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## **IS DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE BIBLICAL?**

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For some time I have been hoping that someone would give a Bible study on this important subject. That hope has faded, as the Church has become more and more silent on the issue of Divorce and Remarriage. This is very true in relation to those who through the years have opposed divorce. Those who are in favor of divorce and remarriage have not remained silent. Their claim that the "innocent party" may remarry has had no strong opposition. In fact, it seems that a sigh of relief has come from conservatives as they claim Biblical proof has been established for what is being practiced among even the Holiness conservative branch of Christianity. Most of the cases of remarriage that are being accepted cannot claim the so-called exceptions of Matthew 5:31, 32 and 19:3-12.

No one wants controversy (at least most do not), but if a subject is being interpreted in such a manner as to appear to condone sin, and encourage the destruction of marriages and the home, it is time for a long, careful look at what the Bible says concerning divorce. The need for this study is heightened by a recent report in U. S. News and World Report, Feb. 28 (a later article in the U. S. News and World Report states that in 1976 one out of two marriages ended in divorce -- July 25, 1977, p.76). This report stated that in the period from 1970 to 1976, there was an increase of 102% in the number of couples living together without being married. In the same article, it is stated that one-third of all marriages are ending in divorce. The very same article states: "A few believe that the family, like other institutions, is as one psychoanalyst puts it, 'dedicated in an authoritarian way to non-realization of most human potentials.' Others simply see the traditional family as obsolete in a technological society, to be replaced by communal groups of adults and children." Just such things are the result of the breakdown of the marriage vows and the easy acceptance of "innocent parties" into the church. In fact, ALL divorces are now being accepted by many churches. Such disturbing factors force us to examine this issue carefully.

Whom do we take for an authority? The answer should be obvious: We must take the Bible as our authority, and when we have the very words of Jesus given to us in the inspired Bible, these words should be considered the last word in settling any question we may have concerning any issue of matter. Let us see what Jesus says about the institution of marriage:

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### Jesus Repudiates the Laws of Moses on the Matter of Marriage

Matt. 19:8 -- "He (Jesus) 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." The word "beginning" in this verse is exactly the same as in Gen. 1:1 and John 1:1. There is no doubt that the word refers to the beginning of things, and thus, to the beginning of marriage: i.e., that of Adam and Eve. Mark, in chapter 10, vs. 6-9, makes clear God's plan for marriage when he says, "But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; "And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

These two scriptures show emphatically that Jesus was not accepting the Law of Moses.

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### Jesus Repudiates the Schools of Shammai and Hillel

It should not be necessary for one to have to make this statement, since these schools were interpreters of the Law, and therefore do not go back to the beginning. While both schools were there at the time of these statements made by Jesus (probably), it does not follow that He chose between them. They were both wrong! Jesus therefore went back to the beginning, to the true Law with its proper meaning. It is amazing that people make much of grace, but want the Law of Moses rather than law through grace which Jesus lays down.

There is no need of proving that divorce under Moses meant dissolution of the marriage bond, since Jesus abrogates the Law of Moses on this subject altogether! It is noteworthy that often these same people accept changes made by Jesus in Matt. 5:21, 27, and 28. Note in vs. 21 and 22, "Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

"But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment ... "Now note vs. 27 and 28: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: (moicheuo)."

"But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery (from the same Greek word as in v. 27) with her already in his heart." You can see that Jesus has changed these, to go to the core of the trouble in both cases where He changed the Law of Moses. Is it no less possible that the core of the problem in divorce is unbridled lust, and that Jesus condemns? In fact, we have in vs. 27 and 28 the word moicheno being used for the general

idea of sexual immorality. This term "adultery" in English is generally used to speak of infidelity to the marriage vows. Here, it is regarded as infidelity to sexual purity, and therefore is the general term for sexual immorality as used just previous to vs. 31 and 32, where the term for fornication is used. The very fact that the two terms are used, "adultery" and "fornication" should tell us that they have separate meanings in the Book of Matthew, or He would simply proceed with the general meaning He has put into the word adultery in vs. 27 and 28. The fact of the matter is that He has a particular form of sexual immorality in mind: that of infidelity to engagement vows -- so that it was necessary to use two words to keep His meaning clear. Since He was talking to Jews, they knew immediately what He meant when He switched from general adultery and the Greek word moicheuo, to the word "fornication" in Matt. 5:32 (porneia from porneuo). As will be shown later, a couple were considered married when they were engaged, to the extent that a divorce had to be granted (for fornication) before permission to marry another was legal. More will be said about this later.

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### Jesus Established a General Law that Marriage Was Until Death Should Separate the Partners

In general, conservative people accept this statement -- they just want an exception! Here is the Law as given to Gentiles (Mark 10:11, 12), "And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another, committeth adultery (moicheuo) against her.

"And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery."

Again in Luke 16:18, "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery." Again in Rom. 7:2, "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."

What is the exception to no divorce claimed by some? Before we mention the exception, we must say that those who claim there is such, make Matthew the one who gives the general law and its exception, while Mark, Luke, and Romans state the general law without giving the exception to that law.

The exception to the general law is claimed from Matt. 5:32 and Matt. 19:9. In both cases, it is claimed that putting away a wife is never permitted "except for fornication."

It is asserted that porneia, from porneuo, is a general term for sexual impropriety, including unfaithfulness to the marriage vow, in that sex is indulged in with someone, or ones, instead of, or as well as, with the husband or wife. Many authorities are quoted to show this to be the case, such as Young's Analytical Concordance, The International Standard Encyclopedia, and Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words.

Answer: Let us examine porneia, to see if it always includes adultery. If it does not, then we must inquire about these two scriptures. The History of the Jews, as given in Matthew, does not bear out the fact that fornication is always any sexual impropriety, but impropriety after engagement. Also, in Bible Manners and Customs by G. M. Mackie, published by Fleming H. Revell Co., under an article on marriage, this statement is made: "The chief event in an Oriental life is marriage. This is usually planned by parents in early infancy of their children. The formal betrothal may take place some years before the marriage ... if sometime afterward the engagement is broken off, the young woman, if a Jewess, cannot be married to anyone else without receiving a paper of divorce from a Rabbi." What we have established from this quotation is that divorce was necessary from an engagement. We will connect this with the "exception" in a more firm way, later. It is sufficient for now to call your attention to the fact that Jesus is talking originally to Jews, who would understand His application better than we do today. Nevertheless, we must understand it, to make the proper application of His teaching, to us.

From Sacred Geography and Antiquities, by E. P. Barrows (1873), it is stated: "From the time of this betrothal, the parties were considered husband and wife, and infidelity was punished as adultery," though it really was fornication.

In The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, by Alfred Edersheim, on page 354, Vol. I we quote: "From the moment of betrothal both parties were regarded, and treated in law (as to inheritance, adultery, need of formal divorce) as if they had been actually married, except as regarded their living together."

That fornication carries this meaning of betrothal infidelity, is plainly evident from Matt. 5:32. The statement, "But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife" indicates, by the use of the word "wife," a legal ceremony had been performed. This was always true when Jews became engaged. The very next part of this verse confirms the fact that this was an engaged couple, from the use of the words "except for fornication"; then says, "causeth her to commit adultery." The standard word for marital infidelity or sexual unfaithfulness is "adultery." Jesus used these two words, not interchangeably, as do those who teach divorce and remarriage, but to emphasize the fact that divorce was permitted only to those engaged. The Jews would know that He was talking about divorce from engagement.

That this was the case is strengthened by the case of Mary the mother of Jesus. Joseph planned to divorce her, though she was only engaged to him (Matt. 1:18). Yet in verse 20, Mary is referred to as "thy wife." Since verse 18 tells that they had not "come together," adultery would not be the word used, but "fornication." That this is the word used for premarital sex is shown in I Cor. 7:1, 2, "... it is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication (sex before marriage), let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband."

Not all authorities make fornication just general sexual impropriety. Adam Clarke, in his comments on Matt. 5:32, states, "As fornication signifies no more than the unlawful connection of unmarried (*italics his*) persons, it cannot be used here with propriety ." He then makes the word mean "whoredom," since he agrees with the idea of divorce.

Had exegetes attempted to search the total sayings of the Book of Matthew, with its historical setting and the people to whom it was written, they would not have gone so far astray as to make fornication identical with adultery in Matt. 5:32.

In the clear-cut case of Mary and Joseph, though stated to be betrothed, she was called his wife, yet he planned to divorce her, which could have been only for fornication!

Perhaps Protestants were so anxious to keep marriage from being a sacrament, and thus avoid Catholicism, that they went to the other extreme and failed to see what Christ was teaching. He taught simply that which Joseph would have practiced (divorce from engagement), had not the Holy Spirit given him a revelation concerning Mary.

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### In Matthew, Fornication Does Not Mean Adultery

I have already shown that the case of Mary could not have been adultery, since they were not married. Now we proceed to show these two terms listed separately, elsewhere. Placed in between Matt. 5:32 and 19:9, we have Matt. 15:19, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications . . ." Now, if fornication were the general term for sexual impurity, there would be no need to list "adulteries"; but since the Holy Spirit placed both of these words here, we must be careful not to diminish one, nor add to one meaning more than the Holy Spirit intended. We have here, then, a clear distinction between the words; otherwise we have recorded in place of "adulteries" and "fornication" as a repetition, "sexual immorality, sexual immorality."

There are instances where the one word seems to carry the meaning of both; but only one word is then used. See Matt. 5:27, 28, where the word "adultery" seems to carry the meaning of "fornication," as well. Since every one who looks, to lust after a woman, has committed adultery, it must mean that single and married alike may fall into this sin. For the use of "fornication" for both meanings, see Jude, verse 7, where it again seems to mean that both single and married are meant. But these cases or exceptions for the meaning are not clear enough to be called exceptions. Since the laws of interpretation demand clear scriptures be used to clarify unclear ones, Jude 7 should not be used to make fornication mean adultery. Porneia is used in Matt. 21:31, 32, but has no reference to help clarify its meaning; so very probably meant women prostitutes, with no clear meaning as to marriage relationships. Had it been both married and unmarried prostitutes, it appears that He would have used the word for adultery as used in Matt. 5:27, 28, where "looking and lusting" was considered adultery. It would seem that He is referring only to single people who were harlots. This scripture certainly cannot be used to bolster the argument for divorce.

It is very clear that fornication does not mean adultery in Matthew. The distinction is clearly stated at least two times (one implicitly in 1:18 and the other explicitly in 15:19). This distinction is carried out in Mark as well.

Adultery as used in Matthew carries the idea of being unfaithful to one's wife, unless we assume that Jesus was generalizing when He stated that to look upon a woman to lust was adultery

and that unmarried men were included in this statement. But clearly adultery carries its usual meaning in 5:32 and 19:9.

Mark 7:21 again list these sins separately. This time, they come before the discussion of the problem of divorce and remarriage.

We have, then, three clear cases of fornication not being adultery. Two of these are found in the Book of Matthew where we would expect it to be, since the weighty question of divorce is discussed, and since it was written originally to Jews. This does not mean we can escape its application to us today! Interpretation of these two instances makes us to conclude that fornication is not the same as adultery in Matt. 5:32. This being the case, Matt. 1:18 gives us the answer that fornication after engagement may permit divorce. It is, in actuality, what was supposed about Mary: sexual immorality after engagement, but before the couple had come together in marriage.

This interpretation is further strengthened by the general law as recorded in Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; and Romans 7:2, 3, as follows:

Mark 10:1-12 -- "And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judaea by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again. And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? "And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife: And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. "And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter. "And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery."

Luke 16:18 -- "Whoso ever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery."

Romans 7:2-3 -- "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. 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."

That the disciples understood the finality of marriage is shown by their reaction in Matt. 19: 10b "It is good not to marry." Thus even in Matthew 19: 10b we see these men being staggered by the high tone of morality that Jesus insisted was the case of marriage. Lusting was adultery, and remarriage was adultery. The line is drawn with only unchastity before the final ceremony being a just cause for divorce from engagement!

One thing we must never forget is that Jesus abrogated the Law of Moses for a higher standard: The Law of God. He states that husband and wife become "one flesh," and further commands that "what God hath joined (aorist), let no man put asunder" (divorce). The force of "Let no man put asunder" is "Let no man ever put asunder!" Since it is a present imperative, it means if you have been doing it, stop it.

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### Misapplication of the Term

#### "One Flesh" as Found in First Corinthians 6:16

If one should study this whole passage (vs. 15-20), he would readily see that it is teaching moral purity; so much so that our bodies are members of Christ (v.15). Then in vs. 16 and 17, we are warned that to become enmeshed in sexual immorality is to become one with immorality, or sin; so that we are not one with Christ, but one with sin. Paul appeals to Christ's statement on marriage that the two become "one flesh," to show that marriage to Christ makes "one spirit" (v.17); while the opposite is true: joining with fornication (harlot) makes us one with her (v.16). We have here no concept of the marriage vow, as such, except marriage to Christ. The plain truth is that we are either married to Christ and faithful to Him, or we are married to sin with its divorcing us from Christ.

I Cor. 6:15-20 -- "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

There remains one other scripture that is brought as an exception to the law of no divorce and remarriage. This scripture is I Cor. 7:1-16. Much labor would have been saved if our brethren had gone back to chapter 6: 9b-11: "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

Once again, we have the clear distinction between fornication and adultery in v.9. He then proceeds to say that "some of you" were involved in each of these sins. If fornication included adultery, why the repetition?

We have produced four instances in which it is clear that fornication is a separate instance from adultery, and in three cases out of the four there can be no argument about them. Matt. 1:19 is a case, by inference. However, it was clear from Matt. 1:19 that divorce was permitted; and it is

clear from Matt. 5:32 and 19:9 that divorce is for this cause: i.e., unchastity after engagement. We would do well to examine any other scriptures dealing with divorce, in the light of these instances.

Matt. 15:19 -- "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."

Mark 7:21 -- "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders."

I Cor. 6:9,10 -- "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind ... shall inherit the kingdom of God"

We now see that Paul has clearly separated fornication and adultery in I Cor. 6:9b, and the rest of this chapter must be read with this interpretation in view. If we do this, we then have a proper basis for understanding chapter 7. It seems clear that in the first part of this chapter, he lays down rules for sexual relations between husband and wife. Intercourse is not to be denied either partner, except by agreement, for the purpose of prayer and fasting.

In verse 10, Paul states that married people should not take occasion to separate (or divorce, if you please), because they have no right to separate, for they are married; and the exception "for fornication" committed during engagement does not apply; therefore, they cannot divorce. The only recourse is reconciliation.

He further cuts the ground from under anyone who says, "My marriage was not of God, since my wife (or husband, as the case may be) is not a believer" -- or, by extension, we could say, "We were married while unbelievers, and one of us got saved: therefore, we are not bound to the marriage vows." Paul says that you are! Do not separate! The obligation is on the part of the believer to remain married.

But what if the unbelieving partner does divorce you? It is clearly stated, then, that the obligation of the marriage vows are no longer valid, and that the wife is no longer subject to or bound to obedience or to the sexual desires of her divorced husband. The divorced believer (either man or woman) is free from the vows of the marriage; but you cannot separate this from the next clause, and the next verse: "God hath called us to peace" (v. 15b). Then v.16 states, "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" By every law of interpretation, this verse must be associated with the previous verse; and, that being the case, we must conclude that the separation (or divorce, if you so translate the word) does leave them husband and wife, and the application is that they may save the divorced one; or as v. 11 says, effect a reconciliation.

It is not proper to bring in Matt. 5:32 and 19:9 into this discussion, since they are clearly cases of fornication after engagement, rather than adulteries. These two instances I Cor. 7:10, 11 and I Cor. 7:15, 16 however, have a clear relationship. The one in vs. 10 and 11 show that a divorce for whatever reason, after marriage, is not acceptable grounds for remarriage. There is no possibility of remarriage. It will not do to lay stress on the idea that this is for believers only. Such



may have been the case; but he immediately starts the argument that both believer and non-believer should remain married. He then makes provision that, should the non-believer divorce the believer, the believer need not be in slavery to perform the marriage vows, so long as the divorce lasts; but he is careful to state that the one sinned against must remember that "God hath called us to peace"; that peace may bring a restoration of the marriage vows which clearly were not dissolved, by the word *choridzo*, of verse 15; even as the same word did not dissolve the marriage in verse 11, since the woman is to remain unmarried. How specious it is to argue for an altogether different meaning for a word, when they are separated by only four verses, and when they are dealing with the same subject! If the woman of vs. 10 and 11 must remain unmarried, then there can be no case made for remarriage in the case suggested in v.15. The very next verse is still addressing them as husband and wife, and is holding forth the idea of reconciliation.

I Cor. 7:10,11 -- "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife."

I Cor. 7:15,16 -- "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. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?"

What this instance does teach is that Christians should not initiate divorce proceedings, nor consider themselves free, when they are divorced by a sinner.

It does appear that there can be no divorce of believers, for one would have to be a sinner or unbeliever, to begin these proceedings. I Cor. 7:15 cannot be used as another exception to the law of no divorce and remarriage. Verses 10 and 11 of this chapter leave persons not permitted to remarry if separated or divorced. And in v. 16 an unbeliever and a believer who have been divorced are called "husband and wife."

No appeal to other writers or "fathers" must be allowed to obscure the fact that the Bible is our authenticating authority; and no obscuring of the truth of the Bible must be tolerated, which attempts to take a word *porneia* and make it inclusive of all sexual sin, when there are clear distinctions to the contrary. No book may be divorced from the people to whom it is written, and the only exception for divorce is clearly set forth in a book (Matthew) written to the Jews, with the result that we must see what are their practices, before we make a judgmental case for divorce.

There is one more argument against divorce and remarriage that has value. It is that Christ likens his relationship to the Church to that of marriage. Do you think a person may divorce himself from the heavenly Bridegroom and make it to heaven? There is no other Bride except the Church and no Bridegroom except our Savior. Even so there can be no other husband than the one she married nor no wife except the one he married. May the Lord help us to see that destruction of marriage destroys the person, the home and the church. It is one of the devil's big guns. Remember we are married to Christ or we are out of His Church.

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## Summary

1. One must not become lost in the thicket of Jewish law and history, investigating what Jesus clearly does away with, when He cuts through the opinions of both Hillel and Shammai on divorce, to establish one clear law that was from the beginning. The amassing of authorities does not obscure what the Bible says in the very words of Jesus. The Law, simply stated, is: No divorce or remarriage.

2. The Old Testament is NOT the authority on divorce, since those were "permitted" laws, for the hardness of their hearts: the choice of the lesser of two evils, rather than the higher standards demanded by Jesus under grace.

3. The meaning of the word "divorce" is, in essence, "a straw man," if one realizes that it applies only to "engaged persons" in Matthew, and is not applied to all anywhere else in the Bible outside of Matthew. One exception is claimed, but not proven, in my opinion, since the very next verse still calls them "husband and wife" (I Cor. 7:14, 15). Even if it were proven to be a case for divorce, there can be few cases for this in our day, for we are not to be "unequally yoked together with unbelievers and this would keep us from ever marrying them.

4. Jesus does not place His sanction on divorce and remarriage at all. Rightly understood, the exceptions must refer to divorce from engagement. See the desire of Joseph to divorce his betrothed in Matt. 1:19, and the clear idea of fornication being a sin of unchastity before marriage, as found in Matt. 15:19, Mark 7:21, as well as I Cor. 7:2. Why force a general meaning on the word "fornication" in two cases in Matt. 5:32 and 19:9, when they are clearly separated in Matt. 15:19 and Mark 7:21? This appears all the more certain, when in Mark 10:1-12 and Luke 16:18 as well as Romans 7:2, 3 the general law is stated without reference to fornication.

5. The multitudes knew quite well what Jesus was referring to, since they were Jews, and knew the provision for divorce for immorality before marriage, but after engagement. Therefore, the meaning of the word "divorce" is not in question (see Matt. 1:18).

6. The question of fornication being used for all sexual immorality is not an issue. The real issue is whether fornication in Matthew is used in the general sense, since it, and it alone, contains the so-called exception. The plain fact is that in relation to marriage, fornication never means general sexual behavior.

It is a plain fact that Mary was engaged, did become "with child," that Joseph considered divorcing her, and was told by an angel not to fear, since this was not a case of infidelity, though it had all the appearance of fornication, for which a Jew might divorce his betrothed and marry again.

It is just as plain in Matt. 15:19 that fornication is a distinct sin before marriage, as the list of sins is given there. Adam Clarke admits as much in his comments on Matt. 5:32: "As fornication signifies no more than unlawful connection of unmarried persons." (Clarke's Commentary on Matthew, Vol. 5, Page 74 -- Abingdon Cokesbury Press). However, he does not catch the

significance of 15:19, and thus to satisfy himself, translates it "whoredom" in Matt. 5:32. One clear-cut case of definition of a word in a book should limit the meaning in that book. When we have another limited meaning of the word in the Synoptic Gospels (Mark 7:21), we have enough witness to establish our meaning; plus another in I Cor. 7: 1b, 2, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.")

7. That we must take Matt. 19 as the general law on marriage, simply because it has some twenty more words than Mark 10, as the so-called exception, could be challenged, since the account in Mark is the general law because it is addressed to a more general audience. That the exception should be included in the general rule has already been successfully challenged. It remains only to say that the Jews did not see the so-called exception as an escape from the general law of "no divorce," since they said, in Matt. 19:10, "His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry." They knew that "fornication" held its narrow meaning as used by the Jews.

8. Jesus shows that there is no cause for divorce after marriage. The so-called exception of Matt. 5:32 applies to the narrow sense of fornication. See Matt. 15:19, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies," and Mark 7:21, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders," as well as by inference from Matt. 1:19, "Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily," where divorce was contemplated; and I Cor. 7:1b, 2, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband," where fornication clearly refers to sex before marriage.

9. Mark and Luke are the general law.

10. Jesus said nothing about the death penalty for adultery because under grace the Law of Moses does not apply. Judgment after death and eternal death is now the terrible penalty for that, as well as all other sins.

11. All interpretations of I Cor. 7:15 that do not take in all the contextual material are faulty, perhaps obscured by previous teaching. Verse 16 retains the terms "husband and wife" for the separated couple (divorced), and suggests a possible re-marriage of the divorced couple. Therefore, v. 11 and v.16 are in agreement. Even if divorced, the whole tenor of this scripture does not permit remarriage!

12. It seems that all the authorities who seek to establish the right of the "innocent party" to remarriage have built their arguments around the wrong premise. The argument is not: Does it include it in Matthew 5 and 19? There is not a shred of evidence in Matthew to sustain this viewpoint. (In fact, we might well prove the opposite true from the case of the rich young ruler, if we make one assumption that he was not married; for he is told not to commit adultery. But such an assumption is unwarranted, since we find no clarification in the Synoptic Gospels.) On the other hand, we do find three cases which support fornication in the narrow sense of sexual immorality among the unmarried (Matt. 15:19, Mark 7:21, I Cor. 7:2) and inferred from Matt. 1:19.

It is my hope and prayer that this effort may serve to help those who are not now involved in the issue. Only God can give light; we only try to bring it into focus on some issues. Only God can untangle some of the cases that have occurred, but it is essential that ministers make clear to those unmarried, and to those who are married, that God does not approve divorce and remarriage.

In this cold age, many will excuse these people, perform marriage ceremonies for them, and thus partake in their guilt. May God help us to see that destruction of the home will also destroy the Church when the Church approves that destruction.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE END