

Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage, Pt. 1 *“Different People, Different Situations”*

Matthew 5:32 ASV (Douay-Rheims; WEB; Darby; YLT)

But I say unto you, that every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery.

Matthew 5:32 NIV (NLT; ESV; NASB; NKJV)

But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Did you notice the difference in these translations? The difference is actually huge. The difference has caused countless people to think a certain way about divorce and remarriage, and promote a false doctrine on a large denominational scale.

This is due to (1) the mistranslation here (I believe in the NIV and the like translations), and (2) an ignorance and/or setting aside of the law of Moses.

So... we will begin a new series today about marriage, divorce, and remarriage. This is the next section in our study through the Sermon on the Mount, so I'm going to deal with it, and deal with it seriously and precisely. It's been about 10 years since I spoke on this topic, and my understanding has developed and increased in those 10 years, not just from studying, but from dealing first-hand with people and situations in marriage.

With Time Comes Wisdom

The longer you serve Yahweh as a Pastor, the more intelligent you become in the Spirit, and in how to handle situations that arise in accordance with Holy Scripture.

When I was younger, and hadn't been through much in life, I had a lot of zeal, but some of it was not according to knowledge. Some people grow up in the flesh, but never grow up in the Spirit. Some people never stop using the Bible like a hammer, trying to nail down every person they meet. That's not the way to treat the Bible, other people, or this particular subject. Thankfully, Yahweh had mercy on me and began to teach me the depths of the fruit of the Spirit. I'm glad He was patient with me.

A Difficulty of Teaching

Let me share with you some of the difficulty I face as a Pastor, teaching on this issue or issues in general.

Whenever I teach, I run the risk of any person in here thinking I am talking specifically about you. Now, if you listen to me teach, and something hits you and you feel conviction, you need to receive it. Every message I teach should deal with all of you in some way. That's what we are here for. My job is not to make you feel comfortable in where you are currently, or help you

remain stagnant. Part of my job is to comfort, but it's also to teach, exhort, and rebuke where needed. I believe this is best done by just teaching through the Bible. There's no need for me to come up with sermons on my own. There's several life-time's worth of sermons in this Bible if I just stay devoted to teaching the text.

My concern though is that I run the risk of people thinking that I crafted a sermon just for them. I want you to know that I never do that. I never see one of you and think, "Well I know what I am preaching on next week."

I've seen preachers see someone walk into the church dressed immodest, and their message all of a sudden changes to immodesty. I believe in modesty. I teach modesty. But if my message one Sabbath is on "Exodus 25 and the construction of the Tabernacle," and I see a brother or sister walk in dressed immodestly, I am not changing my message. Yahweh can touch anyone through any message taught from Scripture.

So I never look at all of you, and decide who I'm going to *preach at* next week. I think that would be a work of the flesh not a work of the Spirit. I just preach the word. If it hits you; if it convicts you - great. If you are a genuine believer, you will want to increase your level of understanding and holiness in the law of Yahweh.

The Different People that Will Hear Me

But think about this subject at hand: *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage*. When I teach on this subject, I have so many people listening who come from different walks in life. Not just in here, but listening by telephone, Facebook, later on the podcast or YouTube.

(1) I have happily married couples listening. Couples devoted to Yahweh and each other, and I want them to be encouraged and continue on in their marriage. I want them to know that Yahweh's design for marriage is to find a spouse, get married, and stay married, until death do you part. Love Yahweh, love each other, be faithful, serve one another. That's the message I want them to hear.

(2) But what about couples who aren't happily married? Is the message still the same? Well, yes, but my words will come across differently to these couples. These couples may know the Scriptures, but they need help. They don't need to just hear, "Be happy and stay with your spouse till death." They need to hear wise council. They need to hear how to do better at being a good husband and wife. They need to be shown love by a Pastor, and my job is to be aware that there are people like this who will listen.

(3) And then you have people involved in a bad marriage. Some people will hear this lesson and have a spouse who is cheating on them. Or maybe the wife is being physically or mentally abused constantly by her husband. Maybe the husband is trying to work things out with the wife, but she never comes home due to a boyfriend on the side. I have to speak to people in these situations too. They hear me different. "Am I required to stay with someone who has given up on

our marriage? Am I just to kneel and pray for the next 5 years while I am treated like dirt?" These are real questions people have asked me as a Pastor. I get tons of questions by text or email or messenger. People are hurting, and they are looking for a genuine man of Yahweh for help.

(4) Then there are divorced people. This is yet another category of people who will hear these sermons. There are single people, sitting in churches all across the world who are single because they've been divorced. Maybe the divorce wasn't their fault, maybe it was? Whatever the case may be, I have to handle these people differently. I have to go as a shepherd to a sheep like this, and talk to them in a certain way. I don't want them to feel like an outcast, or like there is no hope for them. I don't want someone who has been hurt by a sinner to turn around and be hurt by a saint.

(5) And the people who are divorced and remarried in the church... we have some here in this church. I have to speak to these people too. There are people who are happily married, in Yahweh, who have been divorced and remarried. I speak to these people too. I have to remember that they agree with me on the permanence and sacredness of marriage, and they wished they could have found the right spouse to begin with, but it didn't work out that way for them. They are serving Yahweh now, but it just didn't happen sooner. I have to remember not to make these people feel second-class or downtrodden.

(6) And then there are people who are married, but want out for the wrong reasons. They are just tired and have fallen out of love because they haven't put in the effort or stoked the fire of marriage. I don't want my sermons to sound like I'm giving them a way out of marriage, or a free-ticket to do what they want to do. I want sinners to be convicted when I preach, not feel emboldened to continue on in their hatred of Yahweh's holy ways. If a marriage can be mended, I believe Yahweh wants it mended, even if it's hard.

(7) And then, what about the single people in the church? I know a man who has faithfully served Yahweh for many years, is in his late 70's, and has never been married. I have to remember him too, or it could be a female in the church like this. When I preach on the beauty of marriage, I don't want to make them feel like less of a person because they never got married. You don't have to get married to serve the Creator. Some people are gifted with singleness. I preach to and love these people as well.

My point is that when I teach on a subject like this, I have all these people in mind. I worry that something I say will be taken wrongly by one or more of the groups I mentioned. I use my words carefully. I try very hard to come across properly. But it is not easy. It is not easy to become all things to all people as a Pastor. There's not a cheat sheet list of answers to questions I pull out when I talk to people. There's not a pattern answer for every question. You have to listen to people, and deal with each person or each couple uniquely.

The Sad State of the Church

There was a time when people went to church, heard the truth, wept over their sins, and did something about it. Today people go to church, hear a motivational talk, ignore their sins, and do nothing for the kingdom. Sermons like this, or a sermon series like this is few and far between. Many churches today just have motivational speeches for the most part. They are no different than going to a ball-game or watching a self-help talk show. Churches are designed to be like Disney World or a Movie. One brother not long ago told me that he went to a church where you got popcorn and coke before you sat down, and the sermon was centered around a current, popular movie. Christians don't know the Bible, not just because they don't study, but because the church they go to doesn't teach the Bible. Their Pastor commits spiritual malpractice.

Marriage is Under Attack

Marriage is under attack today, and has been under attack since the serpent slithered into the Garden of Eden. A good, righteous marriage, that produces good children, that then produces more righteous marriages and children, and so on. That is one of the best ways that Yahweh's Will continues to be accomplished on this earth. Men and women who are devoted together, and raise their family in under the banner of the law of Yahweh - Satan hates that, so he attacks it.

The enemy thinks that if he can destroy marriages and families, he can destroy Yahweh. Now, he will never destroy Yahweh, we know that. We've read about the coming kingdom of Yahweh, and we know that what Yahweh did through Yeshua bruised the head of the old serpent, but he still roams to and fro about the earth, waiting and ready to attack your service to the Almighty. He does it through unholy influence, certain television shows or movies, certain music, certain humanistic and atheistic ideas, and through worldly agendas.

This world does not love Yahweh. They say they "have love," but their love is a facade. The only love that exists is to fear Yahweh and keep his commandments. Anything that calls itself love that falls outside of the commandments of Yahweh is not true love. True love always falls under the umbrella of Yahweh's commands.

So the enemy wants to destroy holy marriages, but each day that us husbands and wives wake up, kiss each other, tell each other "I love you," and serve one another, we fight the enemy.

Every day that a man loves his wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her, he fights the enemy. Every day a woman submits to her husband and the church submits to Christ she fights the enemy.

Holy Influence through Marriage

When a husband and wife love each other, care for each other, walk through a store holding hands and smiling because they are in love with Yahweh and each other, the enemy weakens, and the ways of this unrighteous world weaken. Holy marriage is a big, giant flashlight in this dark world. It only takes a small light to be seen in a dark room. But righteous marriage is a huge light and tremendously good influence in this world.

Yahweh promotes marriage, and therefore I promote it as his messenger. I want the marriages in this assembly to be strong and influential to those outside these walls. I want them to see us not just living, but thriving. I want to be an example to others on how marriage and family should be. You will not be perfect, but with Yahweh's help you will be righteous. You will make mistakes, but that's part of living. When we make a mistake or commit a sin, we should be quick to ask forgiveness and repent, striving to do better. We are here to pick each other up, not knock each other down.

Closing

Please bare with me as I teach these sermons. Everything I say may not be specifically for you, but realize that someone in here - or someone out there - needs to hear it. Pray for me to be kind, yet firm; gentle, yet to the point.

Above all, pray that Yahweh's law on this subject is understood properly, marriage is promoted, and that some people feel the weight of years of bad doctrine lifted off their shoulders.

I love you all. I'll continue this next week.

Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage, pt. 2

"The Permanency of Marriage"

Last week we began with Matthew 5:31-32, the next section in the Sermon on the Mount that we've been going through, and I talked about the different people who will hear a sermon series like this, and be effected in different ways.

Different people have different life experiences. Each of the lessons this month are *for* you, but each lesson may not speak specifically *to* your situation. Listen to everything, and be patient, because it is likely that I will answer your questions in at least one of these sermons. Realize everyone needs spoken to, and we shouldn't rush to the end without laying a good foundation.

As I speak today I want you to realize this: whatever has happened in the past, you cannot change, but you can move forward at this time in service and obedience to Yahweh. Sin always carries with it consequences, even if repented of. But if sin is repented of, there is forgiveness, and a moving forward in righteousness.

Marriage Should be Forever

I am focusing on the MARRIAGE part today, so I'll begin with this: People ask me what I believe about divorce, and I always start with the response: "I do not believe in divorce." What I mean when I say that is this: Yahweh joined me and my wife together. I love her, and she loves me. What Yahweh has joined together, no one should separate. We have had our share of problems and struggles, but we have worked through those problems, because we love and serve Yahweh, and we love and serve each other. I believe this is Yahweh's perfect will.

Let's say a man and woman *you know* get married. They love the Creator, they love each other, they have children, they love their children, and they have a family that serves Yahweh together. Do you think it's Yahweh's perfect will for that to cease? I know that divorce sometimes happens, but it is always because a person fell out of love and service to Yahweh, their spouse, or sometimes even their children.

What we will learn in these lessons is that while the law of Yahweh does *allow* for divorce, this subject doesn't start with divorce; **it starts with marriage**. Yahweh **permits** divorce, but He **promotes** marriage. Divorce is not the perfect will of Yahweh, marriage permanence is.

The Duties Inside Marriage

Brother TJ and myself have taught lessons on the duties of husband and wife in marriage. If you are married, or are thinking about getting married, these are lessons you need to revisit time and time again, so that you stay refreshed on your role as either a husband or wife. I have a section on the website titled "Husbands," and I have a section on the site titled "Wives." The husbands need to listen to the husband section, and the wives need to listen to the wives section.

I know our human tendency is to listen to things that apply to other people, and then tell everyone else what they are doing wrong, and what they need to be doing. There is a time and place for correcting others, but you should spend more time and focus on correcting yourself. The one person you can control the most is yourself, and through changing yourself you will change those around you, by your example.

So this lesson today is not on the different roles in marriage. You can visit those sections on our website and listen to those sermons on husbands and wives.

The Permanency of Marriage

Today's lesson is on marriage, but it's more on the permanency of marriage. That marriage is a covenant or contract (between male and female) that is supposed to last until death. No one should enter into marriage thinking that it's no big deal if they ever want out. No, it is a big deal when people want out, because it severs a bond that was once love, and care, and service. Marriage should always be entered into seriously, with someone you plan on spending the rest of your life with.

Let's start with one of our opening texts in Matthew 19:1-6. The conversation between the Pharisees and Yeshua begins in verse 3:

19:3 And the Pharisees came to him tempting him, and saying, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?"

The Pharisees here, as in many cases, are not really interested in what Yeshua believes. They come to him with questions in order to trip him up, and find a reason to accuse or harm him.

They think, “If we can catch him veering from established tradition, we can stir up everyone against him and get rid of him.”

I do want you to notice here though that they ask him about whether or not something is lawful. Lawful is a reference to the law of Moses; the law that Almighty Yahweh gave through Moses. Whether or not something is lawful can only be determined by going to that law and seeing the Creator’s design and intention inside of that law.

Now instead of directly answering their question, Yeshua challenges the Pharisees, and even mocks them a little. Notice his first response:

19:4 But he answering said to them, “Have you not read that he who made them, from the beginning made them male and female?”

“Haven’t you read and studied the Torah?” That’s what Yeshua is asking here. “What’s wrong with you guys, and why are you asking me about this? You should have studied the Torah and know what it teaches.”

The first place Yeshua goes to is the beginning (*arche*), which is Genesis (Greek) or *Bereshith* (Hebrew), the first book of the law. There are other Scriptures in the Torah that deal with husbands, wives, and marriage, but Yeshua goes back to the beginning. He goes to the creation and the original plan of Yahweh.

Here in Matthew 19:4, he quotes from Genesis 1:27 (HCSB) where we read that “the Almighty created man in his own image; He created him in the image of the Almighty; He created them male and female.”

Notice the jump there: created man - created him - created them male and female. Genesis 1:27 begins with the words man and him, both singular, and then jumps to *them* (plural), male and female. Yeshua focuses on this male and female part with the Pharisees. He tells the Pharisees that they should know that when Yahweh made man, he made **them** male **and** female. Some people use this text in Genesis to teach against homosexual practice, and I believe that is a secondary use of the text, but it is not the primary meaning. While a male and female coming together is taught here (heterosexual practice), the main point is **harmony** and being **united**. Yahweh made man male and female. That was His design. He promotes joining and harmony and an inseparable bond in marriage.

We see this further by continuing to read Yeshua’s words to the Pharisees when he goes on to cite Genesis 2 in conjunction with Genesis 1. In Matthew 19:5-6 (Darby) Yeshua continues: “On account of this, a man shall leave father and mother, and shall be united to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So that they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore the Almighty has joined together, let no man separate.”

So Yeshua cites Genesis 1:27 first, and then he goes to Genesis 2:24, linking the two together.

In Genesis 1 we learn that the Almighty created them male and female. In Genesis 2 we see the picture of this become clearer because we read that Yahweh actually created the woman **from** the existing body of the man.

Genesis 2 tells us that Yahweh caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man He had created, and while in that sleep Yahweh took a rib, or ribs, or the side of the man and fashioned a woman out of that part.

Whatever part of the man you see that as being, the point is that the woman was made from the body of the man. Yahweh didn't get fresh dirt to form woman like he had done to form man back in Genesis 2:7. He made Adam from the dust of the ground, and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils. This time, Yahweh took the material He had made in Adam, and formed Eve from that existing material.

This is Yeshua's point: **the female that was made originally existed as part of the male.** *Male and female created He them.* When Adam was made, Eve already existed inside of him. They were together in that sense. So when Yahweh makes the actual person of Eve from Adam, and brings her to introduce her to Adam, the togetherness is supposed to continue.

Yeshua says to the Pharisees that there comes a time when a man leaves his father and mother (one marriage unit) and bonds, cleaves, or joins to his wife (a new marriage unit) and the two shall become one flesh, and he means they are supposed to stay one flesh.

In verse 6 he even says, "They are no longer two, but one flesh." Now when I look at my wife, and then I look at me, I count two people. If Adam and Eve stood in front of you, you would count 1... 2... as well. That's how they were able to have children. There were two of them. As Gomer Pyle says, "It takes two to tango."

Yet Yeshua says "they are no longer two." Why? Because he is teaching one in harmony, one in union, one in purpose, one in mind. A husband and wife are to be inseparable. They are to be **united** until death.

Headship AND Equality

In Genesis 2:23, when Yahweh brought the woman to the man, the man said these words: "This one at last is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called woman for she was taken out of man."

The reason you sisters are called a woman or female is because Eve came forth from Adam. Male, Fe-male. Man, Wo-man. It works in Hebrew as well. Man is the Hebrew word Iysh, while woman is the Hebrew word Iyshah. The point is that Eve came out of Adam, and was therefore *part* of Adam.

So in the first book of the Bible we learn that in marriage there is both headship and equality. Some people only want to focus on Adam's headship, while other people only want to focus on Eve's equality, but both are taught here.

Headship is taught in that Adam was created first. Firstborns are always special in Scripture. Yahweh made man from the dust of the ground before He made woman. Yahweh made men the way they are: protectors, providers, strong, defenders. All of that is embedded within the male gender because Yahweh put it there. This is why whenever we see a male trying to steer away from that role it looks strange.

But at the same time Genesis teaches equality in male and female, husband and wife. How? By Yahweh making Eve out of the material of Adam, and making her out of Adam's side. The side shows equality. The old Puritan Matthew Henry put it nicely when he said: "Not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved."

So both headship and equality are taught in Genesis. And recognize that this is pre-fall. What we see in Genesis 1-2 is not the result of the fall of humankind into sin, but the creative order of the Almighty.

I think it's best to view this as headship in role, and equality in person or value. Both the husband and wife are equal in being persons, in being humans, and one is not to be valued over the other. Yet, in a marriage, husband and wife have different roles. Yahweh assigns the man the role of the Messiah, while the woman's role is as the assembly of believers.

I think many churches have erred on either extreme. Some churches and pastors have a tendency to be misogynistic, thinking that women are second class and are just meant to stay in a kitchen or have babies. **What an awful view of women that is.** I hate to say this, but we owe much of the downgrading of women to people who call themselves Christians, and have used the Bible wrongly. In these type churches women are supposed to just keep quiet and never add anything of spiritual worth to a conversation. How sad that is.

The other extreme makes me sad as well. Some churches have over-reacted to the misogynistic view and adopted modern day feminism, where women play the role of the head, and it is thought that man is not needed. It is fine for a female to remain single for the purpose of devoting her life to the Almighty; Paul talks about that in First Corinthians. But it is pagan error for a female to think that she is fine being single because a male has nothing to add to her life. That view has crept into some churches.

The truth is in the middle of these extreme views. When a man and woman get married, under the banner of Yahweh, the man is the head of the home, as it pertains to his role, but the woman

is equal to the man as it pertains to their person and value. This is the teaching of the first book of the Bible.

Bone and Flesh

Now back to what Adam said about Eve. She is “bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.” What does that really mean? I want to present to you today, that it means a **family tie. A kinship bond**, like with a brother and sister. Think about that. Just like I have a kinship bond with my sister, because we both come from the same Mom and Dad, when a man and woman get married in holy matrimony, they are forming a new kinship bond that is just as strong as any blood family tie. Let me show you this is Scripture.

Remember that Adam said Eve was now bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. That’s not the only time that phrase is used in Genesis (29:13-14).

When Laban heard the news of Jacob, his sister’s son (nephew), he ran to meet Jacob, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. Jacob told Laban all these things. (14) **Laban said to him, ‘Surely you are my bone and my flesh.’** Jacob stayed with him for a month.

Family ties. Kinship bond. Here’s another one, from Judges 9:1-3.

Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem to his mother’s brothers (uncles), and spoke with them, and with all the family (relatives) of the house of his mother’s father (grandfather), saying (2) “Please speak in the ears of all the men of Shechem, ‘Is it better for you that all the sons of Jerubbaal, who are seventy persons, rule over you, or that one rule over you?’ **Remember also that I am your bone and your flesh.**” His mother’s brothers spoke of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words. Their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, **“He is our brother.”**

There are others like this in the Old Testament, but let’s look at one more example, this time from the New Testament book of Ephesians 5:28-31. This text will tie everything together.

Even so husbands also ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself. For no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, **even as the Lord also does the assembly; because we are members of his body, of his flesh and bones.** “For this cause a man will leave his father and mother, and will be joined to his wife. **The two will become one flesh.**” (WEB)

Paul is speaking to the husbands in the congregation, that they are to take care of their wives, just like they would take care of their own body. **The Lord himself gives us an example of this, in that he loves all of us as members of the body of Messiah, and he calls us here “his flesh and bones.”** And then notice how Genesis 2:24 is quoted right after this about a man and his

wife becoming one flesh. The point is that when a man takes a wife, they become family. They make a new familial bond that is just as close as any other familial bond.

When you marry a person, in the perfect will of Yahweh, they should always be your spouse. There is life after divorce, but we aren't talking about that part of Scripture right now. We are talking about what *should* take place not what *always* takes place. Yahweh wants male and female to get married, and to be together until one of them dies.

With marriage generally comes children, and the children contain the genetics of the male and female who pro-created them. You can never separate the mother and father out of a child. Divorce may take place between an adult man and woman, but those children will always have that father and mother living inside of them. This shows the bond that marriage produces.

I realize that sometimes marriages fall apart due to the hardness of our hearts, but if you're sitting here in this holy assembly, and you're married right now, don't you believe it's Yahweh's will for you to love and care for your spouse till death? Of course. When marriages fall apart, it is always due to some kind of sin. That's what I'll talk about next week.

Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage, pt. 3 *"Divorce in the Law of Moses"*

Intro

Last week I dealt with the seriousness and permanency of marriage. That marriage should not be entered into flippantly, thinking that "Well... if it doesn't work out, that's no problem, I'll just get a divorce." That's never the attitude we should have.

It seems like every time I walk through the grocery store checkout line I see those magazines displayed, and another "famous couple" in the world is getting a divorce. Husbands and wives are swapped out in the unbelieving world like they are candy or baseball cards to be traded back and forth. What a degrading view of marriage that is. What a degrading view of both male and female.

For those seeking to be married, Yahweh's perfect will is that you find a person of the opposite sex, who is of the same faith, and you commit to that person in holy matrimony, fulfilling whatever duty is yours, until death. You will go through hard times, but those hard times will build stronger and stronger bonds if you are committed to Yahweh and each other.

The Pharisees Question

In our opening text today, the Pharisees ask Yeshua about sending away a wife, because what they have on their mind is the divorce law in Deuteronomy 24. We will look at that text in today's lesson, but remember that Yeshua first responded to their question so wisely, by going back to Genesis. The Pharisees were focused on Deuteronomy 24 when they should have been focused on Genesis 1 and 2.

That doesn't mean Deuteronomy 24 is irrelevant. It is a law of Yahweh. Genesis 1-2 is Yahweh's perfect, practical will for marriage. Deuteronomy 24 is an allowance inside of the law, due to the sinfulness of the heart of man.

Hard Hearts Produce Divorce

How do I know this? Look at Matthew 19:7-8 again (this is their response to Yeshua citing Genesis as being the ideal model of marriage).

They [the Pharisees] say to him [Yeshua], "Why then did Moses command to give a letter of divorce and to send her away?" He says to them, "Moses, in view of your hardheartedness, allowed you to send away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so.

From the beginning - from Genesis - it was not so. Male and female, Adam and Eve, were created to live in harmony and unity together. Moses allowed divorce later, because our hard hearts. That's the reason for divorce.

This is why divorce happens. Someone got outside of the will of Yahweh as a husband or wife. A man stopped loving his wife. A woman stopped submitting to her husband. Someone that was once so excited to get married to a person, that was all smiles and happy tears on the wedding day, that person slowly turned hard-hearted towards their spouse, and divorce took place.

A hard-heart refers to a sinful heart. In Ezekiel 36 and Romans 2 we read about a heart of stone that is unable to obey the Father's instructions. If divorce is allowed due to hardness of heart, that means divorce is allowed due to the sinfulness of human beings.

Allowed or Commanded?

While divorce stems from a sinful heart, it is nonetheless allowed, and even commanded, in order to protect an innocent party. Some may say, "Well the Pharisees said Moses commanded it, but Yeshua just said Moses allowed it." Don't read too much into that, because Mark's gospel records it just the opposite. Look at Matthew and Mark side-by-side.

They [the Pharisees] say to him [Yeshua], "Why then did Moses command to give a letter of divorce and to send her away?" He says to them, "Moses, in view of your hardheartedness, allowed you to send away your wives; but from the beginning it was not thus. (Matthew 19:7-8, Darby)

And the Pharisees coming to him asked him, Is it lawful for a man to send away his wife (tempting him). But he answering said to them, "What did Moses command you?" And they said, "Moses allowed to write a bill of divorce, and to send her away. And [Yeshua] answering said to them, "In view of your hard-heartedness he wrote this commandment for you." (Mark 10:2-5, Darby)

In Mark, Yeshua is the one calling what Moses said a commandment, while the Pharisees are saying Moses allowed this. So I don't think it's good exegesis to say that the Pharisees believed Moses commanded it, but Yeshua didn't. We see this by comparing these two gospel accounts. Always read both horizontally and vertically in the gospels. (*Also note the law of Moses is Yahweh's law through Moses' agency. It is not a law separate from Yahweh's. See Ex. 24:12; 2 Kings 14:6; John 7:19.*)

The Husband's Hard Heart

Deuteronomy 24 and Matthew 19 focuses on a hard-hearted husband. This is a key point. In Matthew 19, *men* are asking Yeshua the question, and Yeshua speaks to the way some *men* were treating their wives. "Moses, in view of your hard heartedness, allowed you to send away your wives." That's a statement towards the male gender. So sinful, unbelieving, hard hearted men are in view in the command, and in the discussion in Matthew 19. The focus is on the husband's hard heart, not the wife's.

So let's look at the law in Deuteronomy 24, because this is the law that gets brought up in both the Sermon on the Mount, and in the discussion in Matthew 19 between the Pharisees and Yeshua.

Deuteronomy 24

When a man takes a wife and marries her, then it shall be, if she finds no favor in his eyes, because he has found some unseemly thing in her, that he shall write her a certificate of divorce, and put it in her hand, and send her out of his house. When she has departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. (Deuteronomy 24:1-2, WEB; there's more in 2-4, but 1 for now)

Remember back to Matthew 5:31 where Yeshua says, "It has been said, Whoever shall send away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement." That statement (by the scribes and Pharisees) comes from this law in Deuteronomy 24. The same goes for Matthew 19:3 where the Pharisees ask Yeshua, "Is it lawful for a man to send away his wife for every cause?" The backdrop is again Deuteronomy 24. They are asking about Yeshua's view of this law.

What we don't see from just reading these texts is the debate that existed in Yeshua's day between two primary schools of thought. We don't see it explicitly, but it's there implicitly in Matthew 19:3 (due to the question about "every cause"), and because from historical study we can learn the cultural context.

Two Schools of Thought

The two schools of thought were the House of Shammai and the House of Hillel, named after two prominent Rabbis of the late BC, early AD era. Jewish people living then generally sided with either of these two Rabbi's on different issues, and the sides continued to exist even after the Rabbis had died. It's a mistake to assume that all Jews agreed on every detail in the Torah. They had discussions, debates, and disagreements on interpretation just as we do today.

Understanding these two schools of thought helps us in understanding the question posed by the Pharisees in Matthew 19, and in turn helps us dig more into Deuteronomy 24.

The House of Shammai held to what was known as a stricter view of Deuteronomy 24, while the House of Hillel held to what was called the looser view. Both houses believed a man could divorce his wife, and that she could then remarry, but they disagreed on what the no favor and unseemly thing was. It is interesting to note that although Shammai held to the stricter view, he was known for being stern, quick-tempered, and impatient. Hillel was instead known for being kind, gentle, and being concerned with humanity.

Rabbi Shammai insisted that something unseemly or indecent (Deuteronomy 24:1) referred to unchastity or marital unfaithfulness; some kind of sexual immorality. Rabbi Hillel however believed that a man was allowed to divorce his wife for anything he found to be displeasing in her. A man's wife could be an awful cook, and Rabbi Hillel said that could be grounds for divorce. Or a man could fall out of love with a woman, and Hillel said that was lawful grounds for divorce.

Who is Correct?

At first we might think that the House of Shammai has the correct understanding. Surely a man shouldn't divorce his wife for bad cooking should he? Well, no, I agree that's not a righteous reason, but I want you to think deeper about this with me.

For starters, if a husband during the time of Moses found out that his wife had committed sexual immorality, and it could be proven, what was the penalty? Divorce? No. The penalty was death, according to Leviticus 20:10. What if he was just suspicious of his wife, but can't prove she has been unfaithful? Numbers 5 teaches us about a law of jealousy. There is a procedure that would be done at the Tabernacle, in front of the Priest, whereby the woman drinks water mixed with the dust of the Tabernacle floor. If she is guilty, it is said that her belly will swell and her thigh will shrivel up, meaning she will become barren.

The point here is that in cases of unchastity, a man's wife was not divorced, but punished, either by death or by being cursed. But Deuteronomy 24 speaks of a woman who is divorced and then goes on to become another man's wife. That doesn't sound to me like she'd done anything wrong. Her allowance to carry on with life, and marry another man, speaks volumes as to who is assumed to be at fault within the confines of this law: the husband.

The Unseemly Thing

Now in the translation we read moments ago, it says that the husband found no favor with his wife, because he found an "unseemly thing" (WEB) in her. KJV says "uncleanness." NIV says "something indecent." NLT says "he found something wrong with her." CEV says "something disgraceful." NET says "something offensive." So many different translations, but none of them sound like they believe the matter to be anything heavy, like sexual immorality.

Those who believe this unseemly thing is unchastity bring up the Hebrew word *erwah* used here. *Erwah* is often translated as nakedness in the Older Testament. It's used throughout Leviticus 18 where we read of commands against uncovering the nakedness (*erwah*) of close relatives. So there it definitely carries with it the idea of sexual immorality.

However, that is not the only way *erwah* is used in the *Tanak*. For example, in Genesis 42 it is used of the famine in the land of Egypt, where Joseph tells accuses his brothers of being spies to spy out the "nakedness of the land." The HCSB says "the weakness of the land." It's a reference to the land being barren or in famine.

In Exodus 20 and 28 the word *erwah* is used of the nakedness of the Priest being covered, with no reference to sexual immorality. It's just speaking of his personal nakedness needing to be appropriately covered while ministering before Yahweh.

The most significant use of this word though (I think) is right here in Deuteronomy, just a few verses before our text. It's found in Deuteronomy 23:12-14, where Yahweh is commanding against having something unclean or improper in the camp while out at battle. Yahweh says in that text that if a person needs to use the restroom while camping, make sure to have a shovel with you so you can dig a hole and cover up your excrement. Yahweh says He walks through the camp in order to protect and deliver Israel, and He doesn't want to see anything improper (HCSB) or any unclean thing (KJV) among you.

What's important about this use of *erwah* is that the word isn't just by itself, but it's a phrase. The phrase is "*erwah dabar*," in Deuteronomy 23:14, the exact same phrase used in Deuteronomy 24:1. This phrase can be translated "nakedness of word" or "unclean thing" or "something indecent" or "anything disgraceful." The point is that the word or phrase doesn't have to be dealing with sexual immorality, but just something offensive.

The school of Hillel went with this understanding. The husband in Deuteronomy 24 found something in his wife he deemed to be disgraceful, so he divorced her. Hillel ruled that this was allowed, so that the woman could go and become another man's wife.

A Law Safe-Guarding Women

Remember what Yeshua said in Matthew 19 to the MEN. "Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so." Yeshua is telling us that the law on divorce is due to **hard-hearted MEN**. He doesn't say anything about the woman being at fault here.

What I'm suggesting is that Deuteronomy 24 is a safe-guard put in place by Yahweh to protect innocent women who were married to men who didn't want to love them like they were supposed to. In other words, the House of Hillel was right in their interpretation of divorce for anything a man found displeasing. This did not mean the men who divorced their wives like this

were acting righteously; else Yeshua wouldn't have mentioned a hard-heart. It just meant that Yahweh knew that due to the sinfulness of men there must be a safe-guard for innocent women.

This makes much more sense than thinking that Deuteronomy 24 allows a man to divorce his wife for sexual immorality. That wouldn't be a hard-hearted man at all. Such a man would be acting righteously, and his wife would be put to death at that time, so long as two or more witnesses saw her commit the crime. The man she committed adultery with would be put to death as well. No divorce necessary. No remarrying allowed. That's a far cry from Deuteronomy 24:1's allowance.

You have to remember, in the cultural context of Torah-abiding Israel, no man would want to marry a woman who had been suspected of adultery in her first marriage. We aren't talking about the modern, western world here where people just swap out women every few years or have open marriages. A Hebrew man would be afraid such a woman would commit adultery against him if he married her after her first husband. In the case of jealousy, where the bitter water made her barren, even if divorced, it wouldn't be because of the husband's hard-heart, she would be cursed by Yahweh, and would remain a curse in the community, even if unable to be put to death due to lack of eye-witnesses.

Someone may ask "What about forgiveness?" Of course forgiveness is there IF a sinner repents. Repentance would be shown by on-going fruit in a person's life. People can change with the help of Yahweh, but we aren't obligated to be someone's "patsy" if they refuse to change. A person can choose to stay in a bad marriage, and praise Yahweh sometimes people change and things work out, but a person is not required to stay in a marriage where one party is unrepentantly promiscuous or abusive.

Deuteronomy 24 must align with the reason Yeshua said it was put in place: the hardness of the male heart. Hard-hearted men were commanded to give their wives a bill of divorcement and send her away so she could go find a husband who would cherish her.

Now... I think Deuteronomy 24:3-4 corroborates this view:

The Second Husband & Josephus

If the latter husband hates her (*This is the second husband, and it is just said that he hates her. Nothing is said about the wife doing anything unlawful, only that the husband is hateful and thus hard-hearted, as Yeshua pointed out in Matthew 19*), and write her a certificate of divorce, and puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, who took her to be his wife; her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before Yahweh. You shall not cause the land to sin, which Yahweh your [Mighty One] gives you for an inheritance. (Deuteronomy 24:3-4, WEB)

I think Deuteronomy 24:3 “if the latter husband hates her” is commentary on Deuteronomy 24:1 “if she find no favor in his eyes because he found something unseemly.”

The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus comments on this law, and basically says the same thing:

He that desires to be divorced from his wife for any cause whatever (and many such causes happen among men), let him in writing give assurance that he will never use her as his wife anymore; for by this means she may be at liberty to marry another husband, although before this bill of divorce be given, she is not to be permitted so to do; but if she be misused by him also, or if, when he is dead, her first husband would marry her again, it shall not be lawful for her to return to him. (Antiquities 4.8.253)

Take special note of the phrase “but if she be misused by him also.” That’s a reference to the second husband this woman has married, after being divorced from her first husband. The point is that the woman here is being mistreated by a hard-hearted man. The law of divorce allows her to be legally unbound to this mean husband, and go and find a husband who will love and cherish her as he should.

The point again is the protection of the woman. Yahweh allowed divorce for any minor reason of displeasure in the man’s eyes, not because it was a righteous act on the man’s part, but because Yahweh was protecting women. He wanted a woman to be able to be married to *and* loved, not just be married to.

The only prohibition here in the law is that the woman can’t go back to a husband who has divorced her, if she gets married to another man. Nothing prohibits her from even a third marriage here, in the case that the first two husbands she had were hateful hard-hearted men. What we have here is a woman who gets married, is in love with her husband, but her husband falls out of love with her. The husband is unrighteous for falling out of love, but Yahweh allows for divorce - not to okay the husband’s actions, but to give life to the woman.

Are Women Hard-Hearted?

As I explain this, some men might say, “Well don’t you think that women can be hard-hearted too?” Of course I think that, and we covered that in the case of a woman committing sexual immorality. She was to be put to death or cursed, (along with the man who committed the act with her). But this law in Deuteronomy 24 is not about a hard-hearted woman treating a man badly, and **it is likely because (and I know this doesn’t go over well in our culture) Yahweh allowed the men to have more than one wife.** There is nothing in the law of Yahweh prohibiting a man from having two or more wives, taking care of and providing for those wives, loving those wives, and having children with those wives (see Genesis 25:1-6; 29-30; Exodus 21:10; Deuteronomy 21:15-17; Judges 8:30; 2 Samuel 12:7-8; 2 Chronicles 24:1-3).

Seeing that this was the case, the law in Deuteronomy 24 is not put in place to allow the husband to remarry. He was allowed by Yahweh to marry another woman to begin with. Yahweh was protecting the woman and allowing her to be divorced so that she could lawfully remarry.

I think scholars miss all of this due to a modern, western mindset. They think that the law of divorce has to have a strict, moral reason behind it. Think about it. In our day and culture, if a woman commits adultery on her husband, what happens to the woman, or the man she committed adultery with? Nothing. It's become quite commonplace. They might be looked down upon for a little while if they claimed to be believers, but if they aren't believers, and this happens out in the world, it goes unchecked. They had the affair and they move on. It was much different in ancient, Hebrew culture, and we must interpret the Scriptures in light of the culture of that time, not of our time.

Concluding Remarks

Some Pastors and Christians will hear a message like this and think, "But people will abuse this allowance!" Yes, people will abuse the law's allowance for divorce. That's the hard-heart of people in general. But the truth of the law has to be taught, and as I taught last week, before going to any of this, Yahweh's perfect plan for male and female is unity, until death do they part. Divorce was not so from the beginning, but it was put in place by the kindness of Yahweh, in order to protect an innocent woman in a marriage from living a total life of misery. This shows that the heart of Yahweh is that His daughters enjoy a good marriage.

Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage, pt. 4 *"Answering Objections to Divorce"*

Intro

Last week I talked about the concept of divorce in the Law of Moses; the Law that Yahweh gave through the agency of His prophet Moses. We saw that Yahweh instituted a divorce law in cases where a wife found no favor in her husband's eyes, because of something he found disgraceful (CEV 24:1), or because he began to dislike her (NIV 24:3).

Yeshua told the Pharisees in Matthew 19 that Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts (the hearts of husbands)... Moses allowed this, or (according to Mark 10) gave you this commandment. This lets us know that the divorce law was given to protect innocent women who found themselves in a marriage where the man did not love them anymore.

This is not to say that women can't have hard hearts too. Hardness of the heart is a general concept in Scripture, whereby humans fight against the law of Yahweh due to our own sinfulness.

But, the law was given to protect innocent women. Moses commanded the men who refused to love and care for their wives, to give her a certificate of divorce, so that she could go be another man's wife. Men who divorced their wives in this way weren't acting righteously as a husband,

because a husband is required by Torah to love and care for his wife, yet sometimes that just doesn't happen, and Yahweh put a remedy in His law for that, called the law of the bill of divorcement.

In the case of Deuteronomy 24, the husband was at fault. In other cases, the wife could be at fault. I've known people who loved their spouse, even when they were living in sin, and stayed with them, and tried to work things out. Praise Yahweh, sometimes mercy leads to repentance and restoration, but I would be naive to think that it always did. Sometimes sin in a marriage ends up in divorce, and while it is tragic, it is something Yahweh allows within the confines of his law.

But some people object to this. They believe there is no Scriptural allowance for divorce, and others think that only sexual immorality gives one an allowance to divorce a spouse. I disagree based upon the law of Yahweh through Moses. I believe that law stands firm, and nothing can change that law. But how do I answer people who object to my view on divorce and remarriage?

Objection 1: Marriage is a Life-long Vow

Some object by saying that marriage is a vow: a vow that one party makes to honor and cherish, to have and to hold, for better or worse, in sickness and health, as long as you shall live. **I do believe that is how marriage should be - for life** - but the reality is that marriages do not always turn out that way.

The problem we have here though is this: we view marriage as a vow, because of our modern culture. Anciently... Hebraically... marriage was seen as a covenant or a contract between two parties. Covenants and contracts *should not* be broken, but sometimes one party breaks their end of the covenant, and when that happens the other party is not obligated to continue in relationship with the first party.

A good friend of mine, Pastor John Carroll (a Pentecostal Preacher) helped me out on this point of understanding. He wrote a book titled "Divorce and Remarriage," in which he challenged a long-standing view in many of the churches he grew up in, and even preached in as an Evangelist.

That takes a lot of courage, and most importantly it takes a desire for the truth of Yahweh's Word to do something like that. I appreciate his dedication to Scripture, and I tell him that he's my favorite Pentecostal. :)

In John's book he has a section where he answers objections to his view of divorce and remarriage. John takes the same view I do on the subject. He believes marriage *should be* one time, and for life. He believes marriage is sacred. He believes marriage should never be entered into lightly. But he believes the other parts of Scripture too. He realizes that people sometimes have hard hearts, and he recognizes the portions of Scripture that allow for divorce.

In the “answering objections” section of his book, he talks about the common, modern Christian concept of marriage as a vow. He begins that section with this sentence: “*Marriage is never called a vow in Scripture; it is a covenant (Malachi 2:14).*” His point here is that a Scriptural marriage is a covenantal contract between two parties. The contract should not be broken, but the contract can be broken. Once the contract is broken by one party, the innocent party has the choice whether or not to stay and work out the problem, or leave, since the other party broke the terms of the covenant.

It is sad that a covenant as serious as marriage ever suffers that much damage, but we must remember that marriage always occurs between two sinful human beings. Even if the two people are saints, we all still struggle with sin.

Sometimes our struggles aren’t too big, and we overcome them through trial and error, and a dedication to do better when we learn better. With any marriage, there must be a lot of love and forgiveness. In marriage we learn how to love an imperfect person, in the same way Yahweh loves us as imperfect people.

Sometimes though the struggle is big, or unrepentant. Sometimes a person that once was in love falls out of love. Should that happen? No. Does it happen? Yes. When one person decides they are through with keeping their end of the covenantal contract, what does the other person do? They can try to keep the marriage together (that is noble and spiritual), but I do not believe they are obligated to keep the marriage together with someone who no longer wants to love them. The covenantal contract was broken.

Some people think nothing can break the contract of marriage. In a perfect world, that would be nice. It would also be nice if nobody ever got sick. It would be nice if there was no death. It would be nice if we didn’t have to have a justice system to punish criminals. But we have all of this, because we do not live in a perfect world. We live in a fallen world.

So Yahweh gives us a law; teachings and instructions to go by in life. Some practices He outright condemns. Other practices might not be the best for us, but because of situations that arise in a fallen world, they are allowed to protect people.

Objection 2: Divorce Was Not So from the Beginning

Someone might remark here, “But divorce was not so from the beginning.” And yes, that is true. Yeshua is the one that actually stated such in Matthew 19. He said that because of the hardness of the husband’s heart that Moses commanded a husband to send away his wife with a bill of divorcement, but from the beginning (from Genesis) it was not so. Male and female (Adam and Eve) were created to live in togetherness, in harmony, in unity. Divorce was never something that should take place.

But those other things I mentioned (moments ago) were not so from the beginning either. Sickness, death, punishment for crime, etc. Just because something was not so from the beginning, in the Garden of Eden, doesn't mean there is no room for them now in a fallen world.

Think about this. At the time the law in Deuteronomy 24 was given, couldn't someone have balked and said, "But Moses, this was not so from the beginning!" Deuteronomy took place a long time after Genesis 1 and 2, so someone could have objected to the law given in Deuteronomy at the time Moses gave the precept to the people of Israel, but their objection would be unfounded, because Yahweh was giving a law meant to govern people in a fallen world, not in a perfect world.

Divorce was not so from the beginning, and should never be one's first resort. We should be pro-marriage, but at the same time permit divorce when something goes sour and someone needs help.

Objection 3: Don't Separate What God has Joined

Others object by quoting Matthew 19: "What God has joined together, let not man separate." Yes, that is what Yeshua said, and I believe that is a commandment. When a man and woman join together in accordance with the law of Yahweh - in love and holy matrimony - neither the man or woman should seek to ever separate that joining. They are forming a new family unit. The woman is becoming the bone and flesh of the man.

But "let not man separate" doesn't mean "man does not have the ability to separate." Separation of marriage sometimes occurs when one person or both persons are bent on sin, and want out of the marriage they once covenanted in. "Let not man separate" should be seen as a commandment for the person being Scripturally married. But it should not be seen as an impossibility of divorce.

What if the husband stops providing for the wife? What if he quits working, is rarely home, spends what money he has on himself, and is never intimate with his wife? Exodus 21:10 teaches that if a husband doesn't provide his wife with food, clothing, housing, and intimacy, she is free to go. A good woman is not required to stay with a man like that.

What if the wife stops taking care of the husband? The husband works all day to provide, but gets home and his wife is not to be found; she stops using the husband's provisions for the betterment of the household. Or what if she refuses intimacy with him? A good man is not required to stay with a woman like that.

I hate that these things happen. I would love it if all marriages were for life. But that's just not how it works out all the time.

Yeshua didn't say, "What God has joined together, no person CAN separate." Marriage is able to be destroyed; it should not be destroyed, but sinful human beings can destroy it.

Objection 4: Yeshua Changed the Law of Moses

Another view I hear from Christians who are against any and all divorce is that Yeshua overturned the law of Moses in Deuteronomy 24. They say “Yes we know the law allowed for divorce, but Yeshua made a new, stricter law in Matthew 5.” This is probably the worst of all the objections, because it pits prophet Yeshua against prophet Moshe.

These two prophets are not at battle with each other. They are on the same team. Bad theology and shallow Bible study has led people to think that Yeshua taught something different than Moses.

I began this series in Matthew 5:31-32, in the Sermon on the Mount. I’ll be going back to that text in my next lesson in order to discover the original intent of Yeshua’s words, but hopefully anyone who hears this lesson today will either remember, or go back and listen to the lessons I taught on through Matthew 5:17-20. Matthew 5:17-20 is the backdrop of the rest of the 5th chapter of Matthew. It’s where Yeshua says, “Do not think I came to destroy the law or the prophets.” If you say that Yeshua overturned Deuteronomy 24, you are saying that he came to destroy the law in Deuteronomy 24.

Many people clap back with: “he didn’t destroy the law, but he fulfilled it.” I get so weary of listening to people talk about the word fulfill when they don’t know what it means. If someone thinks Yeshua fulfilled the law and thereby brought it to an end... that’s destroying the law, the exact thing he said he didn’t come to do.

In Matthew 5 Yeshua is not contrasting his new teaching with Moses’ old teaching. He is contrasting **his** interpretation of the law of Moses with **the Pharisees** interpretation of the law of Moses. “You have heard that it was said to our ancestors” is how the scribes and Pharisees had been destroying the Torah. “But I say unto you” is how Yeshua fulfilled the Torah. Yeshua is not telling the people to forsake what Moses taught. He is telling them that the Pharisees had misused and abused the teaching of Moses by their traditions.

Immediately after Yeshua taught this Sermon on the Mount, he came down from the mountain, healed a leper of his skin disease, and then told the healed man to make sure to go and show himself to the priest, and offer the sacrifice that Moses commanded (Matthew 8:1-3). Yeshua never taught anyone to forsake Moses’ teachings, even when it came to the “ceremonial law.”

In John 5:46-47 Yeshua said, “If you believed Moses, you would believe me, because he wrote about me. But if you don’t believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” Yeshua told the men there that day that the reason they didn’t believe him was because they really didn’t believe prophet Moses.

In John 7:19 Yeshua tells some people, “Didn’t Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keeps the law!” There again, he is uplifting Moses as the one through whom the law was given.

I preached a sermon not long ago that I titled “We Need More Moses.” I posted a paragraph of notes from that sermon on Facebook, and I had someone who never comments on anything jump on there and start condemning me for uplifting Moses. He even said some words that were a bit derogatory about Moses. I told him he better be careful, because one time a sister in Israel spoke evil of Moses, and Yahweh struck her with leprosy.

We need more Moses, because far too many Christians have inherited the lie that what Moses said doesn’t matter anymore. Far too many Christians have in their mind that it’s okay to come up with a NT interpretation that violates the law of Moses.

And worse than that, had Yeshua spoken against the law that Yahweh gave through Moses, he wouldn’t qualify to be the Lamb of Yahweh. Sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4), and if Yeshua taught the people of Israel to go against the law, he would be teaching it was okay to sin. How much sense does that make? And Yeshua wasn’t even standing in the New Covenant, he was standing in the Old! I don’t think the New Covenant changes anything about the law of divorce, but Yeshua wasn’t even in the New Covenant at the time of Matthew 5.

Brothers and sisters, what Yeshua says in Matthew 5:32 (“but I say unto you”) cannot contradict the law of Moses in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. And I present to you that it does not. It rather challenges something the scribes and Pharisees were abusing in the law. Just like with murder (Matthew 5:21-26) and just like with adultery (Matthew 5:27-30). They were quoting the law, but they were not abiding by the complete intention of the law.

I believe the reason people think that Yeshua contradicts Moses is because they begin their Bible study thinking that it’s okay if Yeshua contradicts Moses. I’m telling you today that it’s not okay. I’m telling you that they are on the same team. And I’m telling you that they taught the same law. In my next lesson I will prove that to you from the Scriptures. I will show you what the Pharisees were doing wrong, and how Yeshua addressed and corrected their wrong in his teachings.

Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage, pt. 5 *“To Put Away Without Divorce”*

Today will be my last sermon in this series on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. We’ve went through a lot in these lessons.

We’ve looked at the different people that exist in churches today, and how that everyone has a different background, with different things happening to them. My job as a Pastor and Servant to you is to be mindful of everyone’s differences, and lead and guide you gently into what the instruction manual teaches. It’s not always easy, but I’m learning more as I experience more.

We looked at marriage; how Yeshua took the Pharisees back to Genesis to show them that male and female were originally one (female was inside of male), but then made into two (female was taken out of male) and then brought back together to form a new family unit (one flesh

relationship in marriage). What this shows is that Yahweh's design is unity, harmony, and togetherness. Although marriages do not always work out, Yahweh's perfect will is for you to get married to a person of the opposite sex that you love and care for deeply, and then spend the rest of your life with them.

We then looked at divorce in the law of Moses, the law that Yeshua mentioned in both Matthew 5, and in Matthew 19 when the Pharisees came questioning him. We learned that the law was put in place due to the hardness of the male heart, in order to protect women who weren't being loved and treated properly by their husband. The law in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 allowed the woman to be divorced for light matters, not to okay the husband's actions, but to free the woman from a marriage where she wasn't being cherished.

And then the last time I taught, we went through some objections to divorce. These objections ignore (1) the law of Yahweh, and (2) the reality of sinful humanity. Divorce is not promoted by Yahweh, but it is permitted. A person isn't required to stay in a marriage where there is a habit of: sexual infidelity, physical or verbal abuse, neglect of basic necessities, or neglect of performing the role of husband or wife.

All marriages have problems, and problems should be worked through, but sometimes people lose love and don't want to work through those problems. Yahweh allows for divorce to free the innocent party, and he will forgive the guilty party *if* they repent.

Today I would like to show you the harmony that exists between the law of Yahweh in Deuteronomy 24:1-2 and the teaching of Yeshua in Matthew 5:31-32. I'd like to begin by looking again at Deuteronomy 24 and seeing the particular procedure that Yahweh outlined for a proper divorce.

"When a man takes a wife and marries her, then it shall be, if she finds no favor in his eyes, because he has found some unseemly thing in her, **that he shall write her a certificate of divorce, and put it in her hand, and send her out of his house.** When she has departed out of his house, **she may go and be another man's wife.** (Deuteronomy 24:1-2, WEB)

Marriage in Hebrew Culture

In the law of Yahweh, you will not find a requirement for a marriage certificate of any kind, much less a marriage certificate with the government. I don't believe it's a sin to have a state issued marriage license, but it is not required by the law of Yahweh. Marriage began in the Garden of Eden when Yahweh presented the woman to the man. No preacher. No "by the power of the state of Georgia invested in me." Nothing like that. Just Adam, Eve, and Yahweh. It was a family ceremony.

As we continue to read in Genesis we find other marriages taking place. Genesis 24 is a great chapter where Abraham's servant goes to find a wife for his son Isaac. The servant finds a girl

named Rebekah, and she is a member of the house of Nahor, Abraham's brother. The servant obtains permission from Rebekah's parents, gives gifts to Rebekah from the house of Abraham (and other expensive gifts to her family), and Rebekah agrees to go back with the servant to become the wife of Isaac. When they got back, Rebekah saw Isaac, and she went inside his tent and became his wife.

That might sound strange to our ears today, but Isaac's parents knew what was taking place. Rebekah's family was asked permission of. They all knew each other because they were relatives. Isaac and Rebekah were actually second cousins, and there is nothing in Scripture (even in the later laws of Leviticus) that prohibits cousins from marrying. My point though here is that (1) there were multiple witnesses to what was taking place, (2) permission from the female's family was obtained, and (3) a price was paid to her and her family. A commitment was then made between Isaac and Rebekah. They became a great couple for Yahweh.

As we move further into Genesis we see things progress a bit. Genesis 24 shows us the least that is required for a marriage to take place, but in Genesis 29 we see the length that a man will go to marry a woman he loves. One of Isaac and Rebekah's sons, Jacob, worked for 7 years in order to marry Rachel (daughter of Laban). Laban was Rebekah's brother, so that made Jacob and Rachel first cousins. Jacob worked 7 years for Laban so he could marry Rachel, and he loved her so much that it only seemed like a few days of work to him. They had a big feast on the day they were married, kind of like what we now call a wedding reception. Again, both families involved knew and approved of what was taking place, a price was paid by Jacob, and a commitment was made between Jacob and Rachel.

When a man married a woman, especially in Hebrew culture, it was understood that he was required to take care of the woman. The man held the role of provider. He brought her under his covering to protect her. He was required to supply a place to live, food, clothing, and sexual rights to his wife. Exodus 21:10 speaks to this.

In later times, and probably not much later, a Ketubah was drawn up when a male and female got married. Ketubah comes from the root word *katav* which means "to write." The Ketubah was a legal document, and was **a unilateral agreement from the male** to supply all of these things to his wife. It also included a money settlement agreement, payable to the wife, in the event of a divorce or the death of the husband.

In a patriarchal society (which Hebrew culture was) the woman needed to be protected, and the Ketubah was a written down form of what was understood by the families involved in the marriage. Witnesses signed the Ketubah, not the male or the female getting married, but eye-witnesses to what the man was committing to and to what was taking place.

A written down agreement by the male is not required by Torah, but it is also not against Torah to write down what you are covenanting to as a man marrying a woman. The main thing is that marriage should never be a private event. A man should not take a woman privately in marriage,

without anyone knowing about it. Private commitments lead to sloppy commitments. Marriages were done publicly because marriages involved families. Agreements were made, and covenants were formed in the sight of witnesses, so that everything done was known and firm. People could see the male and female look each other in the eye in love and care.

The Divorce Document

When it came to divorce, a legal document was commanded, by the law of Deuteronomy 24. A man was not allowed to just send his wife away (as was allowed in some cultures), but was required to write out a certificate of divorce, explaining the reasons he was divorcing his wife. It is understood that this must be done in the sight of at least two witnesses, based upon other texts in the Torah that say we must establish important matters this way. Once the husband wrote out the divorce certificate, he was required to put it in her hand, and send her out of his house. The law tells us that she is free from that man, and has the ability to go and become another man's wife.

That certificate was kept by the woman in order to show that she had been lawfully divorced by her former husband, and was no longer attached to that man in marriage. If anyone suspected she was cheating on her husband, all she had to do was show her divorce certificate, which had been written out by her former husband, with not just his hand-writing, but also the signatures of two other witnesses, and the suspicion would be put to rest.

A Refusal of the Document

So the thought comes to mind, "What if the hard-hearted man refuses to give his hated wife a certificate of divorce?" I believe that's exactly what happened in some cases.

In a society led by men, oftentimes men would take advantage of their headship role and use it against the woman. Good leaders don't do this. Good husbands are servant leaders who show love and respect for their wives. Even a hard-hearted man is showing some sense of goodness when he frees the wife he no longer loves with a divorce certificate. But some men abused their power, and skipped to the third step in the divorce process, without going through the first two steps, thereby placing the woman out on her own, yet still tied to a dead marriage.

Such still happens today. This week I watched a video of a Jewish woman named Debi who is asking her husband to give her a "*get*" (the Aramaic name Jews today call the divorce certificate). Debi had been living as an *agunah* (chained wife) for over 10 years (when this video went up in 2017). Even if Debi could obtain a legal government divorce document, in their Jewish faith, no Rabbi or community would recognize her next marriage without a Hebrew divorce certificate nullifying the previous marriage. There is actually an organization that has been established by Jewish women (among others) in order to help women who have been abandoned, but are yet chained to a dead marriage.

Three Steps to a Hebrew Divorce

Remember what Deuteronomy 24:1-2 says. There are three steps. Not one. Not two. Three. He must (1) write out the certificate of divorce, (2) put it in her hand, and (3) send her out of his house. Then and only then can she become another man's wife.

Do you see how a hard-hearted man could skip to step three? He could dislike the woman so much, for whatever reason, that he just sends her away without a certificate of divorce, and therefore she is still lawfully (technically) married to that man, even though he is no longer providing for or protecting her.

Yeshua is in Harmony

Now, let's take this understanding and go back and read Yeshua's words in the Sermon on the Mount.

"It was also said, **'Whoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorce,'** but I tell you that **whoever puts away his wife**, except for the cause of sexual immorality, **makes her an adulteress**; and **whoever marries her when she is put away commits adultery.**" (Matthew 5:31-32, WEB)

I've read this out of the World English Bible (based on the 1901 ASV), because it is one of the few Bible translations that gets this passage correct.

First off, remember Yeshua's pattern here in Matthew 5. He starts off with "you have heard that it was said," and follows that up with "but I say unto you." The first part is the way the scribes and Pharisees had misused, abused, and wrongly interpreted the law. The law would be read, and then explained, and Yeshua is contrasting the explanations of the scribes and Pharisees with his own explanations. He is teaching the people that he didn't come to destroy the law, meaning misinterpret or abuse the law, but rather to fulfill it, or properly interpret and apply the law.

In this case, what was said was based on Deuteronomy 24. Matthew 5:31 basically quotes Deuteronomy 24:1-2. "Whoever shall put away his wife (send her away, step 3), let him give her (step 2) a writing of divorce (step 1)." Now, is there anything wrong with that statement? Not at all, no more than the statements in Matthew 5:21 and 5:27. In Matthew 5:21 Yeshua says, "You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, do not murder." In 5:27, "You have heard that it was said, do not commit adultery." None of these statements are incorrect, but in each case Yeshua peels back that outer layer of the law and reveals deeper intentions. He does the same here.

Many scribes and Pharisees were quoting the law of Deuteronomy 24, but were not abiding by the law's full intent. Hard-hearted men who fell out of love with their wives were sending them away without a bill of divorcement, and thereby tethering that female to them legally. That's why Yeshua says, "but I tell you that whoever puts away his wife makes her an adulteress." The words "put away" there are identical to verse 31's "shall put away his wife" where "put away" is separate from "giving her a writing of divorce."

Some translations read divorce both times in verse 32. For example, the HCSB reads “But I tell you, everyone who divorces his wife, except in the case of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.” That translation makes it sound like Yeshua sided with the school of Shammai, in thinking that the reason for divorce in Deuteronomy 24 is sexual immorality. I’ve covered why that’s not the case in lesson 3 of this series.

The problem here is that the HCSB is not technically accurate. I understand why they translate this as divorce here, but it should be translated as the WEB does “put away” or “send away.” The Greek word for put away here is *apoluo*, and is used in a variety of ways in the NT, most of which have nothing to do with divorce. The Greek word for bill of divorce is *apostation* which always refers to the giving of a certificate of divorce.

So the WEB is correct in its translation here. If a man just sends away his wife he makes her an adulteress. Why? **Because she is still legally married to her first husband.** She doesn’t have the certificate of divorce in order to document that she is free to marry another man. This is why Yeshua says at the end of Matthew 5:32, “And whoever marries her when she is put away commits adultery.” Why does the man who marries her commit adultery? Because she is still another man’s wife, not having been properly divorced by the law of Deuteronomy 24.

So what was happening in Yeshua’s day is that some Hebrew men were quoting the law, but they weren’t abiding by the full scope or intent of the law, just like they did with the law against murder and the law against adultery. They’d quote those laws too, but not abide by the deeper intention of those laws. Yeshua was condemning men who merely sent their wives away without a certificate of divorce. Yeshua, just like Yahweh in Deuteronomy 24, was trying to protect the woman.

The Exception Clause

Why though does it say here “except for sexual immorality”? Most people think this exception clause is put in place to give one exception that allows divorce. In other words, many Christians believe that it’s sin to divorce *except* in cases of sexual immorality. I believe that’s a wrong understanding, because a proper, lawful divorce is not in view in verse 32. Instead, putting away without a bill of divorce is in view, so why the exception clause?

I think it’s best to understand the exception clause as speaking of situations where people are married to each other unlawfully. There are several unions which are forbidden in Leviticus 18, like a man marrying his daughter-in-law, or a brother and sister marrying.

There were also forbidden lineages in Scripture, where certain Israelite men were forbidden to marry women from certain foreign lineages (Ezra and Nehemiah).

You also have Leviticus 21 where an Aaronic priest wasn’t even allowed to marry a widow, a divorced woman, or a woman defiled by prostitution. It appears there that he had to marry a

virgin woman from his own tribe, so any “marriage” other than that for a priest would be unlawful.

All of this is considered sexual immorality, and in a case where someone found out they were unlawfully married to another, or repented later in life of a known sin, they were just required to put away the partner in that union. No divorce certificate was required, because there was no lawful marriage in the first place.

Harmony through All Scripture

All of this helps us see that Yeshua is not out of step with Yahweh’s law in Deuteronomy 24. We should know this because he has just told us he didn’t come to destroy the law just a few verses earlier. What Yeshua came to do was fulfill the law, meaning: **properly interpret and apply the law, and correct the misuse and abuse of the law by many of the religious leaders of that time.**

While marriage harmony and togetherness was Yahweh’s perfect will for male and female, there was a law of divorce put in place due to the hardness of men’s hearts. Yeshua taught that the law needed to be completely followed, else you caused adultery to happen.

Man Held Accountable for the Adultery

And it wasn’t just the wife of the first husband that was guilty of adultery in these cases, it was the first husband too. If you examine Matthew 19:9 you will see that Yeshua teaches that the first husband will be held accountable for the adultery that he causes by only sending away his wife. So this man may think he’s free, because he is allowed within the confines of Torah to have more than one wife (example: Genesis 29; Jacob with Rachel and Leah), but Yeshua is showing that the man who treats his wife with contempt will be considered an adulterer if he just sends that wife away, and he marries someone else, *because of* the situation he has placed her in. Note that the man isn’t just held accountable for the position he places his chained wife in (that’s part of it), but he is also held accountable in any other marriage he has. Normally that wouldn’t make sense due to the allowance of multiple wives, but in this case, Yahweh is hanging his sin over his head and chaining him in adultery until he gives the bill of divorcement required in Deuteronomy 24:1-2.

Final Closing

So much more could be said, but this is where I will end this series. I do want to encourage you to get the material put out by my good friend John Carroll. If you would like to go into more detail, you can watch his 7-part series on YouTube, or order his book off of Amazon, titled “Divorce and Remarriage: a Biblical Theology of Healing after Heartbreak.” He does a great job of combing through the Scriptures, and he deals with even more than I have dealt with in these lessons. I hope this series has blessed you, and above all, I hope for strong marriages in our congregation. Let us never give up on what Yahweh has blessed us with. Husbands, love your wives. Wives, submit to your husbands. Care for one another. Spend time with one another. Really be that one flesh that Yahweh says you are.