

CHAPTER 6: ADULTERY, FORNICATION, DESERTION, DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

OUR PURPOSE IN THIS CHAPTER

Our purpose in this chapter is to report some secular statistical facts and to give a scriptural presentation of what the Bible has to say about adultery, fornication, desertion, divorce and remarriage. This chapter is a very strong doctrinal chapter. Therefore, it is not intended to be a primer on divorce counseling. For Bible believing pastors and counsellors, there is no solution to the exploding wickedness of divorce in the church outside of the willingness of those whom they counsel to yield to the conviction of the Holy Ghost and the plain teaching of the Scriptures on these subjects. Without repentance and forgiveness there is no balm of Gilead for our divorces. The Lord Jesus Christ has already nailed the chief cause of divorce when he stated in Matthew 19:7 that it was the hardness of men's and women's hearts that is at the root of all divorces. God hates divorces.

The doctrine of divorce and remarriage is among one of the most controversial doctrines in Scripture especially in this day when divorce rates among professing Christians are equal to that of secular divorce rates. That ought not to be. Both legally and scripturally a bill of divorcement is a document declaring the intent of one or both parties to a marriage to divorce. In the Bible, the divorce breaks both the scriptural legal bond and the physical bond whereas in civil law it may only break the legal bond with the sexual relationship being allowed to continue. We state again and again throughout this book that God's intent for marriage has from the beginning been "one man with one woman for a lifetime". God's intent in becoming one flesh is best illustrated by the statement: "Nothing but death separates a man or a woman from their own flesh". God hates the action of divorce and he plainly states that very strongly in Malachi 2:16. The Lord Jesus Christ plainly restated in Matthew 19:6 what God's original intent for marriage was and then stated in Matthew 19:8 that the reason God allowed divorce was because of the hardness of the people's hearts. In other words, the cause for divorce was sin that proceeded from hardened hearts. There are those who vehemently argue that divorce is never scriptural, but what does the Bible say? There are five different conditions where divorces are/were scriptural including: (1) An unspecified act of uncleanness from Deuteronomy 24; (2) God put away (divorced) Israel for her idolatry; (3) God's command to divorce given to the people, the priests, and the Levites of Israel in Ezra chapter 10; (4) The fornication/adultery of one's spouse; (5) The act of desertion by an unbelieving spouse as stated in 1 Corinthians 7 (This one is hotly contested by many, if not most). We will elaborate on those later in our study. There are three divorces recorded in scripture and one of those involved multiple divorces. These are: (1) A case could be made that the casting out of Hagar in Genesis 21:10 by Abraham at the insistence of Sarah was a divorce; (2) God divorced Israel in Isaiah 50:1-2, Jeremiah 3:8; (3) God commanded the people, the priests, and the Levites of Israel to divorce their pagan spouses in Ezra chapter 10 because they had taken to themselves the strange wives.

The terms "divorce" and "putting away" and their cognates are the general terms that the Scriptures use for dissolving a marriage. In addition to the three scriptural grounds for divorce, there are at least 18 (eighteen) grounds for divorce identified in the civil law of many government court systems including desertion, natural impotency, insanity or idiocy, a wife's pregnancy by another person at the time of the marriage, adultery, imprisonment for crimes, incurable insanity that

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develops after marriage, habitual drunkenness, habitual and excessive drug use, habitual cruel and inhuman treatment, bigamy, incest, sodomy, bestiality, conviction of a felony, attempting to take the other spouse's life, infecting the other spouse with a sexually transmitted disease, irreconcilable differences (no fault divorce), and non support . All state courts in the United States now allow for no fault divorces. Divorce has become a very serious issue in the Church and in secular society. Without getting into a lot of detail, the reason that the divorce rate has skyrocketed in the church is because our churches in America are full of unbelieving, professing Christians and the few that are saved are in open apostasy because they lack Godly leadership. They have also divorced the 1611 King James Bible that built the church in America and took up with pagan harlots. The corruption of the God ordained institution of marriage has run hand in hand with the corruption of the King James Bible.

SOME VERY TROUBLING DIVORCE STATISTICS

The statistics concerning divorce in the United States are shocking. The country with the highest divorce rate in the world is the United States of America. Before getting underway with our study we cite the following statistics:

“The percentages of divorces expressed in percentage of membership in American religious organizations are as follows: Nondenominational, 34%; Jews, 30%; Baptist, 29%; Episcopal, 28%; Pentecostal, 28%; Methodist, 26%; Mormons, 24%; Presbyterian, 23%; Catholic, 21%; Lutheran, 21%; Atheist/Agnostic, 21%.”
Cited from: <http://facts.randomhistory.com/divorce-facts.html>

“The following divorce rates apply for: first marriages = 41%, second marriages = 60%, third marriages = 73%. There are 16,865 divorces per week in America.” (Cited from 2011 US Census Data)

“Americans have become less likely to marry. This is reflected in a decline of more than 50 percent, from 1970 to 2010, in the annual number of marriages per 1,000 unmarried adult women (Figure 1). In real terms, the total number of marriages fell from 2.45 million in 1990 to 2.11 million in 2010...Since 1960, the overall percentage of the married population has declined by 16%. Since 1960, there has been an average 22.5% drop in those married in the age group 35-44...The decline in marriage does not mean that people are giving up on living together with a sexual partner. On the contrary, with the incidence of unmarried cohabitation increasing rapidly, marriage is giving ground to unwed unions. Most people now live together before they marry for the first time. An even higher percentage of divorced persons who subsequently remarry live together first...The American divorce rate today is about twice that of 1960, but has declined since hitting its highest point in our history in the early 1980s. For the average couple marrying for the first time in recent years,

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the lifetime probability of divorce or separation now falls between 40 and 50 percent.... Teenagers and the nonreligious who marry have higher divorce rates.... Having a religious affiliation (vs. none) makes you 14% less likely to get a divorce.... Between 1960 and 2011, as indicated in Figure 8, the number of unmarried couples in America increased more than seventeen-fold. Unmarried cohabitation — the status of couples who are sexual partners, not married to each other, and sharing a household — is particularly common among the young.... More than 60 percent of first marriages are now preceded by living together, compared to virtually none fifty years ago.... In fact, some evidence indicates that those who live together before marriage are more likely to break up after marriage.... Children from single parent homes are three times more likely to get into trouble. The number of children born in homes without fathers are about 1 million new children each year.... Since 1960, the percentage of babies born to unwed mothers has increased more than sevenfold.... Consequently, there has been about a fifteen-fold increase in the number of cohabiting couples who live with children since 1960.... Children who grow up with cohabiting couples tend to have worse life outcomes compared to those growing up with married couples. The primary reasons are that cohabiting couples have a much higher breakup rate than married couples, a lower level of household income, and higher levels of child abuse and domestic violence.... With more than 50 percent of teenagers now accepting out-of-wedlock childbearing as a “worthwhile lifestyle,” at least for others, they do not seem to grasp the enormous economic, social, and personal costs of nonmarital childbearing.” (Cited from: “The 2012 State Of Our Unions Report” from the University of Virginia)

“Living together prior to getting married can increase the chance of getting divorced by as much as 40 percent.” (Cited from:
<http://www.mckinleyirvin.com/blog/divorce/32-shocking-divorce-statistics/>)

SOME QUESTIONS POSED

In the study that is before us, we have some difficult and controversial questions to answer. During the course of our study, we will deal with definitions and descriptions of the words adultery, fornication, adulterer, adulteress, uncleanness, bound, loosed, putting away, divorce, divorced, divorcement, desertion, and sodomite. Some of the questions that we will deal with include: (1) What is adultery? (2) What is fornication? (3) What is the difference between fornication and adultery? (4) Can a married person be guilty of fornication? (5) Is adultery a sexual act or a ceremonial act? (6) What, if any, are the scriptural grounds for divorce? (7) Does unmarried mean separated, but not divorced? (8) Is desertion a scriptural ground for divorce? (9) Are all divorces absolutely prohibited? (10) Is divorce always wrong? (11) Is divorce always a sin for all parties to the divorce? (12) Under what circumstances is a divorce scriptural? (13) Is divorce an unforgivable sin?. (14) If a person gets divorced can they remarry? (15) If a divorced person gets remarried are they in perpetual adultery?

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(16) Should a person who has been guilty of an unscriptural divorce put away (divorce) their current spouse and reunite with their former spouse? (17) Can you be married to someone and them not be your spouse? Now let's turn to the definition of some terms?

DEFINITIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF TERMS

Some fundamentalist and Baptist churches believe that the only scriptural grounds for divorce is adultery while other churches believe that adultery and desertion are scriptural grounds for divorce. Some Baptist churches teach that there are no scriptural grounds for divorce. Some fundamentalist and Baptist churches believe that if a divorced person ever remarries they are living in perpetual adultery. Some Baptist churches will not allow a divorced man to testify of his salvation in church services. There are even some Baptist churches that will not allow a divorced man or woman to be a member of THEIR church. Some fundamentalist and Baptist Bible schools, pastors, and evangelists teach that a married person cannot be guilty of fornication. Many fundamentalist and Baptist Bible schools, pastors, preachers, and evangelists believe that both parties to a divorce are guilty of sin. Some fundamentalist and Baptist preachers teach and preach that it is heresy to state that the sexual act constitutes a scriptural marriage (God says that a man and a woman become husband and wife when they become one flesh in the sexual act. There is no scriptural requirement for a ceremony. There is no requirement for a marriage license. There is no requirement either in the Old Testament or the New Testament for a religious official such as a priest, a pastor, or a preacher to perform a ceremony). We are NOT stating here that we believe that marriage is nothing more than a sexual relationship, but we are saying that a sexual relationship establishes a covenant that imposes upon a couple the obligation to enter into a permanent scriptural relationship as husband and wife. When they do not, or cannot enter into a permanent husband and wife relationship, they are both guilty of fornication even if one or both of them is married. If one or both of them is married, but not to each other, then the act of fornication becomes the crime of adultery. Some fundamentalist and Baptist Bible schools, pastors, preachers, and evangelists teach that it is not the sexual act that constitutes adultery, but that it is the marriage ceremony itself that constitutes adultery. We address these and other issues in the discussion that follows.

ADULTERY

Under the Old Testament law, a man could not be guilty of adultery unless he had sex with a woman that was married to another man. What that means is that if he had sex with an unmarried woman, he was not guilty of adultery even if he had a wife. However, if he laid with an unmarried women, he was under the obligation to take care of her as a wife. Perhaps that is why so many of the kings of Judah and Israel had so many wives. Under that same law, an unmarried man could be guilty of both fornication and adultery if he had sex with another man's wife. The following definition for adultery is from the Oxford English Dictionary:

Adultery: Violation of the marriage bed ; the voluntary sexual intercourse of a

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married person with one of the opposite sex, whether unmarried, or married to another (the former case being technically designated single, the latter double adultery). [Oxford English Dictionary]

In 1388, the Wycliffe translation of Jeremiah 3:9 read as follows:

“Bi lightnesse of hir fornicacioun sche defoulide the erthe, and dide auowtrie with a stoon, and with a tree.” [Oxford English Dictionary]

Let us put the above sentence into Modern English: By lightness of her fornication she defiled the earth, and did adultery with a stone, and with a tree. What this dictionary definition and contextual definition tells us is that adultery is considered to be an act of fornication. Wycliffe’s translation of Jeremiah 3:9 gives us our contextual definition. You will see the definition of adultery repeated several times in this book Adultery is usually defined as a voluntary sexual act committed between two people who are not married to each other, but at least one of whom is a married person. Both parties to this sin are said to be committing adultery, even the unmarried party. If both parties are married, but not to each another, then double adultery is involved. Regardless of the marital status of the individuals involved, all are guilty of fornication. Adultery is a special class of fornication committed by married persons. In the Scriptures, adultery is never based upon a ceremony. Adultery is always based upon a sexual act. The Bible nowhere states or implies that a ceremony must take place in order for a marriage to be scripturally valid and binding. You can perform all the ceremonies you want to, but until a sexual act takes place there is no scriptural marriage. In quoting and refuting Brother Stinnett Ballew, Brother Karl Baker has this to say:

“Karl Baker quotes Stinnett Ballew as saying: “Very plainly, it is the marrying another that is adultery, not the living together. It is not the sex act in the second marriage, but the second marriage itself. If it were the sex act, which was the adultery, then, a person that is too old or physically unable to function sexually could divorce and remarry many times without committing adultery. Again I emphasize the adultery is a second marriage itself.”...Using Dr. Ballew’s definitions would run you into some serious problems when it came to teaching about David’s sins of 2 Samuel 11 and 12. You can’t have David committing adultery when he went into Uriah’s wife in chapter 11:4 because he didn’t have a ceremony, in fact, according to Dr. Ballew’s definition, David never did commit adultery, because when David did marry Bathsheba in 11:27, Uriah was already dead, verse 26! David couldn’t have committed fornication because he wasn’t having sex before marriage, so I guess the only sin David really committed was killing Uriah!” [The Marriage & Divorce Controversy, Karl Baker, pages 103-104]

We could not have said it better. The words “adultery” and “adulteries” occur a total of 45 times in our King James Bibles: 20 times in the Old Testament and 25 times in the New Testament.

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In the Old Testament, the words are used of physical adultery but five times with the remaining 15 times used of spiritual adultery against God. In the New Testament, the word adultery is used 23 times of a physical act of adultery with the remaining 2 times used of idolatry. Only three different incidents of physical adultery are recorded in the whole Bible. In neither of those three incidents, is the word adultery used. The first act of adultery recorded in the Bible took place when Reuben “lay with” his father’s wife, Bilhah, in Genesis 35:22. The next act of adultery is recorded when David committed adultery with Uriah the Hittite’s wife Bathsheba when “he lay with her” in 2 Samuel 11:3-4. The last recorded act of adultery is by an unnamed son who “had his father’s wife” in 1 Corinthians 5:1. Below, we quote all those passages of Scripture we have referenced in this paragraph:

Genesis 35:22

²² And it came to pass, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father’s concubine: and Israel heard *it*. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve:

Exodus 20:14

14 Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Leviticus 20:10

10 And the man that committeth adultery with *another* man’s wife, *even he* that committeth adultery with his neighbour’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

Deuteronomy 5:18

18 Neither shalt thou commit adultery.

Deuteronomy 22:22

²² If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, *both* the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel.

2 Samuel 11:3-4

³ And David sent and enquired after the woman. And *one* said, *Is* not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? ⁴ And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.

Proverbs 6:32-33

32 *But* whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that

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doeth it destroyeth his own soul. 33 A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away.

Ezekiel 16:32

3 *But as* a wife that committeth adultery, *which* taketh strangers instead of her husband!

Matthew 19:9

9 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.

Mark 10:11-12

11 And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. 12 And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

Luke 16:18

18 Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from *her* husband committeth adultery.

John 8:3-5

3 And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, 4 They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. 5 Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

1 Corinthians 5:1

¹ It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

Hebrews 13:4

4 Marriage *is* honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

We deal in great depth with these Scriptures that relate to adultery in the section describing adultery as scriptural grounds for divorce. Our next term we describe is fornication.

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FORNICATION

The Oxford English Dictionary definition of fornication is:

Fornication: Voluntary sexual intercourse between a man (in restricted use, an unmarried man) and an unmarried woman. In Scripture extended to adultery. [Oxford English Dictionary]

In a 1450 A.D. document called the Knights de la Tour a phrase in that document with a reference to Bathsheba had this to say:

“King David...felle into avowtry and fornicacion with her”.
[Cited from Oxford English Dictionary under the entry for **fornication** and from Knights de la Tour.]

“Avowtry” is Middle English for adultery and “fornicacion” is Middle English for fornication. What the dictionary definition and the contextual definition is telling us is that adultery is an act of fornication. The only time fornication is called “uncleanliness” in the Bible is in Numbers 5:19 where it is describing the fornication/adultery of a wife after a couple is married. We deal with that under the definition of “uncleanness” below. Concerning the definition of what fornication is Brother Harold Sightler had this to say:

“Now, what is fornication? Certainly, it is reasonable for us to desire to know just what this sin is. From the usage of the word in the New Testament there can be little doubt but that it is the word for sexual intercourse of unmarried persons. The Old Testament word for the same sin is “uncleanness” as used in Deuteronomy 24:1.” (Page 6, Divorce and Remarriage, Harold B. Sightler)

Brother Sightler’s definition is wrong. We would agree that one of the Old Testament words used for fornication is uncleanness, but it is not in Deuteronomy 24:1. The only time in the Old Testament that uncleanness is used of fornication is in Numbers 5:19 where it is used to describe a possible case of adultery. Some Old Testament words and phrases that are used to refer to fornication are “adultery”, “uncover the nakedness”, “go in unto”, “lie with”, “lie carnally with”, “play the harlot”, “playing the whore”, “go a whoring”, “prostitute”, “sodomy”, “sodomite”, and so forth. A proper definition of the word fornication would include any perverted or illicit sexual relationship between two individuals that are not married to each other. That would properly put sodomy, adultery, premarital sex, child molestation, bestiality, and pornography under the umbrella of fornication because that is the way it is used in the New Testament. Do you think for a moment that those same sort of actions would not have ended a marriage in the Old Testament and that by stoning to death?! In the Old Testament, the penalty was stoning to death and in the New Testament the penalty is divorce. Fornication is never used of a sexual act in the Old Testament. It is always used

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of a spiritual act that is committed with idols. The fornication of Matthew 19:9 is not the uncleanness of Deuteronomy 24:1 because the penalty for fornication in the Old Testament was death and not the putting away of divorce allowed in Deuteronomy 24:1. We discuss this issue in some length later on. Adultery and other unlawful sexual activity between a man and a woman in the Old Testament was dealt with according to the law of Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:12-30 and in most cases required the death penalty. The exception to this rule was Deuteronomy 22:28-29 where if an unmarried man and woman were found lying together they were forced to become husband and wife and the man had to give the woman's father 50 shekels of silver. Fornication can best be defined as any illicit sexual activity outside of the scripturally established confines of marriage. Speaking of this word Karl Baker had the following to say:

“In talking of Stinnett Ballew he says: he further states that fornication is commonly accepted to mean sexual involvement before marriage; and the only place Moses mentions divorcement is Deuteronomy 24:1-4. He uses Jesus' remarks in Matthew 19:9 as a pretext for this conclusion, consequently, interpreting the uncleanness of Deuteronomy 24 to be the fornication of Matthew 19. In all these points, Dr. Ballew is totally and scripturally wrong. In fact, we might as well throw in Dr. Ballew's previous paragraph where he accused the Pharisees of twisting the Scriptures by asking why Moses would command to give a writing of divorcement and put her away, when Jesus said Moses suffered them to put away their wives to show it was an optional decree not an original design. Dr. Ballew is wrong in that statement, as well. Moses did command to give her a writing of divorcement – read Deuteronomy 24:1. The bill of divorcement had to be given to her or she would be called an ADULTERESS (Romans 7:1-3). Anybody knows that who knows the law! A woman could marry another man under the law by either death or divorcement, but if it was by divorcement; she had to have proof or she would be stoned (Leviticus 20:10). The good doctor forgot to study Scripture with Scripture before he made such a statement, for if he had checked the cross-reference of Matthew 19 in his center reference Bible, it would have taken him to Mark 10:2-4 where it is Jesus who asked what did Moses command you, and it's the Pharisees who replied Moses suffered us to write a bill of divorcement. Kind of messes up his accusation a little, doesn't it? One thing is for sure, contrary to Dr. Ballew's assumption, Jesus was not interpreting the uncleanness of Deuteronomy 24:1 to be fornication as a sex act committed before marriage. All we have to do is go to Deuteronomy 22.... Look at Deuteronomy 22 and see if it does not wash away Dr. Ballew's foundation of sand, (the uncleanness of Deuteronomy 24 is fornication before marriage)...”[The Marriage & Divorce Controversy, Karl Baker, pages 80-81]

“Jesus said except it be for fornication. You have no right to corrupt the word of God by saying it is an act before you get married when all the evidence points to any time a man or woman is unfaithful to their marriage vows, the offended party has

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a right to seek a divorce if they cannot live with it. God did it any Ezekiel 16 and Jeremiah 3. If the offended party decides to remarry, they have not sinned! Jesus made the allowance! You have no right to condemn what God allows.” [The Marriage & Divorce Controversy, Karl Baker, page 100]

Brother Karl Baker’s point is well taken that the uncleanness of Deuteronomy 24 is not the fornication of Matthew 19:9. We deal with that issue several times in this chapter. One could ask at what point does adultery become fornication.

A woman is guilty of being a whore and a harlot when she commits her first act of fornication and/or adultery. A man is guilty of being a whoremonger when he commits his first act of fornication and/or adultery. What that means is that if you come together sexually with multiple partners, then you have had, or do have, multiple (living) spouses. Many pastors scream against acts of fornication being called marriages because they and many of their deacons are guilty of premarital sex and/or adultery after their marriages. The act of adultery also constitutes an act of fornication. If the sexual act(s) constitute a marriage (and it does), then they are guilty of having multiple wives which by their own twisted interpretation and application would permanently disqualify them from the ministry. Again, the Holy Ghost plainly states in 1 Corinthians 6:16 that when a man joins himself unto an harlot that they become one flesh. That is the definition of a scriptural marriage. Some of the men we are talking about were guilty of fornication before they were saved and some of them were guilty of fornication after they were saved. God does not give a different set of qualifications for the ministry based upon whether a man was saved or lost. Many self-righteous, once-married peacocks take what they consider to be the “safe” route by not allowing anyone who has ever been divorced, saved or lost, to enter into the ministry. While we partially agree with that interpretation that salvation is not the issue, we totally disagree that divorce is the disqualifying issue. The issue is how many scriptural wives does a man have in the present tense. What that means is if a man has a former wife that he has been scripturally divorced from, that she is no longer counted as a wife. If the divorced man did not remarry, he does not have a wife. If he remarried, then he has only one wife. The same reasoning applies to a widower.

For those who say that a married person cannot fornicate you need to reread Matthew 19:9 where the Lord Jesus Christ uses both the word “adultery” and the word “fornication”. You also need to read Ezekiel 16 where adultery is equated with fornication at least three times. For those of you who like running to “the Greek” you also need to know that we know that two entirely different Greek words are used for fornication and adultery in Matthew 19:9. Many fundamentalists claim to love the King James Bible until you challenge their doctrine. Then they like to run to “the Greek” and that is especially true in interpreting 1 Timothy 3:2. We do not speak Greek and if we did, we would still use the King James Bible. “Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that *by my voice* I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an *unknown* tongue”(1 Corinthians 14:19). Greek is an unknown tongue in an English speaking congregation.

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UNCLEANNES

It is sometimes difficult to determine the exact definition of the word uncleanness because it is used in so many different ways in the Old Testament to describe such things as ceremonial uncleanness, religious uncleanness, unlawful sexual activity, a woman's menstrual cycle, any discharge of waste from the human body, dead human bodies, leprosy, the touching of dead animals, the consumption of certain unclean animals, and so forth. In the New Testament, the word "uncleanness" is also used in a number of different ways that fall into two different categories: spiritual uncleanness and sexual uncleanness. The Oxford English Dictionary definition of uncleanness is:

“Lack of moral cleanness ; moral impurity.” [Oxford English Dictionary]

In a 1603 Shakespeare work called “Measure For Measure”, we have the following contextual definition for uncleanness:

“Marry sir, by my wife, who, if she had bin a woman Cardinally giuen, might haue bin accus'd in fornication, adultery, and all vncleanlinesse there.” [Cited from the Oxford English Dictionary and Shakespeare's 1603 work “Measure For Measure”]

To put this phrase in today's English it would say: “Marry sir, by my wife, who, if she had been a woman Cardinally given, might have been accused in fornication, adultery, and all uncleanness there”. Notice in this definition that the words fornication AND adultery are equated with all uncleanness. That is the same sense that it is used in the Old Testament in Numbers chapter 5. Numbers chapter 5 verses 12, 13, and 19 state:

Numbers 5:12-13

¹² Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man's wife go aside, and commit a trespass against him, ¹³ And a man lie with her carnally, and it be hid from the eyes of her husband, and be kept close, and she be defiled, and *there be* no witness against her, neither she be taken *with the manner*;

Numbers 5:19

19 And the priest shall charge her by an oath, and say unto the woman, If no man have lain with thee, and if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness *with another* instead of thy husband, be thou free from this bitter water that causeth the curse:

If the woman in Numbers 5 had actually been caught in the act of adultery, then both her and the adulterer would have been stoned to death as required by Leviticus 20:10. Leviticus 20:10 reads:

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Leviticus 20:10

¹⁰ And the man that committeth adultery with *another* man’s wife, *even he* that committeth adultery with his neighbour’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

In the context of Numbers 5, it is obvious that the husband and the woman suspected of adultery or fornication had been married for some time. The woman is said to have lain with a man carnally in Numbers 5:13. Verse 13 also indicates that her adultery had not resulted in a pregnancy. That fact is revealed in the phrase “neither be she taken with the manner”. In Numbers 5:19 we see that uncleanness is equated with adultery and/or fornication, but that is not the case in Deuteronomy 24:1-2 where it is stated:

Deuteronomy 24:1-2

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 let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give *it* in her hand, and send her out of his house.
2 And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man’s *wife*.

The marginal note in the King James Bible for Deuteronomy 24:1 sheds some light on the interpretation of the phrase “found some uncleanness”. The King James marginal note refers to it as a matter of nakedness. In other words, it may have been some defect that could not be observed until the woman was naked in the marriage bed. It is also possible that the uncleanness described in Deuteronomy could be a physical defect that was not evident until there was an attempt to consummate the sexual relationship in the marriage bed. If the uncleanness of Deuteronomy 24:1-2 were adultery then the law of Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:13-21 would apply which would bring the death penalty and not divorce. Brother Karl Baker had this to say about the uncleanness of Deuteronomy 24:

“The uncleanness of Deuteronomy 24 is not fornication before marriage, because that is covered in Deuteronomy 22! It is evident that Jesus cannot be interpreting fornication to be the uncleanness of Deuteronomy 24:1, because when a man found his espoused wife had fornicated before marriage, he did not give her a writing of divorcement; rather, he took her to the elders of the city to be proved, and she better have proof in hand or she was to be stoned. Divorce for uncleanness cannot be fornication. It must be something her husband could not stand about her that he considered unclean. Why do you think the Pharisees are saying “for every cause”? One more reason we should know that Deuteronomy 24:1 is not premarital sex is that when the woman goes out with her divorce papers she can be another man’s wife; do you believe the divorce does not state why he put her away? Moreover, do you believe that the second husband does not know he is not marrying a virgin? Also, does not Deuteronomy 24:3 say that if the latter husband hates her,

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that he can divorce are also? Is the latter husband putting her away for fornication also? Why would the first husband want her back if she were a fornicator in the first place?" [The Marriage & Divorce Controversy, Karl Baker, page 83]

The word uncleanness is used much the same way in the New Testament as it is in the Old Testament. It is used in both a spiritual sense and in a sexual sense. It is used eight times in relation to sexual uncleanness. We will look at Romans 1:24-28, Galatians 5:19, and Colossians 3:5 where we see:

Romans 1:24-28

24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. 26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

Galatians 5:19

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

Colossians 3:5

5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

In all three occurrences of the word "uncleanness" in the above Scriptures, we can see from the context of the word that it is a reference to some sort of sexual sin. It is not identified with any particular sexual sin just sexual sin in general. It obviously has more to do with a wicked mind set or tendency to commit sexual sins. It is used in the context of sexual acts such sodomy, adultery, fornication, lasciviousness, inordinate affection, and evil concupiscence. These are all actions that lead to divorce and the destruction of the God ordained institution of marriage. A more and more frequent event in our reprobate American society is that of same sex, sodomite relationships destroying scriptural marriages. So, it is a very serious issue that must be dealt with. The question that must be answered by those who advocate no divorce under any circumstance, no divorce except for adultery, and no divorce except for fornication is what if any scriptural grounds exist for a divorce when an innocent spouse has been the victim of a spouse who has been guilty of sodomy, or pornography, or bestiality, or child molestation? Are you actually going to tell me that the

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exception clauses “saving for the cause of fornication” in Matthew 5:32 and “except it be for fornication” in Matthew 19:9 do not apply to acts of fornication that involve sodomy, pornography, bestiality, child molestation, and adultery?? Speaking strictly to the issue of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, how do you administer justice and punishment in the New Testament economy for sexual sins that required the death penalty in the Old Testament economy? The obvious conclusion is that divorce is the recourse for the offenses of fornication and/or adultery in marriage.

DIVORCE

We open this section by quoting Brother Karl Baker who wrote:

“It is evident that divorce can be the only action to alleviate the suffering that once was a capital punishment (Leviticus 20:10). It replaces the Old Testament form of judgment against the unchaste in marriage. The Lord in his omniscience knew that because nations and laws outside of Israel’s theocracy were going to be reached, and just as the Jews were unable to enforce certain laws after it fell into secular powers and their jurisdictions (John 18:31-32), so would the Christians in those countries where the gospel would be ministered, need effectual ordinances for the sake of moral and spiritual relief... One thing more, if adultery is the second “ceremony” and not a “sex act” (page 33, Dr. Ballew’s book), does it include the “adultery” of 1 Corinthians 6:10?” [The Marriage & Divorce Controversy, Karl Baker, page 128]

Divorce is the putting away of a husband or wife. God put away Israel for adultery. Though God hates putting away, he regulated divorce in the Old Testament Law because he knew the hardness and the wickedness of mens hearts would lead to divorces that would bring great harm if they were not restrained by the Law. God also regulates divorce in the New Testament by limiting its grounds to adultery, fornication, and desertion. There was no divorce allowed in the Old Testament for adultery and fornication because the adulterer and the adulteress were put to death. Though allowing for divorce in the New Testament, God has deliberately made divorce as difficult and as painful as possible because if He did not the institution of marriage would be destroyed by the unbridled lust and wickedness of men’s and women’s hearts. By the time God was incarnate in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, divorce was being practiced for every cause by the Jewish people contrary to the law and the original intent of God that marriage be one man and one woman becoming “one flesh” for a lifetime (No man or woman separates from their flesh without dying). God in the flesh rebuked the Pharisees for their licentious interpretation and application of Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

The words used in our King James Bibles to describe the destruction of a marriage are put away, putteth away, putting away, divorce, divorced, divorcement, unmarried, and loosed. These words are used to describe the breakup of human marriages and the putting away of God’s wife, Israel. These words occur in only twenty-seven (27) verses in the whole Bible. These 27 verses occur in the context of only 105 verses dealing with the issue of divorce. Forty-four of those verses come

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from Ezra chapter 10 alone. So that you may go and read all these Scriptures in context we include them here and they are: Leviticus 21:7, Leviticus 21:14, Leviticus 22:13, Numbers 30:9, Deuteronomy 24:1-4, Ezra 10:1-44, Isaiah 50:1, Jeremiah 3:1-11, Ezekiel 44:22, Malachi 2:10-16, Matthew 5:31-32, Matthew 19:3-12, Mark 10:2-12, Luke 16:18, 1 Corinthians 7:10-15, and 1 Corinthians 7:27-28. Make sure that you read and study all the verses in context because a verse taken out of context is a pretext for false doctrine. Some would include Romans 7:1-4 in the list of verses that we just gave, but those verses are not about divorce. Those verses are about a woman who would be guilty of adultery. Those verses are not being used by the Holy Ghost to teach doctrine about men's divorces. The Holy Ghost is using those verses to teach that once we die to our sin we are no longer in bondage to, or married to Satan, and are therefore loosed and free to marry the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, Romans 7:1-4 can be used to interpret the words "loosed" and "bound" in 1 Corinthians 7:27. And we do use them later for that purpose. God's attitude toward divorce is best illustrated by Malachi 2:10-16 where He states:

Malachi 2:10-16

¹⁰ Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers? ¹¹ Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god. ¹² The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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.

Not only were these wicked men and wicked priests divorcing the wives of their youth, they were taking up with "the daughters of a strange God" who were nothing but temple prostitutes. The priests were the leaders in this wickedness before God as is documented in Malachi 2:1-9 and yet they continued to minister in the house of God while committing adultery with temple prostitutes. That sounds like some "fundamentalist" churches of today. Now, let's go pick up twenty-three more of the verses that we called out above (We deal with Ezra chapter 10 under a separate topic in this chapter):

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Leviticus 21:13-14

13 And he shall take a wife in her virginity. 14 A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, *or* an harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife.

Leviticus 22:13

13 But if the priest's daughter be a widow, or divorced, and have no child, and is returned unto her father's house, as in her youth, she shall eat of her father's meat: but there shall no stranger eat thereof.

These verses in Leviticus give us no real insight into the meaning of the word divorce. We do not get a scriptural definition of divorce until we reach Deuteronomy 24:1-4 where it is written:

Deuteronomy 24:1-4

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 let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give *it* in her hand, and send her out of his house. 2 And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's *wife*. 3 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; 4 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.

Note that a bill of divorcement had to be written and given to the woman that was being divorced so that she would be allowed to go out of her former husband's house and remarry. If she tried to marry another man without a bill of divorce, both she and the man she would marry would be stoned to death for adultery as required by Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:22. For that reason, the uncleanness of Deuteronomy 24:1 could not be fornication or adultery because a divorce was allowed in Deuteronomy 24. Now, we come to the matter of God's divorce which we have already stated was caused by Israel's adultery. This divorce is recorded in Isaiah 50:1 and Jeremiah 3:8 where we read:

Isaiah 50:1

1 Thus saith the LORD, Where *is* the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors *is it* to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.

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Jeremiah 3:8

8 [The Lord said] And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.

So much for the statements of many fundamentalists preachers and pastors that adultery is not a grounds for divorce as we have already discussed above. To get a real grasp of the issues involved here, you really need to read and study all of Ezekiel 16 and Jeremiah 3:1-11. Ezekiel 44:21-22 is the last Old Testament Scripture we will look at.

Ezekiel 44:21-22

21 Neither shall any priest drink wine, when they enter into the inner court. 22 Neither shall they take for their wives a widow, nor her that is put away: but they shall take maidens of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow that had a priest before.

In Ezekiel 44:22, the phrase “her that is put away” refers to a divorced woman. Now, lets turn to the New Testament where a great deal of controversy exists over Matthew 5:31-32, Matthew 19:6-9, Mark 10:7-12, Luke 16:18, 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, and 1 Corinthians 7:27-28. Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 5:

Matthew 5:31-32

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

Now let’s turn to Matthew 19:6 where we read:

Matthew 19:6-9

⁶ Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. ⁷ They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? ⁸ He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. ⁹ 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.

Now let’s turn to Mark 10 and begin reading in verse 7:

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Mark 10:7-12

4 And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put *her* away. 5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. 6 But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. 7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; 8 And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. 9 What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. 10 And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same *matter*. 11 And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. 12 And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

Luke 16:18

¹⁸ Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from *her* husband committeth adultery.

Those verses in Matthew 5 and Matthew 19 do not say that a person cannot marry any divorced person. What these verses are saying is that a person cannot marry another person who has been put away (divorced) for fornication else he or she is guilty of adultery. What this also means is that a single person can commit adultery because it is said that both are guilty of adultery. That is why both were stoned to death under the Old Testament law. These verses do not say that a man or woman commits perpetual adultery if they marry a divorced person. We deal with that issue in a separate topic that follows. The conditional statements “saving for the cause of fornication” and “except it be for fornication” is what drives the interpretation of both of these passages as it relates to who is guilty of adultery and who is allowed to divorce and remarry. We deal with those issues below under the topics of the scriptural grounds for divorce and remarriage.

Many argue on the basis of Matthew 19:6 and Mark 10:9 that God puts all marriages together. This false doctrine creates its own list of difficult problems and impossible situations that are to numerous to be dealt with here. Imagine the myriad of scenarios that could be documented or devised that would be almost impossible to resolve. From a human perspective, the sin and damage of most divorces cannot be undone and must be dealt with in an attitude of forgiveness that does not bring the repentant sinner under endless condemnation. However, if they will not repent, they are under the condemnation of God. Those repentant sinners guilty of causing divorces should be forgiven and charged to “go, and sin no more”. If an unrepentant sinner continues down a path of adultery, they must be put out of the church. This discussion brings us to this conclusion: Contrary to what many fundamentalist and Baptist preachers and pastors preach and teach, God does not put most marriages together. While God in his permissive will allows unscriptural marriages, he does not put them together. God does not put a believer and an unbeliever together. God did not put a Jew and a pagan together. The scriptures do not say: “what therefore God has **allowed** to be joined together, let not man put asunder”. The scripture is emphatic that God joined them together. There

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have been a lot of unholy unions down through the years. The last such unholy union will take place during the tribulation when the apostate church, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, becomes the bride of Satan. How many marriages today do you think God has actually joined together?

“Divorced” in the Old Testament and the New Testament is a term meaning having been married but now unmarried. Being scripturally unmarried, gives you the right to remarry (Deuteronomy 24:2-3; Matthew 19:9; and 1 Corinthians 7:15, 27-28). In 1 Corinthians 7 we have the case of a believing wife that has left an unbelieving husband and the following instructions are the charge to the believer from the Holy Ghost:

1 Corinthians 7:10-11

10 And unto the married I command, *yet* not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from *her* husband: 11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to *her* husband: and let not the husband put away *his* wife.

1 Corinthians 7:27-28

²⁷ Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. ²⁸ But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

First Corinthians 7:10-11, plainly states that the departed spouse is unmarried. You cannot be unmarried without a divorce. That does away with the whole false idea that the term “unmarried” of 1 Corinthians 7:11 is referring to a temporary separation. Therefore, “unmarried” applies to those who have never been married and to those who have been married but are no longer married because of death or divorce. The term unmarried only occurs four times in our Bibles and all these are in 1 Corinthians 7. Concerning this term “unmarried” in 1 Corinthians 7:11, Brother Karl Baker had this to say:

“**Unmarried**, or be reconciled to her **husband**! Now if married means a ceremony and she had one, because she had a husband, how can she remain **unmarried**? Unless the word “married” means, as we have implied, not to join her flesh to another man’s flesh, thereby marrying with him. Is that not also how Paul use the term in Romans 7, “**So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress,**”? That is why Paul in 1 Corinthians 6 emphasizes not joining ourselves to harlots, because in so doing we become “one flesh” even though we did not intend to “marry” her. We technically are marrying her when we join our flesh with hers.” [The Marriage & Divorce Controversy, Karl Baker, page 94]

Brother Baker is driving home the idea that it is the sexual relationship that establishes the marriage. Divorce ends that sexual relationship. Divorce is a very painful thing because it is the

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ripping asunder of one flesh. Divorce is a knife in the heart of love. Divorce is death itself. In many ways divorce is much more painful than the death of a spouse because if you love someone you will always wonder if there was something you could have done to have prevented the divorce. Divorce is not always a sin in the Bible for all parties involved. There can be an innocent party in a divorce. The Bible no where says that divorce is sin. Sin can and does lead to divorce. In quoting Stinnett Ballew, Brother Karl Baker had this to say about the doctrine that states that divorce is sin:

“let me, [Stinnett Ballew], say in the very beginning divorce is sin. It is not the unpardonable sin, but it certainly is sin. I do not believe any couple is ever led of the Lord to get a divorce. Divorce is man’s way out, not God’s.” Then Brother Karl Baker states: “But Dr. Ballew, the Bible states in 1 John 3:4, “sin is a transgression of the law”. **Where** is the Scripture that backs up the statement that divorce is sin? I realize that divorce can be sin (Matthew 19:9) and can cause sin (Matthew 19:9) but divorce is **not** sin in every case. Deuteronomy 24 is the law, and what the law allowed or made a provision for **cannot** be called sin (Romans 7:12, 14 also, Romans 5:13). Jesus allow divorced for fornication and desertion by an unbeliever (Matthew 19:9, 1 Corinthians 7:15), and it **cannot be sin** if our Lord condoned it as acceptable.... **God himself has gone through a divorce!**” [The Marriage & Divorce Controversy, Karl Baker, page 75]

We have heard it stated many times that divorce is always sin and that both parties to the divorce are guilty of sin. That is not true. To state that “Divorce is ALWAYS wrong” or “God NEVER approves of divorce” is to contradict the Scriptures. The following scriptural facts contradict those views: (1) God gave a law that permitted and regulated divorce AND REMARRIAGE (Deuteronomy 24:1-4).(2) It was the will of God that the priests and the people of Israel put away their strange wives (Ezra 10:10-11).(3) God Himself divorced the nation of Israel (Isaiah 50:1-2, Jeremiah 3:8).(4) The Lord Jesus Christ granted permission to divorce AND REMARRY if a spouse was guilty of fornication (Matthew 19:9). (5) the Holy Ghost allows for divorce in 1 Corinthians 7 in cases of desertion by an unbeliever. Next in our discussion, we will deal with the scriptural grounds for divorce.

THE SCRIPTURAL GROUNDS FOR DIVORCE

If your doctrine states that divorce is man’s way and not God’s way, then how does that doctrine line up with Ezra chapter 10 where God required the people and priests of Israel to put away their strange wives and how does your doctrine line up with Isaiah 50:1 and Jeremiah 3:7-8 where God divorced Israel? Turn in your Bibles to Isaiah 50:1 and Jeremiah 3:7-8:

Isaiah 50:1

1 Thus saith the LORD, Where *is* the bill of your mother’s divorcement, whom I

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have put away? or which of my creditors *is it* to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.

Jeremiah 3:7-8

7 And I said after she had done all these *things*, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw *it*. 8 And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.

So, is divorce man's way out and not God's way out? We will deal with Ezra chapter 10 a little later on. We realize that some of what we are about to say here is very controversial, but here we go anyhow. The real question here is not how we feel about the issue, but what does the Bible say? What, if any, are the scriptural grounds for divorce? From Malachi 2:16, we realize that God hates divorce, but we also realize that God made provision for it under the law and under grace because of the hardness of men's and women's hearts. While death does end a marriage, there are also three other scriptural justifications for divorce. These are: (1) God's command to divorce given to the people, the priests, and the Levites of Israel in Ezra chapter 10 because they had taken to themselves the strange wives as identified in Ezra 10:2, 10, 11, 14, 17, 18, and 44. There are some object lessons that can be learned from Ezra chapter 10, if we will just set aside the unscriptural teachings that have been hammered into us on the anvil of false teaching. (2) A second ground for a scriptural divorce is an act of fornication known as adultery. (3) The third ground for a scriptural divorce is an act of desertion whereby an unbeliever rejects and deserts a believing spouse. We will now proceed to deal with these three grounds for divorce.

GOD'S COMMAND IN EZRA 10 AS SCRIPTURAL GROUNDS FOR DIVORCE

Our first scriptural justification for divorce is God's command to divorce given to the people, the priests, and the Levites of Israel in Ezra chapter 10 because they had taken to themselves the strange wives as identified in Ezra 10:2, 10, 11, 14, 17, 18, and 44. The women were called strange wives because they were pagans. The reason for the divorces was to enforce ecclesiastical separation between the priests, the Levites, and the congregation of Israelis as a unit and the pagan nations that surrounded them. The law that had been violated was Leviticus 21:7, Leviticus 21:14, and Deuteronomy 7:3. The indictment of Israel took place in Ezra 9:1-2 and the trial and sentence was pronounced in Ezra chapter 10. The divorces were probably carried out at least in part in accordance with Deuteronomy 24:1. These Scriptures state:

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Leviticus 21:7

⁷ They shall not take a wife *that is* a whore, or profane; neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband: for he *is* holy unto his God.

Leviticus 21:14

¹⁴ A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, *or* an harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife.

Deuteronomy 7:3

³ Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.

Ezra 9:1-2

¹ Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, *doing* according to their abominations, *even* of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. ² For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of *those* lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass.

Ezra 10:1-3

¹ Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore. ² And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, *one* of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. ³ Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law.

Ezra 10:10-12

¹⁰ And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel. ¹¹ Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives. ¹² Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do.

Ezra 10:18-19

¹⁸ And among the sons of the priests there were found that had taken strange wives:

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namely, of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren; Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib, and Gedaliah. ¹⁹ And they gave their hands that they would put away their wives; and *being* guilty, *they offered* a ram of the flock for their trespass.

Deuteronomy 24:1

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 let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give *it* in her hand, and send her out of his house.

What about that?! In Ezra chapter 10, we have a commandment from God to divorce (put away) their pagan, unbelieving wives. The law in Leviticus chapter 21 was given specifically to the priests and the law in Deuteronomy 7 was given generally to all the people of the nation of Israel. What is significant here, is not only did God allow these divorces, but also that he commanded them! So, were these divorces wrong? Put another way, were these divorces sin? There are those that state that divorce is always wrong, but these events in Ezra 10 prove that statement to be entirely false. While we know that there is sin associated with divorce, there is not one verse in the Bible that states that divorce is sin because if there were, God could be accused of sin because He divorced (put away) the nation of Israel because she was unfaithful to God when she went a whoring after false gods. Brother Karl Baker said this:

“You cannot show me one verse in either Testament that states that divorce is a sin when the offended party divorces the guilty party, as previously stated in Deuteronomy 24, Matthew 19, and a 1 Corinthians 7.” [The Marriage & Divorce Controversy, Karl Baker, page 76]

While we know that divorce always involves sin, we also know that there are innocent parties in some divorces. Many fundamentalists and Baptists deny that because it destroys their theology that states that all parties to a divorce are guilty, even the innocent, and if the innocent party remarries they are guilty of adultery and/or perpetual adultery. Brother Karl Baker has rightly said:

“Divorce is the only act in the whole Bible that makes a guiltless person a sinner by association.” [The Marriage & Divorce Controversy, Karl Baker, page 61]

It is this same type of guilt by association that has been used by many fundamentalists and Baptists to permanently disqualify an innocent divorced man from the ministry. What this false doctrine essentially does is to hold an innocent party responsible for the sin of the guilty party. What comes to mind here is Exodus 23:7 which says:

Exodus 23:7

⁷ Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked.

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The wicked end up getting justified in their conduct while the faithful innocents are forced to pay the penalty for the guilty's sin. In continuing our discussion on Ezra chapter 10, we would note that the priests had to put away their profane wives and that no steps were taken to remove them from the priesthood. In fact, there is every indication that they were required to put away their pagan wives so that they would be ceremonially clean in order to be able to administer the sacrifices. The guilt and sin associated with the divorces in Ezra 10 was that of the people, the priests, and the rulers of Israel and not of the pagan spouses they had married. The pagans were innocent in the divorces. Yet, those who were guilty of causing the divorces, because they had broken the law in the first place when they had married the pagan wives, were allowed to continue in the priesthood. Can you imagine that: a divorced priest ministering in the house of God!

FORNICATION/ADULTERY AS SCRIPTURAL GROUNDS FOR DIVORCE

Our second ground for a scriptural divorce is an act of fornication known as adultery. God put away His wife, Israel, for adultery. That makes adultery a scriptural ground for divorce. God called that wife a harlot three different times in Jeremiah 3:1-11, six different times in Ezekiel 16:1-43, and four different times in the book of Hosea. That adultery and whoredom was described as fornication in 2 Chronicles 21:11, Ezekiel 16:15, Ezekiel 16:26, and in Ezekiel 16:29. In Revelation 2:20-22 we see fornication equated with adultery where we read:

Revelation 2:20-22

²⁰ Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. ²¹ And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. ²² Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

So, how is it that adultery is not fornication and how is it that fornication and adultery are not grounds for divorce in the eyes of some doctors of the law? A friend of ours, Brother John Asquith, argues that fornication and adultery are not the same and spends eight pages in his book proving it. We are not saying that Brother John Asquith is a doctor of the law because he is an outstanding Christian man, the most Biblically literate individual we know, and a wonderful pastor. He has taught us many things that we have never heard from another man. Nevertheless, those things line up with the Scriptures. He has been a wonderful blessing to this author and we love him, but we do not agree with him on this issue. While we agree that fornication and adultery are not the same, we do not agree with anyone who states that adultery is not an act of fornication. Adultery is an act of fornication by a married individual with an individual they are not married to. First Corinthians 5:1 also proves that adultery is an act of fornication. This verse reads:

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1 Corinthians 5:1

¹ It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

We here quote Brother John Asquith with whom we disagree on the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5:1:

The Oxford editors go no further with their proof. Some of the Brethren have. Certain of the brethren have seized upon another use of the word fornication as being proof that its definition includes adultery. Again, they are wrong.

They quote *I Cor. 5:1, It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.* This, to some, is proof positive that fornication can mean adultery. A closer look at the verse proves otherwise.

The assumption made here is that there is a living father whose latest wife has been having an affair with the man's own son. Such a sin is not without precedent in the Word of God, *Gen. 35:22, 49:4.* Yet such a sin is also named among the Gentiles. In my brief sojourn on this earth, I have heard of a couple cases reported.

The key to the verse is the phrase *not so much as named among the Gentiles.* There is a perfectly sound, rational explanation that does not alter the word *fornication* to give it a definition that it never had before 1611 and has nowhere else in the AV 1611. [Further Thoughts On The Word Of God, John M. Asquith, pages 109-110, copyright 2005]

This particular sin of adultery with a stepmother was outlawed in the Roman Empire when the book of 1 Corinthians was written. That is why the sin was not so much as named among the Gentiles. In the Roman Empire, adultery with a stepmother was considered to be incest also and resulted in permanent exile and the loss of citizenship and all property [Cited from: Justinian Code, Book IX, Title IX of the Roman Code, The Law of Adultery and Debauchery, dated 18 B.C.]. The Holy Ghost is rebuking the church at Corinth because they were tolerating something that would not even be tolerated amongst unsaved Gentiles in the Roman Empire. The point of the Holy Ghost is that the Romans were putting like offenders out of the empire while the church at Corinth was doing nothing to put the offender out of the church. Brother John Asquith states that the father called out in 1 Corinthians 5:1 is dead while we believe that the father called out is alive. So, what would be the issue here? If the son's father was dead there would be no real issue here under Roman law. Under God's law, it would be an act of fornication that would be named among the Gentiles. The issue is that the father is alive and the son is guilty of an act of fornication known as adultery with his father's wife, in other words, his stepmother. That is the same issue with Reuben when he took his father's wife (concubine), Bilhah, in Genesis 35:22. Bilhah was one of Reuben's stepmothers. It is clear that Leviticus 18:8, Deuteronomy 22:30, and Deuteronomy 27:20 are in view in 1 Corinthians

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5:1 and these verses read:

Leviticus 18:8

⁸ The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover: it *is* thy father's nakedness.

Deuteronomy 22:30

³⁰ A man shall not take his father's wife, nor discover his father's skirt.

Deuteronomy 27:20

²⁰ Cursed *be* he that lieth with his father's wife; because he uncovereth his father's skirt. And all the people shall say, Amen.

If the father were dead, the law just cited would be of none effect just like the law of not marrying two sisters was of none effect after the death of one of the sisters (Leviticus 18:18). If the father was dead, there was no violation of the law and therefore, no reason to call it out as the Holy Ghost did in 1 Corinthians 5. This would be true although it would have been a particularly revolting act of fornication with no need to reference the woman as being the father's wife if the father was already dead. There is no provision in the Law of Moses that prohibited a man from marrying a dead man's former wife provided they were not blood kin as defined by Leviticus 18. It is clear that the King James translators knew that the Holy Ghost was making reference to the Scriptures we just quoted because they are given as marginal cross references for 1 Corinthians 5:1. What we have in 1 Corinthians 5:1 is an act of adultery being described as fornication just as it is in Matthew 19:9. If fornication cannot be an act of adultery, then there are no scriptural grounds for divorce based upon adultery because the Lord Jesus Christ initially limited just grounds for divorce to fornication. We reject that notion. What that would mean is that there would be no recourse for a spouse trapped in a marriage to an adulterous mate. It would force the victimized spouse to live in a polygamous state where they were sharing the marriage bed with another mate of their spouse. Would that be right? In fact, a New Testament law or precept that allowed that situation to continue would violate the spirit of the restoration of the “one flesh” ideal reestablished by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 19:4-6 and Mark 10:6-8. **For those of you who believe that a married person cannot be guilty of fornication, why would adultery/fornication in marriage not be justification for a divorce and fornication before marriage would be?** Adultery is a much more serious matter because it involves an illicit sexual act and the breaking of vows and/or a covenant. Also, if divorce is not allowed for adultery, how can a spouse who is having continuous sexual affairs be stopped? Does the innocent party have to run the risk of getting a fatal sexually transmitted disease by continuing in a marriage with a sexually promiscuous spouse with no recourse to a divorce to end the danger? I realize that some of you self righteous hypocrites would counsel that person to separate from their spouse and remain celibate and alone for the rest of their lives when God has allowed a means of grace for the innocents that are trapped in such adulterous marriages. Forcing the innocent spouse to live in celibacy would violate the intent and the spirit of 1 Corinthians 7:5 which declares:

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1 Corinthians 7:5

⁵ Defraud ye not one the other, except *it be* with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

Many times the only solution that will work for an innocent spouse is a divorce. Brother Karl Baker put it very well when he said:

Divorce is a divine sanctioned grace in the New Testament established by our Lord himself (Matthew 19 and 1 Corinthians 7)[The Marriage & Divorce Controversy, Karl Baker, page 71]

That divine sanctioned grace is divorce and remarriage if so desired by the innocent party. You do remember that God said that is not good for man to be alone don't you (Genesis 2:18)? You do remember that God has said that it is better to marry than burn don't you (1 Corinthians 7:9)? You do remember that God has said that it is a doctrine of devils to forbid marriage, don't you (1 Timothy 4:3)? Brother Harold Sightler had this to say concerning fornication and adultery:

“The Lord makes it clear that “fornication” is the only ground for divorce. Fornication and adultery are often terms used interchangeably, though they are not the same. There is a difference in the Scriptural use of the two words. Fornication is the practice of illicit sexual relation of unmarried peoples; while adultery is the same sin practiced by married people.” (Divorce and Remarriage, Harold B. Sightler, Page 3)

“Divorce is never permissible upon the grounds of adultery. Now I full well recognize this to be a controversial thought. Many good preachers and many good Christians will not agree with me here. However, a careful study into the general subject has convinced me that adultery, as terrible as it is, is not a Bible ground for divorce.”(Divorce and Remarriage, Harold B. Sightler, Pages 5-6)

Now, as much as we respect Brother Harold Sightler, those statements will not stand an unbiased test of the Scriptures as we will now document. The problem here comes through misinterpreting and misapplying the word “fornication” when the Lord Jesus Christ plainly stated in Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9 that a spouse could be guilty of fornication. The way most fundamentalist and Baptist preachers and pastors handle the problem before us is to twist the words of the Lord Jesus Christ by stating that fornication applies only to unmarried people. **It just does not make any sense at all that a sexual act “BEFORE” a marriage would be scriptural grounds for divorce and that an unfaithful sexual act “AFTER” a marriage would not be scriptural grounds for divorce.** It is incredible to us that anyone could actually buy into that belief! We suspect that many fundamentalists and Baptists are unwittingly walking hand-in-hand with the

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Roman Catholic harlot Mary while she leads them into the crypts of Roman Catholic theology. If you do not believe it, take a look at Appendix I to this chapter where we document the Roman Catholic marriage heresies from the 1563 Council of Trent and the 1994 Roman Catholic Catechism: some of which we quote in this chapter.

For those who selectively use a few passages of Scripture to give a false impression that divorce and remarriage is never permissible and that those who remarry are always guilty of adultery, even perpetual adultery, let's put a package together that includes the whole counsel of God concerning adultery. The next three and a half pages include the pertinent Scriptures that speak to adultery. Those scriptures include Exodus 20:14, Leviticus 20:10, Deuteronomy 5:18, Deuteronomy 22:13-30, Deuteronomy 24:1-4, Matthew 5:27-32, Matthew 19:1-12, Mark 10:2-12, Luke 16:18, John 8:3-9, and Romans 7:1-4 which we now quote:

Exodus 20:14

¹⁴ Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Leviticus 20:10

10 And the man that committeth adultery with *another* man's wife, *even he* that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

Deuteronomy 5:18

¹⁸ Neither shalt thou commit adultery.

Deuteronomy 22:13-30

13 If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her, 14 And give occasions of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid: 15 Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth *the tokens of* the damsel's virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate: 16 And the damsel's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her; 17 And, lo, he hath given occasions of speech *against her*, saying, I found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these *are the tokens of* my daughter's virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. 18 And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him; 19 And they shall amerce him in an hundred *shekels* of silver, and give *them* unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days. 20 But if this thing be true, *and the tokens of* virginity be not found for the damsel: 21 Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you. 22 If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband,

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then they shall both of them die, *both* the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel. 23 If a damsel *that is* a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; 24 Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, *being* in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you. 25 But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her: then the man only that lay with her shall die: 26 But unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; *there is* in the damsel no sin *worthy* of death: for as when a man riseth against his neighbour, and slayeth him, even so *is* this matter: 27 For he found her in the field, *and* the betrothed damsel cried, and *there was* none to save her. 28 If a man find a damsel *that is* a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; 29 Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty *shekels* of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days. 30 A man shall not take his father's wife, nor discover his father's skirt.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4

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 let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give *it* in her hand, and send her out of his house.

² And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's *wife*.

³ 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; ⁴ 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.

Matthew 5:27-32

27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: 28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. 29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. 30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. 31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: 32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

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Matthew 19:1-12

¹ And it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan; ² And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there. ³ The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? ⁴ And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ 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? ⁶ Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. ⁷ They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? ⁸ He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with *his* wife, it is not good to marry. ¹¹ But he said unto them, All *men* cannot receive this saying, save *they* to whom it is given. ¹² For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from *their* mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive *it*.

Mark 10:2-12

² And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away *his* wife? tempting him. ³ And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? ⁴ And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put *her* away. ⁵ And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. ⁶ But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. ⁷ For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; ⁸ And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. ⁹ What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. ¹⁰ And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same *matter*. ¹¹ And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. ¹² And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

Luke 16:18

¹⁸ Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from *her* husband committeth adultery.

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John 8:3-9

³ And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, ⁴ They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. ⁵ Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? ⁶ This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with *his* finger wrote on the ground, *as though he heard them not.* ⁷ So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. ⁸ And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. ⁹ And they which heard *it*, being convicted by *their own* conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, *even* unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

Romans 7:1-4

¹ Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? ² For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband. ³ So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. ⁴ Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

After having read all of that, our first conclusion is that there was no divorce for adultery or fornication in the Old Testament. According to Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:22, the penalty for adultery was death by stoning! Case closed. The remedy for the innocent spouse for adultery in the Old Testament is that the guilty spouse was put away by stoning them to death! This was an especially fast and effective means of divorce for adultery that ensured there would be no repeat offenders! Do you actually think that God would not supply some means of relief for the innocent spouse in the New Testament!? That means of relief in the New Testament is that the innocent spouse was allowed to put away the guilty spouse through divorce. Though Deuteronomy 24:1-4 does not mention adultery, it is often brought into the discussion concerning adultery for the purpose of destroying the means of grace that the Lord Jesus Christ provided for those who are victims of adultery. This approach makes the fornication of Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9 the uncleanness of Deuteronomy 24:1. A typical interpretation of this passage is that of Brother Harold Sightler who writes:

“In Deuteronomy 24:1 we find the explanation for the permission given Moses to divorce one’s wife. When he found in his wife some “uncleanness” which occurred before marriage, he was then permitted to give her a writing of divorcement and send

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her out of his house. This uncleanness is called fornication in the New Testament. Being unfaithful to the marriage vow has never been or ever will be grounds for divorce. Like Hosea, we are to forgive even adultery”. (Page 3, Divorce and Remarriage, Harold B. Sightler)

To this we respond, the uncleanness of Deuteronomy 24:1 is not premarital fornication or adultery because if it were the law of Deuteronomy 22:21-24 would apply and the offenders would be stoned to death. They would not be allowed to divorce and remarry. Brother Sightler is correct when he says that being unfaithful to the marriage vows in the Old Testament was no grounds for divorce. The marriage was terminated in a whole lot faster fashion than a divorce could ever accomplish. The offenders were stoned to death! That is why a bill of divorce was required in Deuteronomy 24:1. It was insurance against getting stoned to death for adultery! In Deuteronomy 24:1-4, those getting the divorce were granted the right to remarry. In fact, the woman that was divorced could get remarried and divorced again! As we have already mentioned, the marginal note in the King James Bible for Deuteronomy 24:1 sheds some light on the interpretation of the phrase “found some uncleanness”. The King James marginal note refers to it as a matter of nakedness. In other words, it was some defect that could not be observed until the woman was found naked in the marriage bed. It is obvious that Deuteronomy 24:1-4 had a wide range of interpretation from the way the Pharisees tried to use it in their confrontation with the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 19 and Mark 10. The Pharisees interpreted it of divorce being justified for every cause. Unlike many modern day preachers, pastors, and teachers they knew it did not apply to fornication or adultery and the confrontation between the Pharisees and the Lord Jesus Christ in John 8:3-9 proves it. In John 8, in tempting the Lord Jesus Christ, the Pharisees brought the woman caught in adultery to the Lord Jesus Christ knowing that under the law she had to be stoned. They wanted to know what the Lord thought. In the confrontation that ensued, He put them on the run convicting them out of their own mouths. The Lord probably wrote Leviticus 20:10 on the ground. The Lord Jesus Christ wanted to know where the man was who participated in the act of adultery because he was supposed to be stoned to death also.

In our Lord’s response to the Pharisees in Matthew 19, He reset the law for marriage to God’s original intent set down in Genesis 2:24. He also done away with the “for every cause divorce” and established fornication as a scripturally just grounds for divorce. Here is where the controversy begins. In the New Testament, fornication applies to every sexual sin under the sun including adultery. Adultery is an act of fornication committed by two people at least one of whom is married. We would refer you back to our extensive discussion on fornication. The fornication referred to here is not premarital sex. **Why would the Lord allow a divorce for a presumed act of premarital sex and not allow divorce for an acts of adultery and/or fornication during a marriage??** The act of adultery and/or fornication during marriage would be much more destructive to a relationship than an act of premarital sex. Again, for those of you who believe that adultery is not an act of fornication, you need to study Ezekiel 16 in depth where acts of adultery are called fornication at least three different times. We realize the context of Ezekiel 16 is spiritual fornication, but that does not change its application to the adultery that is described in the context.

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What many Christians do is to take Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18 alone and use them to condemn any divorce and to teach a doctrine of “perpetual adultery” for all those that have been divorced and remarried. That is akin to neglecting 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-58 when trying to teach the scriptural doctrine of the rapture of the saints (Church). It does not present the whole counsel of God. Still others will take Mark 10:11-12, Luke 16:18, Matthew 5:32, and Matthew 19:9 and use all of them, but then deliberately neglect to use the phrases “saving for the cause of fornication” in Matthew 5:32 and “except it be for fornication” in Matthew 19:9. Many also will deliberately neglect to use the phrase “and shall marry another” from Matthew 19:9. That is a critical error in interpretation. Matthew 19:3-10 is granting the right of the innocent party in a divorce to divorce and remarry when their spouse is guilty of fornication. **In other words the context of Matthew 19:3-10 is lawful divorce and remarriage.** Concerning the exception clauses the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia had this to say:

“Why, then, will reason stand by this exception? Because adultery is per se destructive of monogamic family life. Whoever, married, is guilty of adultery has taken another person into family relation. Children may be born to that relation — are born to it. Not to allow divorce in such case is to force an innocent party in marriage to live in a polygamous state. There is the issue stated so plainly that “the wayfaring man need not err therein,” and “he who runs may read,” and “he who reads may run.” It is the hand of an unerring Master that has made fornication a ground for divorce from the bond of matrimony and limited divorce to that single cause. Whichever way we depart from strict practice under the Savior’s direction we land in polygamy. The society that allows by its statutes divorce for any other cause than the one that breaks the monogamic bond, is simply acting in aid of polygamy, consecutive if not contemporaneous.”[The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Copyright 1929, James Orr General Editor, Volume II, page 865]

Now let’s get back to Harold Sightler’s assertion that divorce is never permissible on the grounds of adultery. While that may sound very righteous, “no divorce, ever” is not the historical position nor is it the scriptural position. The Westminster Confession of 1646 stated:

“Adultery or fornication committed after a contract, being detected before marriage, gives just occasion to the innocent party to dissolve that contract. In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce and, after the divorce, to marry another, as if the offending party were dead.”[Westminster Confession Of 1646, Chapter XXIV, Section V]

Matthew Henry (1662-1714) had this to say about Matthew 19:9

“He [The Lord Jesus Christ] settles the point by an express law; I say unto you (v. 9); and it agrees with what he said before ch. 5:32); there it was said in

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preaching, here in dispute, but it is the same, for Christ is constant to himself. Now, in both these places,(1.) He allows divorce, in case of adultery; the reason of the law against divorce being this, They two shall be one flesh. If the wife play the harlot, and make herself one flesh with an adulterer, the reason of the law ceases, and so does the law. By the law of Moses adultery was punished with death, Deu. 22:22 . Now our Saviour mitigates the rigour of that, and appoints divorce to be the penalty.” [Matthew Henry’s Commentary On The Whole Bible, on Matthew 19:9]

Matthew Poole [(1624-1679) said this about Matthew 19:9:

“We met with the like determination of our Lord’s upon this question Matthew 5:32, only there it was (instead of committeth adultery) causeth her to commit adultery, that is, in case she married again. Here our Lord saith the like of the husband: we have the same, Mark 10:11 Luke 16:18. The reason is this: Because nothing but adultery dissolves the knot and band of marriage, though they be thus illegally separated, yet according to the law of God, they are still man and wife. Some have upon these words made a question whether it be lawful for the husband or the wife separated for adultery to marry again while each other liveth. As to the party offending, it may be a question; but as to the innocent person offended, it is no question, for the adultery of the person offending hath dissolved the knot of marriage by the Divine law. It is true that the knot cannot be dissolved without the freedom of both persons each from another, but yet it seemeth against reason that both persons should have the like liberty to a second marriage. For,

1. The adulteress is by God’s law a dead woman, and so in no capacity to a second marriage.
2. It is unreasonable that she should make an advantage of her own sin and error.
3. This might be the occasion of adultery, to give a wicked person a legal liberty to satisfy an extravagant lust.

But for the innocent person, it is as unreasonable that he or she should be punished for the sin of another. But what our Saviour saith here, and in the other parallel texts, is undoubtedly to be understood of husbands and wives put away not for adultery, but for other light and trivial causes, for which by the law of God no divorce is allowed.” [See Matthew Poole’s Commentary On The Holy Bible, Volume 3, pages 88 and 89]

Matthew Henry and Matthew Poole also believed that 1 Corinthians 7:15 granted another scriptural cause for divorce and that being desertion. We will quote those comments later. Brother Karl Baker had this to say concerning Matthew 19:

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“Trying to keep the churches pulpits “pure” by preaching against double married preachers at the expense of doctrinal truth is no more effective than the Pharisees trying to clean up the outside of the cup and platter, when the inside is full of extortion and excess... First of all, Jesus said that because of the Pharisees perversion of Deuteronomy 24; to preserve the spiritual intent of God’s mercy to those who are married that found themselves joined to an unfaithful spouse, the allowance of divorce under the grounds of fornication (which also included adultery, read the dictionary) would be the **only** acceptable act that constituted an annulment of the marriage bondage under the law. It is not the right of the guilty party to instigate the divorce proceedings (see the statement under the statutes of law in index).” [The Marriage & Divorce Controversy, Karl Baker, pages 98-99]

“Therefore, Matthew 19 is to be understood to mean what our Lord plainly stated in the first place: a lawful means by which one is allowed by the grace of God to put away an unfaithful spouse. We are to interpret it as our Lord specified [as] the relief of an innocent party in a situation where the heart has been hardened against the spouse for violating the marriage bonds by fornication. The application is this: reconciliation is to be made for all offenses with one exception – fornication (and that is not a commandment, it is an option for the relief of a broken spirit!)...The putting away has to be done by the innocent party and if the accusation of fornication is true, the Lord will honor the innocent by allowing the divorce and marriage again.” [The Marriage & Divorce Controversy, Karl Baker, page 110]

In closing this section on adultery as a scriptural grounds for divorce, we have proved that adultery is a scriptural grounds for divorce and remarriage. Throughout this book we have quoted, and will continue to quote, numerous authors on the issues that are before us, but those authors do not determine our doctrine. We have also looked at many Bible dictionaries and commentaries NOT to determine where we should stand on these issues, but to see where various “great men of God” stood on these issues. What we can tell you is that it is a mixed bag with many “great men of God” coming down on opposite sides of the issue. We are not mocking here. We know many great preachers that we disagree with on this issue that we have driven hundreds of miles to hear preach. While we have never met Brother Karl Baker, we pretty much agree with almost everything that he says in his book “The Marriage and Divorce Controversy”. It was his book that motivated us to search the whole counsel of God on these issues. Boy were we surprised! The bottom line is this: What does the Bible say!

DESERTION AS A SCRIPTURAL GROUND FOR DIVORCE

Matthew Henry had this to say about desertion as a scriptural ground for divorce and remarriage:

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“The Christian calling did not dissolve the marriage covenant, but bind it the faster, by bringing it back to the original institution, limiting it to two persons, and binding them together for life. The believer is not by faith in Christ loosed from matrimonial bonds to an unbeliever, but is at once bound and made apt to be a better relative. But, though a believing wife or husband should not separate from an unbelieving mate, yet if the unbelieving relative desert the believer, and no means can reconcile to a cohabitation, in such a case a brother or sister is not in bondage (v. 15), not tied up to the unreasonable humour, and bound servilely to follow or cleave to the malicious deserter, or not bound to live unmarried after all proper means for reconciliation have been tried, at least of the deserter contract another marriage or be guilty of adultery, which was a very easy supposition, because a very common instance among the heathen inhabitants of Corinth. In such a case the deserted person must be free to marry again, and it is granted on all hands. And some think that such a malicious desertion is as much a dissolution of the marriage-covenant as death itself. For how is it possible that the two shall be one flesh when the one is maliciously bent to part from or put away the other? Indeed, the deserter seems still bound by the matrimonial contract; and therefore the apostle says (v. 11), If the woman depart from her husband upon the account of his infidelity, let her remain unmarried. But the deserted party seems to be left more at liberty (I mean supposing all the proper means have been used to reclaim the deserter, and other circumstances make it necessary) to marry another person. It does not seem reasonable that they should be still bound, when it is rendered impossible to perform conjugal duties or enjoy conjugal comforts, through the mere fault of their mate: in such a case marriage would be a state of servitude indeed.” [Matthew Henry Commentary On The Whole Bible, on 1 Corinthians 7:15]

Matthew Poole had this to say about desertion as a scriptural ground for divorce and remarriage:

“If the unbelieving husband or the unbelieving wife will leave his or her correlate, that is, so leave them as to return no more to live as a husband or as a wife with her or him that is Christian, let him depart. Such a person hath broken the bond of marriage, and in such cases Christians are not under bondage, they are not tied by law to fetch them again, nor by the laws of God to keep themselves unmarried for their perverseness. But it may be objected, that nothing but adultery, by the Divine law, breaketh that bond.

Answer. That is denied. Nothing but adultery is a justifiable cause of divorce: no man may put away his wife, nor any wife put away her husband, but for adultery. But the husband’s voluntary leaving his wife, or the wife’s voluntary leaving her husband, with a resolution to return no more to them, breaks also the bond of marriage, frustrating it as to the ends for which God hath appointed it; and, after all

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due means used to bring again the party departing to their duty, doth certainly free the correlate. So that although nothing can justify repudiation, or putting away a wife or a husband, and marrying another, but the adultery of the person so divorced and repudiated; yet the departure either of husband or wife without the other's consent for a long time, and refusal to return after all due means used, especially if the party so going away doth it out of a hatred and abomination of the other's religion, will justify the persons so deserted, after due waiting and use of means to reduce him or her to their duty, wholly to cast off the person deserting; for no Christian in such a case, by God's law, is under bondage." [See Matthew Poole's Commentary On The Holy Bible, Volume 3, page 560]

Brother Karl Baker had this to say about 1 Corinthians 7 and the doctrine of desertion:

"Are you going to say, that when Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7, "**A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases, but the Lord hath called us to peace**" does not mean, because of the desertion of the unbeliever, God is not freeing (loosed, I believe it says in verse 27) you from the bondage of marriage? Why, the whole context of the chapter is the commandments concerning marriage!" [The Marriage & Divorce Controversy, Karl Baker, page 101]

Brother Harold Sightler had this to say about whether desertion is a scriptural basis for divorce:

"Divorce is never permissible on the grounds of desertion. This happens many times. Husband or wife will simply walk away. They will desert one another. I know the laws of our state will permit divorce on this ground but the Bible knows nothing of divorce on such grounds." (Page 5, Divorce and Remarriage, Harold B. Sightler)

But does Harold Sightler's statement line up with what the Bible teaches on grounds for divorce? That is the question that we answer next. Is desertion a scriptural ground for divorce?

What about the man or woman who deserts their mate and never gets a divorce, but lives a life of fornication. Isn't it ungodly to keep a Christian brother or sister in bondage to a mate who is consorting with the Devil by rubbing fornication in the Christian's face. Isn't it ungodly to continue in fellowship with a mate who is in open fornication when God has commanded Christians to separate from the unfruitful works of darkness. Isn't it ungodly to continue in fellowship with a mate who is in open fornication when God has commanded Christians NOT to keep company with any man that is called a brother who is a fornicator: how much more so an unbelieving mate. This creates a big problem for those who maintain that adultery is a second ceremony and not an act of fornication. Calling the marriage ceremony adultery allows the unsaved mate to live a licentious life style without being held accountable for it. When you will not allow a scriptural divorce in cases of

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adultery and desertion you are punishing the innocent party for the sin of another. Adultery is not a ceremony. Adultery is an **act of fornication** by a married person. If adultery and fornication are forgivable sins, then how is it that divorce is an unforgivable sin?? You will deny that you believe divorce is an unforgivable sin, but that is not what the application of your doctrine screams. If my doctrine creates a huge conflict with another Biblical doctrine, I had better be adjusting my doctrine to line up with the Scriptures. When the application of OUR law conflicts with God’s law and God’s mercy and grace, then we need to check our law against the Scriptures. When your doctrine will not allow for divorce where the Scriptures allow for it, then you subvert and hijack the mercy and grace of God in the life of an innocent believer who has been grievously injured by an act of treachery on the part of an unfaithful mate. This leads us to our third ground for divorce.

Our third ground for a scriptural divorce is an act of desertion whereby an unbeliever rejects and deserts a believing spouse. A believer cannot desert an unbelieving spouse and remarry. If a believer deserts an unbelieving spouse they must remain UNMARRIED (divorced). You cannot be unmarried without a divorce. The argument for desertion being a scriptural ground for divorce is based mostly upon 1 Corinthians chapter 7 which we deal with in the next few paragraphs. We would encourage you to read our chapter in this book on 1 Corinthians chapter 7. There are generally four arguments presented against using desertion as a scriptural ground for divorce: (1) They interpret the word “unmarried” in verse 11 to mean separation; (2) They say you put yourself in a supposed impossible position of trying to establish who is unbelieving in verse 15; (3) They accuse you of believing that God changes positions from verse 11 to verse 15 and then changes His position again in verse 27-28 and then back again in verse 39; (4) They accuse you of contradicting the Lord Jesus Christ who said in Matthew that the only grounds for divorce was fornication. Lets deal with the idea of “unmarried” being interpreted as “separated”.

Does the word “unmarried” in verse 11 mean separation? What is legally called separation cannot exist in an unmarried, or in other words, a divorced state. Separation does not fit in the context of 1 Corinthians chapter 7. That the Holy Ghost is defining divorce as being unmarried is clearly stated in the context of 1 Corinthians 7:10-11. A legal separation is not a divorce. It enables you to live separately but to remain legally married. A legal separation comes via a secular court order and is no where found in the Scriptures. Many try to infer it from 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, but those verses plainly state that the departed spouse is unmarried, not separated. At the risk of being accused of tautology, unmarried means “not married”: unmarried does not mean separated. Unmarried applies to those who have never been married and to those who have been married but are no longer married because of death or divorce. The only reason we even address the issue of legal separation here is because some unscripturally call the “unmarried” of 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 “the separated” in an attempt to eliminate desertion as a scriptural ground for divorce. In the context, unmarried means not having a sexual relationship with another person and thereby making them your spouse. That chokes those who refuse to acknowledge the scriptural definition of marriage as becoming one flesh without the necessity of a ceremony. First Corinthians 7:10-11 is a restatement of the law and runs parallel to Romans 7:1-4. Romans 7:1-4 is not about divorce and remarriage, but is about living in an adulterous state. Divorce and remarriage have to be read into Romans 7:1-4 because they are not stated or implied in the context. Now, let’s read Romans 7:1-4:

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Romans 7:1-4

1 Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? 2 For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband. 3 So then if, while *her* husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. 4 Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

Here, we can plainly see that the law of death in marriage is being used to show that the believer's death to the law through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ broke our marriage with Satan so that we could and should be married to the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the application of the text, but if we are going to use it in the context of a debate or a discussion on marriage, then we need to rightly divide it according to the Old Testament laws of marriage and divorce and not read our doctrine into it. If you read your doctrine into it, we call that adding to the word of God (Revelation 22:18-19). Notice that the Romans 7:2 says, "woman which hath an husband," and "her husband." What is this text picturing? The picture is of a woman married to one man, who commits adultery. Under the Mosaic Law, she would now be stoned for committing adultery; there would be no remarriage for her. Nowhere in this context is divorce/remarriage mentioned. Why? Because a divorced woman no longer has a husband. Her marriage is over. The picture here is of adultery, not a divorce/remarriage situation. It really is that simple. This text has nothing to do with remarriage. The binding of the law refers to their marriage and the loosing from the law refers to the breaking of the marital bond in this case through death. The loosing from the law of a spouse also takes place in a scriptural divorce which is the whole point of Deuteronomy 24:1-4. That loosing allows remarriage which is the whole point of verses 2 and 3 where a bill of divorcement is given. That is also what the meaning of bound and loosed is in 1 Corinthians 7:15, and 27 where we see:

1 Corinthians 7:15

¹⁵ But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such *cases*: but God hath called us to peace.

1 Corinthians 7:27-28

27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. 28 But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

It is already an established scriptural fact that no sin is involved when a person remarries after the death of a mate. So, verse 27 cannot be referring to a widow or a widower. Verse 27 is referring generally to all those in verses 15-26. Those that have suffered the death of a mate are addressed in

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the closing two verses of 1 Corinthians 7, verses 39 and 40. Brother Karl Baker had this to say about 1 Corinthians 7:27-28:

“Do not seek a wife, but, if you do-make sure it is in the Lord (verse 39) and you have not sinned if you do (verse 28)!... Can’t you see in 1 Corinthians 7:15 with verse 27, the cross reference of Romans 7:2 that says “bound” and then says “loosed” with verse 2 and then says “free” in verse 3? Free to do what – stay single? 1 Corinthians 7:27 says that if you are loosed from a wife, and that includes verse 15, seek not a wife – **But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned: and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless, such shall have trouble in the flesh but I spare you** (verse 28).” [The Marriage & Divorce Controversy, Karl Baker, page 96]

What is clearly established in 1 Corinthians 7:27-28 is that it is not a sin to remarry if there were scriptural grounds for divorce. That scriptural grounds is established here in 1 Corinthians 7 by the desertion of an unbelieving mate. In most cases, the deserting, unsaved mate will have a sexual relationship with a party that is not their spouse (marry) another and loose (release) the saved victim from being bound (married) to the unsaved deserter. This act of adultery would give the saved victim an additional ground for a scriptural divorce. A rough parallel can be drawn between the divorces allowed for the desertion of unbelieving mates in the New Testament and the divorces allowed for the strange wives that Israel had taken from the pagans in their day that were documented in Ezra chapter 10. That rough parallel exists in the fact that in both cases believers were ordered and/or allowed to be divorced from their unbelieving spouses. The actions that were taken in Ezra chapter 10 prove that divorce is not always a sin because those divorces were sanctioned by God Himself.

We also want to emphasize here that if the believer deserts the unbeliever they are bound to remain unmarried, or be reconciled to, to their former spouse until their former spouse either dies, gets remarried, or sexually consummates another relationship. Brother Karl Baker has this to say concerning this matter:

“Before we leave 1 Corinthians 7, I would like to say this; in dealing with desertion, it is only the desertion of the unsaved. God doesn’t expect us to take advantage of his graces or pervert them. When two Christians have trouble and one departs, it is not verse 15, but verses 10-11 that they fall under – reconciliation”. [The Marriage & Divorce Controversy, Karl Baker, page 102]

Is it true that we put ourselves in an impossible position if we try to establish who is an unbeliever in line with 1 Corinthians 7:15? We have heard it stated that if we interpret the desertion of 1 Corinthians 7:15 and 1 Corinthians 7:27-28 as another grounds for divorce that we are put in the untenable position of trying to discern if an individual is a believer. It is sometimes phrased in this manner:

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“If the abandonment by an unbelieving spouse is grounds for divorce, we face the unenviable responsibility of determining whether the departing spouse is redeemed. While evidence can be procured to show definitively that a spouse has been unfaithful we will have a hard time proving that any given individual is an unbeliever”.

Or, it is phrased like this:

“Further, to see “abandonment by the unbelieving spouse” as grounds for divorce puts us in the situation of trying to determine whether the departing spouse is born-again.”

Statements like these beg the question. If we cannot with some degree of certainty determine whether a person is saved, then why would the Holy Ghost use the phrase “if the unbelieving depart”. It has to mean that we can conclude that an individual is unsaved based upon their conduct or their words. While we cannot judge a persons heart, we are charged to base our continuing full fellowship with our families, our friends, and those around us upon whether they are believers. This charge is given to us in 2 Corinthians 6:14-15 where we read:

2 Corinthians 6:14-15

¹⁴ Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

¹⁵ And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

While we cannot judge a persons heart, we can judge their fruits. If we do not have some basis upon which to determine if a person is a believer, then we cannot have any assurance of being able to obey any commandment to separate from unbelievers. The same principle of interpretation, or hermeneutics, applies to the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:15. Therefore, we can with some degree of certainty determine whether an individual is saved.

If we interpret 1 Corinthians 7 to allow divorces in case of desertion, do we believe that God changes positions from verse 11 to verse 15 and then changes His position again in verses 27- 28 and again in verse 39? The answer to that question is that we know for sure that God does not change positions, but we also know for sure that he changes persons throughout 1 Corinthians 7. What we have here is an issue of rightly dividing the Word of Truth. In verses 10 and 11, we are talking about believing spouses who desert their unbelieving spouses. When believing spouses desert unbelieving spouses, the believing spouse must remain unmarried (divorced) because believers are subject to the law. In cases where believers desert unbelievers, the believer cannot remarry until such time as the unbelieving spouse either commits adultery or remarries. In verses 12-15 the subject switches to unbelieving spouses who desert their believing spouses. When the

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unbelieving spouse deserts the believing spouse, the believing spouse is loosed from the bondage of the law and may divorce and remarry. In these cases the unbelieving spouses are not subject to the law, neither indeed can. In verses 27-28 the focus has switched back to a mixed group of people that includes saved, unmarried folks including the divorced and virgins that are told that if they marry they have not sinned. Verses 39-40 are dealing with saved widows.

Do we contradict the Lord Jesus Christ when we allow divorce on the ground of desertion when He said except it be for fornication? What we have in this question is a denial of the doctrine of progressive revelation as it relates to marriage, divorce, and remarriage. While the question could be dealt with dispensationally, there is no need to when it is obviously a matter of progressive revelation. While many will allow for, and even promote, the doctrine of progressive revelation in Bible Prophecy, Salvation, the Scriptures, and other doctrines, they deny that it can be applied to the doctrines of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. That creates a major problem for those who try to apply laws written strictly for the Jews to the Gentiles. The original biblical doctrines of marriage, divorce, and remarriage were laws that were written for the Jewish people in a society that was actively regulated and controlled by the five books of the law. The Gentiles were not subject to that law. In Matthew 5 and Matthew 19, the Lord Jesus Christ overrode and permanently changed some Old Testament Jewish laws that had been in existence for thousands of years. That was his prerogative because he is the Author and God of the law and the Scriptures. The Lord Jesus Christ eliminated the “for every cause” divorce interpretation of the Pharisees that had probably existed since shortly after Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was written because man’s natural tendency is to pervert the law to feed his wicked flesh. The Lord Jesus Christ also eliminated the death penalty for fornication and adultery that had existed for thousands of years. Was that a matter of contradiction also? No, it was a matter of progressive revelation. Note also that the Lord Jesus Christ was dealing with nothing but Jews in Matthew 5 and Matthew 19. The gospel was to go forth to Jew and Gentile. The Lord Jesus Christ also knew that the Gospel would be going forth to the Gentile nations that had not the rule of the Jewish law. He also knew that many newly converted Christians would be deserted by their unbelieving spouses as the Gospel was sent forth to all the earth. What we have here is another case of pharisaical men finding the swords among the plowshares and vice versa and calling it a contradiction because it does not fit their doctrine. It was not some scribe or Pharisee that made the following statements:

1 Corinthians 7:10-11

¹⁰ And unto the married I command, *yet* not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from *her* husband: ¹¹ But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to *her* husband: and let not the husband put away *his* wife.

1 Corinthians 7:15

¹⁵ But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such *cases*: but God hath called us to peace.

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1 Corinthians 7:27-28

²⁷ Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. ²⁸ But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

It was God the Holy Ghost that made those statements. Though it was not some scribe or Pharisee that made the above statements, it is always a bunch of scribes and Pharisees that will deny them. We have heard many men twist and contort the words unmarried, bondage, bound, and loosed in 1 Corinthians 7 into the most mangled verbal mess we have ever heard. They would put most propagandists to shame. It makes you wonder if English is their first language. If you have a problem interpreting the words bound and loosed, go and look again at Romans 7:1-4 for the contextual definition that is the same as it is in 1 Corinthians 7. The reason some have a problem with this passage is because they see an apparent contradiction with the words of the Lord Jesus Christ that is somewhat difficult to explain without the application of the Laws of Progressive Revelation and Progressive Mention. What we have in 1 Corinthians 7 is not a contradiction of the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, but rather further revelation on the doctrine of marriage, divorce, and remarriage by the Holy Ghost. It is an addition to the doctrine of marriage, divorce, and remarriage by the Holy Ghost.

REMARRIAGE AFTER DEATH AND DIVORCE

When the scriptural conditions are given allowing for divorce and remarriage, in no case is a ceremony stated or implied. It is assumed that the marriage is made and broken by a sexual act. In the case of a broken marriage, a bill of divorcement was required. We are going to turn to some comments made by Brother Harold Sightler. We will briefly refute his comments and then move onto a deeper analysis of the whole issue of remarriage. Brother Harold Sightler said:

“In Matthew 19:8-9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18, the grounds for divorce is only “fornication”; and the remarriage of the divorced person is forbidden. And let us remember that this is the ONLY grounds upon which one may scripturally divorce”. (Page 7, Divorce and Remarriage, Harold B. Sightler)

Luke 16:18 does not include fornication as a grounds for divorce, but fornication is included as a grounds for divorce in Matthew 19:8-9 and Mark 10:11-12. In a scriptural divorce, the permission to remarry is granted by the bill of divorcement. The topic under discussion in Matthew 19 and Mark 10 was divorce and **remarriage**. There was no question in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ that fornication was a scriptural (lawful) ground for divorce. The Lord Jesus Christ made it so himself when he said a married woman could fornicate and that it was grounds for divorce. The answer of the Lord Jesus Christ made it lawful for the innocent party to remarry when their spouse was guilty of fornication. The Lord Jesus Christ made it plain that if anyone married a person that

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had been put away for fornication then they themselves were guilty of adultery. Brother Harold Sightler also said:

“The question is often asked, Why cannot the innocent party remarry after divorcing according to the scripture? Look again carefully at the passage above, Matthew 19: 8-9, “Whosoever shall put away his wife except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery.” This is the innocent man whose wife is put away for fornication who is forbidden to remarry. If we reread the passages from Romans 7:2-3 and I Corinthians 7:10-12 as well as the passages in Genesis which refer to the origin, purpose and sacredness of the marriage relation, we must conclude that it was never in the mind of God, nor did it occur to Jesus when He explained the matter to the Pharisees, that remarriage could be permitted”. (Pages 7-8, Divorce and Remarriage, Harold B. Sightler)

The innocent man is **NOT** forbidden to remarry. This interpretation by Brother Harold Sightler is just plain wrong. The concept of remarriage did occur to the Lord Jesus Christ because he used the word “remarry” in His response to the Pharisees. When the Pharisees came to the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 19, their whole fallacious argument was based upon a licentious interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1-4. The context of the question that the Pharisees asked plainly included divorce AND remarriage: twice, in fact. Read Deuteronomy 24:2-3 again and again very slowly and very carefully. The Lord Jesus Christ in his answer to the Pharisees also answered their question in the context of “putting away AND shall marry another (remarry)”. In His response to the Pharisees, not only did the Lord Jesus Christ do away with the “for every cause” divorce interpretation, but He also overrode the Old Testament death penalty required for adultery from Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:21-24. Brother Sightler goes on to say:

“To marry the second time is wrong and sinful....It is better, beloved, to be on the safe side and not to guess at the will of God or risk disobedience”. (Page 8, Divorce and Remarriage, Harold B. Sightler)

The Bible nowhere says that it is wrong and sinful to marry a second time. That has to be read into the Bible through the prism of someone’s doctrinal bias. It is based upon the false ideas that both parties to a divorce are always wrong, that God does not allow divorce under any circumstances, and that God does not allow remarriage. It is better not to do anything less or do anything more than what the Scriptures require than it is to risk adding to or taking away from the Word of God by yielding to the unscriptural prejudices and fears of men. Yielding to the prejudices and fears of men is the source of much heresy and apostasy in the Church. That is why we demand a literal interpretation of the Scriptures. When we do not yield to the whole counsel of God on a particular subject, we risk disobedience, apostasy, and heresy.

Returning to the issue of fornication as it relates to the grounds for lawful divorce and remarriage we want to reemphasize that contrary to what is taught and preached in many

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fundamentalist and independent and denominational Baptist churches, a married person can be guilty of fornication (See our detailed discussion under fornication above). The proof of that statement is given by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 19:9. That also makes sex between a man and a woman who are unmarried fornication. A married person who commits adultery is guilty of both adultery and fornication. The bottom line is that both married and single people can be guilty of fornication. Fornication is any sex outside of the God ordained boundaries of marriage. That makes pornography fornication. That makes sodomy fornication. In other words, that makes sex between a man and a man and a woman and a woman fornication. What the world calls homosexuality and lesbianism, the word of God calls sodomy. The Bible does not refer to them as homosexuals, and lesbians, and gays. The Bible calls them sodomites. The necessity of dealing with sodomy as being fornication when dealing with the issue of scriptural marriage has come to the forefront in the year 2014 because many relationships between husband and wife are being destroyed by many sodomites and sodomitesses coming out of Satan's closet and deserting their spouses. For those of you who believe that the fornication called out by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9 is sex before marriage, or sex between couples neither of whom is married, what are you going to do when the sodomite or sodomitess who comes out of Satan's closet starts running around on their mates in a same sex abominable relationship? Are you going to require that the innocent mate remain in the relationship and endanger their lives? If they get scripturally divorced, are you going to require them to remain celibate and unmarried for the rest of their lives in violation of Matthew 19:9 and 1 Corinthians 7 verses 15, 27, and 28? Or, will you say in your self righteous, pharisaical hypocrisy that they should not have the desire to have a sexual relationship while you continue to have a normal sexual relationship with your spouse? Brother Karl Baker has well said:

“The answer the good doctors have for all this is; the innocent must stay unmarried and wait upon their spouses return or the tranquility that only death can bring! The problem is, this sounds fine if the Lord commanded such. However, that is not what the Scriptures say and I, as a minister, am not going to help support a false and erroneous method of sanctimonious spirituality”. [The Marriage & Divorce Controversy, Karl Baker, page 113]

In Matthew 19:12 and 1 Corinthians 7:7, celibacy is described as a proper gift of God that would not be able to be received by some. Forbidding to marry or remarry when the Scriptures allow it is described as a doctrine of devils in 1 Timothy 4. Forbidding to marry or remarry reeks of the heresy of Roman Catholic celibacy. It comes from the same Roman Catholic theological crypt as forbidding divorce under any circumstances. **THE BIBLE SAYS: IT IS BETTER TO MARRY THAN BURN! THE BIBLE SAYS: BUT AND IF THOU MARRY, THOU HAST NOT SINNED!**

Much of the argument as to whether a divorced person can remarry is based upon a false belief that divorce does not end a marriage or that divorce is never allowed under any circumstances. Therefore, so the unscriptural argument goes, since divorce is never permitted, then remarriage is out of the question. Now, let's look at Matthew 19:3-12 where it is written:

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Matthew 19:3-12

3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? 4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female, 5 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? 6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. 7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? 8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. 9 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. 10 His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with *his* wife, it is not good to marry. 11 But he said unto them, All *men* cannot receive this saying, save *they* to whom it is given. 12 For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from *their* mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive *it*.

The whole context of Matthew 19:3-12 is lawful divorce and lawful remarriage. To use these verses to teach that a divorced person cannot remarry is twisting the whole passage out of context to promote a preconceived unscriptural doctrine that divorced people can never remarry. What we are obviously dealing with here are matters hard to be understood because most of our fundamentalist and Independent Baptist preachers, pastors, and teachers wrest these Scriptures to the destruction of their divorced brethren and make their divorced brethren unto themselves as heathen men and publicans. What the phrase “and shall marry another” does is put the whole passage in the context of divorce and remarriage. What this passage also teaches is that a married person can be guilty of fornication unlike some who teach the false doctrine that a married person cannot be guilty of fornication in the present tense. The Lord Jesus Christ himself said that a wife can commit fornication in Matthew 19:9. Adultery is an act of fornication that becomes the crime of adultery when the act of fornication is committed by a married person with a person that they are not married to. If a wife can be guilty of fornication when she commits adultery, then a husband can be guilty of fornication when he commits adultery. The complimentary passages to Matthew 19:3-12 are located in Mark 10:2-12 and in Luke 16:18.

Mark 10:2-12

2 And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away *his* wife? tempting him. 3 And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? 4 And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put *her* away. 5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your

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heart he wrote you this precept. 6 But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. 7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; 8 And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. 9 What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. 10 And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same *matter*. 11 And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. 12 And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

Luke 16:18

18 Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from *her* husband committeth adultery.

1 Corinthians 7

8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. 9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn. 10 And unto the married I command, *yet* not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from *her* husband: 11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to *her* husband: and let not the husband put away *his* wife. 12 But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. 13 And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. 14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. 15 But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such *cases*: but God hath called us to peace. 27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. 28 But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you. 39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

According to the Lord Jesus Christ, divorce does end a marriage. Why did the Lord Jesus Christ say to the woman at the well in John 4: “thou HAST HAD five husbands and what was her sin? She was obviously having sex with a man who was not her husband because he was married to another woman! She was committing adultery and fornication and he was committing adultery and fornication. Also, the clear implication of this passage is that she has been divorced five times. Why would the Lord hold it against her that she had been married five times, if those men had simply died? The Lord Jesus Christ showed us that she was a sexually promiscuous woman, living with a man who was not her husband. Notice that he does not say that she is married to all five of those men. He says that she “hast had” (past-tense) five husbands. She is no longer married to those men.

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Therefore, it is inaccurate to speak of a divorced person as having multiple living spouses because of the divorces. If her previous divorces had not dissolved those previous marriages, the Lord Jesus Christ would have said that “thou hast (present tense) five husbands”. So much for those preachers, pastors, and teachers that state that a divorced man has more than one wife if he remarries. That whole theory is blown out of the water with this one passage of Scripture! Do you actually think the Lord Jesus Christ would change his wording if it was a man at the well who “hast had” five wives? Based upon what the Lord Jesus Christ said here, you cannot say that a lawfully divorced man or woman who is married now has more than one husband or wife. When a person is divorced from a spouse, that person is no longer their spouse in any sense of the word. Otherwise, the Lord Jesus Christ would have used the present tense to indicate that the five men were still her husbands.

We have already proven beyond a reasonable doubt that divorce and remarriage are allowed in the case where a spouse is guilty of the act of fornication called adultery. We have also proved that divorce permanently dissolves the marriage and that people who are scripturally divorced are allowed to remarry. Brother Karl Baker had this to say concerning the issue of remarriage:

“Divorce is a divine sanctioned grace in the New Testament established by our Lord himself (Matthew 19 and 1 Corinthians 7)... Divorce therefore has to be a loosing of the marital bonds (1 Corinthians 7:15). For those who know the law (Romans 7:1), divorce also annuls the relationship and allows a divorced person, by the permissive will of God to marry another person without being an adulterer (Deuteronomy 24:1-4) just as death separates the bond in unquestionable terms (Romans 7:4-6). Therefore, divorce does the same to those who have chosen death over life in the spiritual sense (1 Timothy 5, 1 Corinthians 7:14-15, Romans 8:5-8, Ephesians 2:1-5, and 2 Corinthians 5:11-12) as much as death in the physical sense. The minister of the gospel has no right to take upon himself a self-imposed law of righteousness for the sake of preserving the church against the so-called “evil fruits” of unrighteousness because he feels if he doesn’t the life of the church will die or the church will be affected by the evil to such a degree she will never recover.” [The Marriage & Divorce Controversy, Karl Baker, page 71]

“Dr. Ballew says: Even though the Lord permits a man to put away his wife on the basis of fornication, he does not clearly give him freedom to remarry.... Karl Baker says: Now if a man is divorced in the eyes of God (Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, is he not?); And if the woman may go and be another man’s wife lawfully (Deuteronomy 24:2-3); and if in fact she can do it twice (Deuteronomy 24:3); then do you mean to tell me the divorce did not totally and unconditionally separate the two so the man could marry again?” [The Marriage & Divorce Controversy, Karl Baker, page 88]

“Both they that have been loosed who choose to remarry and virgins are explicitly told that the choice of marriage is ultimately a personal decision of self-

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determined necessity and although marriage may cause “trouble in the flesh” (verse 28), the trouble is not because of sin (verse 28), it is just more of the present distress of life (verse 26)... These so-called “well meaners” go to no ends to try to prove that under no condition does divorced mean you are “free” to marry again – no matter if Christ or Paul the apostle accepted it. Divorce does not mean, “loosed” to these “gnat strainers” whose only method of interpretations is based upon “private interpretation”.” [The Marriage & Divorce Controversy, Karl Baker, page 97]

Remember that remarriage is included in the Old Testament permission to divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, which the Lord Jesus Christ replaces in Matthew 19:9. In Matthew 19:9, the Lord Jesus Christ said that He prohibited divorce and remarriage, except in the case of fornication. In the phrase “Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery” he joins the putting away (divorce) with the remarriage by the word “and”. Tying the two together is consistent with Deuteronomy 24:2-3 where remarriage was allowed after a scriptural divorce. Notice that divorce ends the marriage. In verse 2, she goes and becomes another man’s wife. Verse 4 refers to her first husband as her “former” husband. He is no longer her husband. They have no relationship, and indeed are forbidden to re-establish a relationship. Their marriage is over. In no sense does God or the law consider her and her first husband still to be married. Nor does she commit adultery against her first husband when engaging in the marriage relationship with her current husband. Otherwise, she would be stoned for adultery and would not be continuing in a second marriage (much less a second divorce as the text indicates). No, her marriage is over.

Brother Karl Baker in quoting Brother Stinnett Ballew had the following to say:

“Dr. Ballew stresses the idea that although the woman is *free* to marry, the man is evidently *not free* because in the next paragraph he says: “Even though the Lord permits a man to put away his wife on the basis of fornication, he does not clearly give him freedom to remarry”. [The Marriage & Divorce Controversy, Karl Baker, page 79]

In his book, Brother Baker goes on to rightly condemn this statement of Brother Ballew. We see no need to clearly give the divorced man the freedom to remarry because the law specifically grants him the permission to remarry with the proviso that he could not remarry the woman he had put away for uncleanness. Also, the Lord Jesus Christ specifically grants permission to divorce AND remarry in cases of fornication. Furthermore, why would the woman be explicitly given the right to remarry and the same right be denied to the man. The Pharisees’ question in Matthew 19 was focused upon the interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 which allowed divorce for uncleanness. The fact that they framed their questions in terms of “for every cause” shows that adultery was not in view, but they got more than they bargained for. The Lord Jesus Christ used the whole confrontation to set aside the whole of the Pharisees’ doctrine of divorce and to reestablish God’s original intent for marriage from Genesis 2:24. The Pharisees’ question in Matthew 19 was NOT on the issue of

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adultery because the Pharisees knew that adultery was handled according to Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:22 which required the death penalty for both parties. That was the whole point of the confrontation between the Lord Jesus Christ and the Pharisees in John 8:1-12. The woman's adultery required the death penalty, but where was the man? This whole series of confrontations should put to rest the false doctrine that the uncleanness of Deuteronomy 24:1 was fornication or adultery because that whole issue was covered in Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:13-30. The penalty for the uncleanness of Deuteronomy 24:1 was divorce. The penalty for the fornication/adultery of Deuteronomy 22:13-31 was death. It is significant to note that the declaration of the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 19:9 abrogated, or done away with, the death penalty for fornication and adultery in marriage. The penalty would now be divorce with the innocent party being allowed to remarry. The guilty party is not allowed to remarry without committing adultery.

All **unscriptural** divorce and remarriage constitutes a sin of adultery under the following conditions: 1. A man who divorces his wife and takes a second wife commits adultery against his first wife if he did not divorce her for her fornication and/or adultery, or desertion. The second woman he marries also commits adultery if the husband did not scripturally divorce his first wife. The same is true for the woman also 2. A man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery if that woman's former husband was not put away for fornication and/or adultery, or desertion. 3. A woman who divorces her husband and marries another commits adultery if the woman did not put away her former husband for fornication and/or adultery, or desertion. 4. A man who divorces his wife is guilty of causing her to commit adultery if his wife was not put away for fornication and/or adultery, or desertion. We will close out this section with a comment from Brother Harold Sightler where he stated:

“It is a dangerous thing to lower God's standards to accommodate man's weakness.”
(Page 8, Divorce and Remarriage, Harold B. Sightler)

To which we reply, that it is a dangerous thing to raise man's standard above the word of God because you then get into the doctrines and commandments of pharisaical men whose natural tendency is to exceed the righteousness of the Scriptures resulting in the subverting of the grace of God. “For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers.” (Matthew 23:4).

ARE THOSE THAT ARE REMARRIED LIVING IN PERPETUAL ADULTERY?

Consider now the interpretive snare created by the unscriptural position that divorce does not end marriage. Some churches will not let divorced people join their churches because they say they are in perpetual adultery as long as they continue to stay married after their divorces. Some churches describe it as “living in sin”. This false doctrine states that a divorce does not permanently end a marriage is the creator of yet another unforgivable sinner and that being the “perpetual adulterer/adulteress” that can be added to the blasphemer of the Holy Ghost and the divorced man.

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[We are being satirical here. We do not believe that divorce and adultery are unforgivable sins] Can the “perpetual adulteress/adulterer” ever join a Bible believing New Testament church? The church is clearly commanded to separate from those who continue in sin (Matthew 18:15-17, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, 1 Corinthians 5:9). A Scripture that is pertinent to the discussion before us is Galatians 5:19-21 which says:

Galatians 5:19-21

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ²⁰ Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, ²¹ Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Note that adultery is at the top of the list in Galatians 5. In verse 21, the phrase “they which do such things” means “they which continually do these things”. If we believe a remarried person commits an act of adultery every time they engage in the marriage act with their new spouse, these verses deny them salvation. That would mean that they are going to Hell. What if that remarried person was already saved? Do you actually believe they would lose their salvation? The view that a remarried couple is “living in perpetual adultery” comes from a misinterpretation of Scripture and is rooted in Roman Catholic theology which states:

“2384 Divorce is a grave offense against the natural law. It claims to break the contract, to which the spouses freely consented, to live with each other till death. Divorce does injury to the covenant of salvation, of which sacramental marriage is the sign. Contracting a new union, even if it is recognized by civil law, adds to the gravity of the rupture: the remarried spouse is then in a situation of public and permanent adultery:

If a husband, separated from his wife, approaches another woman, he is an adulterer because he makes that woman commit adultery, and the woman who lives with him is an adulteress, because she has drawn another's husband to herself.” [Quoted from the 1993-1994 Roman Catholic Catechism]

The “living in perpetual adultery” argument denies that a scriptural divorce ends a marriage. Usually it misuses Romans 7:3 or 1 Corinthians 7:39 to argue that only death ends a marriage. It also misuses Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18 to the exclusion of Matthew 5:31-32 and Matthew 19:9. Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9 include the exclusion clauses “saving for the cause of fornication” and “except it be for fornication”. What those two clauses establish is a scriptural ground for divorce and that ground is fornication/adultery. However, Deuteronomy 24:1-3 clearly indicates that divorce ends marriage. In John 4, Christ told the woman at the well “thou hast had five husbands,” pointedly

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using the past-tense to indicate that those previous marriages were divorced.

How does this individual quit committing this adultery? Do they divorce their new spouse? That would create yet another problem. Furthermore, it is never right to commit wrong to correct wrong. Remarrying an individual you have divorced after you have married a different spouse is not lawful. Deuteronomy 24:3-4 has this to say:

Deuteronomy 24:3-4

³ 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; ⁴ 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.

So, that rules out a divorce and remarriage to the former spouse. Do they quit sleeping with their new spouse? To do so means they become guilty of yet another sin by breaking God’s instructions in 1 Corinthians 7:4-5, where married folks are told not to cease from the marriage bed except for a time of fasting and prayer, making sure to come together again. Is God now commanding them to sin? The answer to that question is obviously no. What we need to do in these situations is to apply the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 19:9 where he clearly states that the innocent party can remarry in cases that involve fornication and in 1 Corinthians 7:15, 27-28 where the Holy Ghost plainly states that a person that has been loosed from a marriage does not sin if they remarry. These verses state:

Matthew 19:9

⁹ 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.

1 Corinthians 7:15

¹⁵ But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such *cases*: but God hath called us to peace.

1 Corinthians 7:27-28

²⁷ Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. ²⁸ But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.

To be loosed is to be freed from the marriage bond. The marriage bond becomes bondage when the innocent victim of a fornicating and adulterous spouse is required to remain either celibate in marriage or unmarried for life while the guilty spouse is allowed to force the innocent spouse to

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continue to suffer. To require the innocent victim to continue to suffer would be a violation of the spirit of Matthew 19:10-12 and 1 Timothy 4:1-3 which state:

Matthew 19:10-12

¹⁰ His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with *his* wife, it is not good to marry. ¹¹ But he said unto them, All *men* cannot receive this saying, save *they* to whom it is given. ¹² For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from *their* mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive *it*.

1 Timothy 4:1-3

¹ Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; ² Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; ³ Forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

In Matthew 19:12 and 1 Corinthians 7:7, celibacy is described as a proper gift of God that would not be able to be received by some. Forbidding to marry or remarry when the Scriptures allow it is described as a doctrine of devils in 1 Timothy 4. Forbidding to marry or remarry reeks of the heresy of Roman Catholic celibacy. It comes from the same Roman Catholic theological crypt as forbidding divorce under any circumstances. Furthermore, for you to set up a rule that requires an innocent spouse to remain celibate, or unmarried for life, while their adulterous mate continues to fornicate is to violate the command not to defraud the marriage bed that is explicitly stated as follows in 1 Corinthians 7:

1 Corinthians 7:5

⁵ Defraud ye not one the other, except *it be* with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

We cannot overemphasize that Matthew 19:1-12 is given in the context of **LAWFUL DIVORCE** and **REMARRIAGE**. That is what the phrase “**and shall marry another**” means. For you to state that Matthew 19:9 does not allow for remarriage, is to take away from the Scriptures.

The topic under discussion in Matthew 19 is divorce and remarriage. There was no question in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ that fornication was a scriptural (lawful) ground for divorce. The Lord Jesus Christ made it so himself when he said a married woman could fornicate and that it was grounds for divorce. The answer of the Lord Jesus Christ made it lawful for the innocent party to remarry when their spouse was guilty of fornication. The Lord Jesus Christ made it plain that if anyone married a person that had been put away for fornication then they themselves were guilty of

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adultery. In reading these scriptures, remember that Deuteronomy 22 and 24 give two different exceptions to the prohibition concerning divorce. In Deuteronomy 22, the exception was fornication and the penalty was death. In Deuteronomy 24, the exception was uncleanness and the penalty was divorce. We also need to remember that God (the Lord Jesus Christ) gave an exception to the prohibition against divorce in Matthew chapters 5 and 19. The exception was fornication and the penalty was divorce and NOT death. We also need to remember that the Biblical definition of fornication is ANY sex outside the God ordained boundaries of a marriage between a man and a woman. That makes adultery, premarital sex, sodomy, child molestation, pornography, etc to be fornication. We realize that in the New Testament that two different Greek words are used for fornication and adultery. We realize that in the Old Testament that two different Hebrew words are used for fornication and adultery. Both words in both Testaments refer to illicit sexual intercourse: the only difference being whether the offenders had husbands or wives. In 1 Corinthians chapter 7 it is very crucial that you look at every detail so that you will know exactly what group of individuals are being dealt with.

SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED: SUMMARY

At the outset of this study we posed 17 different questions which we have answered during the course of this chapter. The answers to these questions form somewhat of a summary of this chapter and are given in brief here:

- (1) What is adultery? Adultery is an act of fornication that involves two people of the opposite sex not married to each other, one of whom is married. Both parties whether single or not are said to be guilty of adultery.
- (2) What is fornication? Fornication is any sexual act outside the God ordained boundaries of marriage between a man and a woman. Fornication includes adultery, harlotry, prostitution, sodomy, pornography, rape, bestiality, and child molestation.
- (3) What is the difference between fornication and adultery? Fornication is any sexual act outside the God ordained boundaries of marriage between a man and a woman whereas adultery is an act of fornication committed by a married person with someone they are not married to.
- (4) Can a married person be guilty of fornication? Yes a married person is guilty of fornication when they have sexual intercourse with someone they are not married to.
- (5) Is adultery a sexual act or a ceremonial act? Adultery is never described as a ceremonial act in the Scriptures. It is always a sexual act.
- (6) What, if any, are the scriptural grounds for divorce? There are three scriptural grounds to dissolve a marriage. These are death, fornication/adultery, and desertion.
- (7) Does unmarried mean separated, but not divorced? Unmarried means divorced. Unmarried is never referred to as a separation in the Scriptures.
- (8) Is desertion a scriptural ground for divorce? As we have proved, desertion is a scriptural ground for divorce.

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(9) Are all divorces absolutely prohibited? As we have seen they are not because God divorced Israel and God ordered the priests and the people of Israel to divorce their pagan wives in Ezra 10.

(10) Is divorce always wrong? Not only is divorce not always wrong, it is sometimes absolutely necessary for the relief and the protection of the innocent. It is even commanded by God in certain instances.

(11) Is divorce always a sin for all parties to the divorce? As we have seen, not every party to a divorce is guilty of the sin that led to the divorce. Many times, the innocent are made to suffer the penalty of the guilty.

(12) Under what circumstances is a divorce scriptural? There are three scriptural grounds to dissolve a marriage. These are death, fornication/adultery, and desertion.

(13) Is divorce an unforgivable sin? Though most divorced people in fundamentalist and Independent Baptist churches are treated as if their divorces are an unforgivable sin, there is but one unforgivable sin and that is the blaspheming of the Holy Ghost.

(14) If a person gets divorced can they remarry? All those that have been scripturally divorced can get remarried if they have suffered wrong through the desertion or adultery/fornication of their spouses.

(15) If a divorced person gets remarried are they in perpetual adultery? No, they are not in perpetual adultery if they get remarried. Such a preposterous concept is based upon the false doctrine that divorce does not end a marriage. This is especially true where an innocent party to a divorce has been granted a scriptural divorce. Furthermore, even the guilty party or parties in a divorce are guilty of but one act of adultery when they get remarried and that being the initial sexual consummation of the new marriage. The ceremony itself is not an act of adultery.

(16) Should a person who has been guilty of an unscriptural divorce put away (divorce) their current spouse and reunite with their former spouse? No, they cannot divorce their current spouse and remarry their former spouse because that would be yet another sin because the Scriptures ban that practice.

(17) Can you be married to someone and them not be your spouse? According to Mark 6:17-18 a man can be married to a woman and her not be his wife . These verses say:

Mark 6:17-18¹⁷ For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. ¹⁸For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.

What these verses indicate is that though Herod was married to Herodias through a sexual relationship, he could not scripturally be her husband because she was scripturally married to Herod's brother Philip. What we have here is a case of adultery and bigamy on the part of Herod and Herodias. The same situation existed

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with the woman at the well in John 4:7-30. In John 4:17-18, the reason the man the woman at the well was sleeping with was not her husband is because he was another woman’s husband. Though the woman at the well had “married” this man, he could not be her husband because he already had a wife. We know this may offend some of our Christian sisters, but under the Old Testament law this man was not guilty of adultery because he was not having sex with a woman who was married to another man.

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APPENDIX I

THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

CANON I – If any one saith, that matrimony is not truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of the evangelic law, (a sacrament) instituted by Christ the Lord; but that it has been invented by men in the Church; and that it does not confer grace; let him be anathema.

CANON V – If any one saith, that on account of heresy, or irksome cohabitation, or the affected absence of one of the parties, the bond of matrimony may be dissolved; let him be anathema.

CANON VII.– If any one saith, that the Church has erred, in that she hath taught, and doth teach, in accordance with the evangelical and apostolical doctrine, that the bond of matrimony cannot be dissolved on account of the adultery of one of the married parties; and that both, or even the innocent one who gave not occasion to the adultery, cannot contract another marriage, during the life-time of the other; and, that he is guilty of adultery, who, having put away the adulteress, shall take another wife, as also she, who, having put away the adulterer, shall take another husband; let him be anathema. [This statement contradicts and denies the statement of the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 19:7 allowing the innocent party to remarry, but is in keeping with the unscriptural doctrine of marriage pushed by many so-called fundamentalist and Baptist preachers and pastors]

CANON VIII – If any one saith, that the Church errs, in that she declares that, for many causes, a separation may take place between husband and wife, in regard of bed, or in regard of cohabitation, for a determinate or for an indeterminate period; let him be anathema.
[This denies 1 Corinthians 7:3]

CANON IX – If any one saith, that clerics constituted in sacred orders, or Regulars, who have solemnly professed chastity, are able to contract marriage, and that being contracted it is valid, notwithstanding the ecclesiastical law, or vow; and that the contrary is no thing else than to condemn marriage; and, that all who do not feel that they have the gift of chastity, even though they have made a vow thereof, may contract marriage; let him be anathema: seeing that God refuses not that gift to those who ask for it rightly, neither does He suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able. [To require anyone to remain celibate and unmarried as a condition of service in the church is a violation the literal intent and spirit of Matthew 19:12, 1 Corinthians 7:7, 1 Timothy 3:2, 1 Timothy 4:1-3, and Titus 1:6]

CANON X – If any one saith, that the marriage state is to be placed above the state of virginity, or of celibacy, and that it is not better and more blessed to remain in virginity, or in celibacy, than to be united in matrimony; let him be anathema. [This is adding to the Scriptures and contradicts Hebrews 13:4. Marriage, and not celibacy, is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ and the His Church.]

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[All cited from the twenty-fourth session of the Council of Trent, November 11, 1563, the doctrine on the sacrament of matrimony] Note from the author: The sacrament of matrimony is a Roman Catholic heresy that makes marriage a part of the works that accumulate to salvation.

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1650 Today there are numerous Catholics in many countries who have recourse to civil divorce and contract new civil unions. In fidelity to the words of Jesus Christ - "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery" The Church maintains that a new union cannot be recognized as valid, if the first marriage was. If the divorced are remarried civilly, they find themselves in a situation that objectively contravenes God's law.

2353 Fornication is carnal union between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman. It is gravely contrary to the dignity of persons and of human sexuality which is naturally ordered to the good of spouses and the generation and education of children. Moreover, it is a grave scandal when there is corruption of the young

2382 The Lord Jesus insisted on the original intention of the Creator who willed that marriage be indissoluble. He abrogates the accommodations that had slipped into the old Law. Between the baptized, "a ratified and consummated marriage cannot be dissolved by any human power or for any reason other than death."

2383 The separation of spouses while maintaining the marriage bond can be legitimate in certain cases provided for by canon law. If civil divorce remains the only possible way of ensuring certain legal rights, the care of the children, or the protection of inheritance, it can be tolerated and does not constitute a moral offense.

2384 Divorce is a grave offense against the natural law. It claims to break the contract, to which the spouses freely consented, to live with each other till death. Divorce does injury to the covenant of salvation, of which sacramental marriage is the sign. Contracting a new union, even if it is recognized by civil law, adds to the gravity of the rupture: the remarried spouse is then in a situation of public and permanent adultery:

If a husband, separated from his wife, approaches another woman, he is an adulterer because he makes that woman commit adultery, and the woman who lives with him is an adulteress, because she has drawn another's husband to herself.

[All cited from the 1993-1994 Roman Catholic Catechism (the numbers preceding the text are the so-called canon numbers)]