

## Daily Bible Study

*“...let not man separate” Part - 3*

*Selected Scripture*

*March 20 – March 26, 2011*

**THE LORD’S DAY & MONDAY** –After two weeks studying Jesus’ words concerning marriage from **Mark 10:1-12** we are going to take this 3<sup>rd</sup> week, finish our text and then address some questions that naturally arise surrounding marriage, divorce, and re-marriage. As we have studied, you know it is my understanding of both **Mark 10** and the whole of Scripture that Jesus says marriage is a permanent God ordained institution which He has declared “...*let not man separate*” and that only death *separates* that union and frees a person for re-marriage. Sinful men do attempt to “*separate*” it and therefore many situations arise from disregarding God’s word and many questions need to be answered concerning what Scripture teaches about various scenarios that come to be concerning marriage, divorce, and re-marriage. I will not be able to cover entirely ALL the questions that people have in this study nor in the sermon to come this Lord’s Day but I will try to at least cover the basic texts that speak to some of these issues. Again I would emphasize these are emotionally charged issues; true Christians come down in differing places on them. I am responsible to teach the Scripture as I best understand it and these are my convictions from study and prayer over these texts and subjects. I by no means claim infallibility and am not against changing my “position” would The Holy Spirit convict me to do so. I would just point you to the Scripture and ask you to study and examine the Word of God with His Holy Spirit as your teacher and settle with Him where you stand on these issues. To set up our thinking again let’s look at our current text and then I will wrap up with some thoughts from it and then we will move to cover some other Scripture. Today read: **Mark 10:1–12**: “*Then He arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan. And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He taught them again. The Pharisees came and asked Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” testing Him. And He answered and said to them, “What did Moses command you?” They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her.” And Jesus answered and said to them, “Because of 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 reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter. So He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”*”

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

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Suggestion for Prayer: As I come to Your Word God, always help me be humble and “teachable”.

**TUESDAY – Mark 10:10–12:** *“In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter. So He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”* As to these last three verses, I mentioned at the close of last week’s study (after addressing the apparent shock of the disciples to Jesus teaching) that Jesus explains that the rights of husbands and wives are equal and both are responsible before God to live according to how He has set up marriage. There is different and distinct roles given to men and women in the marriage relationship such as God given headship to the man (**Ephesians 5:22-23**) yet also we see the equality of men and women before God as He has called us both *fellow heirs of this grace of life* (**1 Peter 3:7**). In this portion of our text we see unlike Matthew, writing with an obvious Jewish viewpoint, Mark addresses this matter toward a more Gentile audience. This is possibly why he speaks of *a woman divorcing her husband* which was unheard of among the Jews. We read Josephus on the matter: “... when Salome [sister of Herod the Great] happened to quarrel with Costobarus, she sent him a bill of divorce, and dissolved her marriage with him, though this was not according to the Jewish laws; for with us it is lawful for a husband to do so; but a wife, if she departs from her husband, cannot of herself be married to another, unless her former husband put her away. However, Salome chose not to follow the law of her country, but the law of her authority, and so renounced her wedlock.” (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 15.259) So divorce was exceptionally rare among Jews but was common among Gentiles and is common today. Jesus here explains that violations of the sacred marriage covenant, whether committed by the husband or wife, amount to in His words, *adultery*, a sin in the eyes of the creator of life and marriage, God Himself. In a summary of **Mark 10:1-12**, we find that Jesus refutes the rabbinical misinterpretations of the law, reaffirms the true meaning of God’s law, and gives a clear statement of the sacredness, inviolability and permanence of the marriage union. Jesus regards the “*separating*” of a marital union to be a serious matter; one he “*hates*” (**Malachi 2:16**) but as we move along we need to remember the Gospel and its sin cleansing power and forgiveness through Jesus perfect life under the law. Our merciful Lord Jesus told the woman caught in adultery what he tells all of us, “...*neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more*” (**John 8:10**).

*(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?*

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*Suggestion for Prayer: Father, thank You for the forgiveness of sins through Jesus. Help me to consider how serious life is concerning my behavior and obedience to Your Word.*

**WEDNESDAY** – The Jewish/Gentile differences concerning the process and custom of marriage and divorce that we discussed yesterday will be stressed again today as we look at what is called the “exception clause” in **Matthew 19:9**. Again I stress there is no way in this short format say all that could be said on this topic but I will do my best to be both succinct and clear; be patient please. This Lord’s Day we’ll elaborate on these issues and questions. **Matthew 19:9** reads, “*And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery*”. Those who

would argue against my understanding that marriage is a permanent, binding union that only death separates, and that re-marriage afterward is adultery will point to this text and in it see Jesus giving an “out” (for choice of better words) for marriage and a legitimate reason for re-marriage. There are two classic historical protestant “outs” for marriage and allowances for re-marriage; this is the first one (we will look at the second one (desertion) from **1 Corinthians 7** later). Many would say the “out” according to this verse is sexual immorality. Before we specifically break this text down I would say off the top that such a view (in my opinion) misses the point of what earthly marriage is a picture of. Earthly marriage is a picture of Jesus and His marriage to us His people according to **Ephesians 5** and there is not a one of us as His “bride” who has not been guilty of *sexual immorality* against Him; yet He remains faithful. Jesus does not divorce us and until He does earthly divorce violates that wonderful picture, is a dishonor, and is something that doesn’t follow our Lord’s example. Those who see this “exception clause” (committing *sexual immorality*) as legitimate God given allowance for divorce and freedom to remarry do so based on this verse. Most people assume that the sexual immorality here discussed is adultery against one’s spouse. The problem for my mind is that this verse would then seem to completely contradict **Mark 10:11-12**, and **Luke 16:18** which simply denounce and call remarriage after divorce *adultery*. Why the difference in Matthew, Mark and Luke here on such an important matter? The Jewish customs concerning marriage may play a part in the reason.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

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Suggestion for Prayer: Jesus, thank You for being faithful & never leaving or forsaking me.

**THURSDAY** – I mentioned the Jewish flavor of Matthew’s gospel may help give us answers in this matter. Let’s look. First, Matthew is the only gospel that records the trouble of soul that Joseph had concerning marriage to Mary, our Lord’s mother (**Matthew 1:18-19**). When Joseph was *betrothed* to Mary and he finds out that she is pregnant he was thinking of “putting her away secretly” (divorce- same Greek word from **Mark 10**). He was going to “divorce” her when they are merely *betrothed*. Remember the Jewish betrothal period was much more serious than our engagement process today and Matthew’s Jewish readers understood this. The Bible calls him a *just man* in these actions so what he was about to do would appear to be acceptable before God. What is of further interest is the fact that in **Matthew 19:9** the word used for sexual immorality is *porneia*, not the common word for adultery which is the Greek, *moicheia*. Very interesting is that Matthew uses the word for adultery (*moicheia*) right alongside the word for sexual immorality (*porneia*) in other places such as **Matthew 15:19**, “*For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” This says to me that Matthew sees a distinct difference in the two terms, what they mean and is therefore not speaking about adultery in **Matthew 19:9** but rather something else. The “something else”, I believe is the type of situation to which Joseph found himself in with Mary recorded earlier in his gospel record. It is also interesting that in **John 8:41** the word *porneia* is used where the Pharisees indirectly accuse Jesus of being born of sexual sin. I will be able to elaborate further Sunday but*

suffice to say, I think Matthew is recording Jesus speaking to this particular issue and situations like it here in **Matthew 19:9**. This view has been labeled the “Betrothal View” and it is my understanding of this verse that *except for sexual immorality* does not refer to adultery but to premarital sexual fornication which a man or a woman discovers in a betrothed partner. The following quote summarizes the point: “Therefore, as Matthew proceeded to construct the narrative of his gospel, he finds himself in chapter 5 and then later in chapter 19 needing to prohibit all remarriage after divorce (as taught by Jesus) and yet to allow for "divorces" like the one Joseph contemplated toward his betrothed whom he thought guilty of fornication (*porneia*). Therefore, Matthew includes the exception clause in particular to exonerate Joseph, but also in general to show that the kind of "divorce" that one might pursue during a betrothal on account of fornication is not included in Jesus' absolute prohibition” (John Piper). Finally, **Matthew 19:9** in The Jerusalem Bible (parenthetical insert is the Older JB) I think is helpful, “*Now I say this to you: anyone who divorces his wife -- I am not speaking of an illicit marriage (of fornication –in the Old Jerusalem Bible) -- and marries another, is guilty of adultery.*”

*(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?*

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*Suggestion for Prayer: Jesus, thanks for being a merciful, caring, patient, forgiving husband.*

**FRIDAY & SATURDAY** – We did not get as far as I would have liked this week but tomorrow Lord willing we will tackle some other questions that arise surrounding this topic. I give some of them to you here for your own study. Does the death of a spouse give the only Scriptural allowance for re-marriage? Read **Romans 7:1-3, 1 Corinthians 7:39**. If the answer to the previous question is yes, should a divorced and re-married person then leave their current spouse? I believe we find some answers in **Deuteronomy 24, John 4:16-18, John 8:10-11**. Finally, if an unbelieving spouse wants to leave (divorce) a believer, what is the believer to do? We are given the answer to this question from **1 Corinthians 7:12-16**. Lord willing, we will study it in some detail tomorrow.

*(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?*

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*Suggestion for Prayer: Father, thank You for the gift of Your Gospel. Thank You for punishing Jesus in my place & forgiving me all of my sin & rebellion even my sins pertaining to marriage.*