

THE GOSPEL OF MARK "one flesh"

'TESTED HIM'

*John the Baptist had been put to death by Herod Antipas for criticizing his marriage to Herodias, who had divorced her husband to marry him (6:17-20), which was across the Jordan. The Pharisees' testing Jesus was more than a desire to learn Jesus' theological position on the issue of Divorce and Remarriage than an attempt to ensnare him in a statement that would have angered Herod.

SHAMMAI VS. HILLEL

*In general, the House of Shammai's positions were stricter than those of the House of Hillel.

*They debated over . . .

***Admission to Torah Study** Shammai believed only worthy students should be admitted to study Torah. Hillel believed that Torah may be taught to anyone, in the expectation that they will repent and become worthy

***White lies.** Whether one should tell an ugly bride that she is beautiful. Shammai said it was wrong to lie, and Hillel said that all brides are beautiful on their wedding day.

***Hanukkah.** Shammai held that on the first night eight lights should be lit, and then they should decrease on each successive night, ending with one on the last night; while Hillel held that one should start with one light and increase the number on each night, ending with eight.

***Divorce.** Shammai held that a man may only divorce his wife for a serious transgression, but Hillel allowed divorce for even trivial offenses, such as burning a meal, wearing their hair in a bun or finding someone better.

CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE—DEUTERONOMY 24:3

1. It was a testimonial to the innocence of the one who was released.
2. It gave evidence of legal freedom to remarry.
3. It protected the woman's reputation. It was a certificate of innocence. The right to freedom then (because of innocence), the right to remarry, and the protection of a reputation were at stake.
4. The certificate of divorce was largely a way of protecting the woman. It meant that in Jewish society—unlike in the society governed by the Code of Hammurabi—a woman's first husband could not come back and re-claim her. Divorce's main purpose was to permit re-marriage so that a woman would not starve or be forced into prostitution.

Mark 10:1-12 (NIV)

⁽¹⁾ Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them. ⁽²⁾ Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" ⁽³⁾ "What did Moses command you?" he replied. ⁽⁴⁾ They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." ⁽⁵⁾ "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. ⁽⁶⁾ "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' ⁽⁷⁾ 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, ⁽⁸⁾ and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one. ⁽⁹⁾ Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." ⁽¹⁰⁾ When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. ⁽¹¹⁾ He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. ⁽¹²⁾ And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 (NIV)

⁽¹⁾ If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, ⁽²⁾ and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, ⁽³⁾ and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, ⁽⁴⁾ then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the Lord. Do not bring sin upon the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance.

GOD'S VIEW OF MARRIAGE

*Jesus used the scriptures to interpret the scriptures. Comparing Deuteronomy 24:1-4 with Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:24

*The three fold pattern in of Genesis 2:24, leaving parents, union with wife, and man and woman becoming one provides the essential basis for marriage and its relevance to divorce is that the imagery of a single 'flesh' could hardly be more clearly designed to express that which is permanent and indivisible. If lifts marriage from being a mere contract of mutual convenience to an something that was created and ordained by God.

*It is not the merely that 'one flesh' should not be separated it is that is can't. When a marriage occurs there is no longer two independent beings who may choose to go their won way, but a single indivisible unit.

*Jesus uses the word 'adultery' which is moichan, it occurs 27 times in the NT, always in the restricted sense of immoral sexual activity with a person married to someone else. The sin of 'adultery' results because of the remarriage not because of the divorce.

*The disciples were shocked by Jesus' standard in Matthew's account. Matthew 19:10

DOES GOD HATE DIVORCE?

*YES! And here's why. The main metaphor used to describe God's relationship to Israel is a marriage. Likewise, the main metaphor for idolatry is adultery. So, through the prophet Jeremiah God sees there choice to not to follow him as adultery. Jeremiah 3:8

*Many people know that in Malachi 2:16 God says, "I hate divorce." Why? God has been through it. He knows the humiliation of rejection and betrayal—from hard-hearted people.

*God hates divorce because God is a divorcee.

IS DIVORCE EVER RIGHT?

*Matthew 5:32, 19:9 and 1 Corinthians 7:12-15 explicitly allow for divorce and remarriage incases of sexual morality and desertion by an unbelieving spouse. What about other reasons? Physical abuse and sexual abuse of wife or kids? One should not expect 22 words of Mark to answer all hypothetical situations.

*There is not such thing as a 'good divorce' Every divorce is a witness to a failure of God's purpose in marriage. Perhaps in a dangerous and abusive marriage, divorce may be a lesser evil.

APPLICATION

*The intent of Jesus is not to shackle those who fail in marriage with debilitating guilt. The question is not whether God forgives those who fail in marriage. Jesus answered that question in Mark 3:8

*The question in our day of impermanent commitments and causal divorce is whether we as Christians will hear the unique call of Jesus to discipleship in marriage. In marriage will we seek relief in what is permitted, or commit ourselves to what is intended by God and commanded by Jesus? Will we fall away in trouble and difficulty or follow Jesus in the costly journey of discipleship, even in marriage?

Genesis 2:24 (NIV)

⁽²⁴⁾ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

Matthew 19:10 (NIV)

⁽¹⁰⁾ The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."

Jeremiah 3:8 (NIV)

⁽⁸⁾ I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery.

"The craziest thing about marriage is that one cannot get divorced. We just do not seem to make it out of intimate relationships. It is obviously possible to divide up property and to decide not to live together any more, but it is impossible to go back to being single. Marriage is like a stew that has reversible and irrevocable characteristics that the parts cannot be rid of. Divorce is leaving a part of the self behind like the rabbit who escapes the trap by gnawing one leg off." Whitaker "Counseling the Divorcing Marriage"

Mark 3:28 (NIV)

⁽²⁸⁾ I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them.