1-8 about whether it is better to marry or remain single?