

MARRIAGE IN THE MASTER'S TEACHING

Introduction

- A. Text: **Mt. 19:3-6**.
- B. The subject of marriage is of immediate interest to most people.
- C. Regrettably, the discussion must often be *problem-oriented* — i.e. it must answer questions about what to do when marriages are in *trouble*.
- D. Our discussion of Jesus' teaching on marriage will have to deal with some of this, but it will also seek to focus on the *positive* aspect of the subject: what *should* marriages be?
- E. Jesus' personal teaching on marriage is found principally in four passages: (1) **Mt. 5:27-32**; (2) **19:3-12**; (3) **Mk. 10:2-12**; and (4) **Lk. 16:18**. This lesson will concentrate on **Mt. 19:3-12**.

I. THE ORIGIN OF MARRIAGE: WHERE DID THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP COME FROM?

- A. The Scriptures are our only source of information about the origin of marriage: "Have you not read" (**Mt. 19:4**).
- B. God created human beings male and female, and provided the marriage relationship for them - **Mt. 19:4,5**. Cf. **Gen. 1:27; 2:18-25**.
- C. Marriage is not merely a human social contract — it is of divine origin.

II. THE NATURE OF MARRIAGE: WHAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP IS MARRIAGE?

- A. **Marriage is a union that supersedes the parent-child relationship - Mt. 19:5.**
- B. **Marriage is a union of such intimacy that the mates are said to become "one flesh" - Mt. 19:5.**
 - 1. Paul compared the marriage relationship to that between Christ and the church - **Eph. 5:22-33**.
 - 2. Certainly, the closeness of the marriage relationship calls for care in selecting a mate.
- C. **Marriage is a union to which both partners are to be faithful - Mt. 5:27-30.**
 - 1. The Old Testament teaching - **Exo. 20:14**. Cf. **Lev. 18:20; 20:10; Deut. 5:18**; etc.
 - 2. Jesus' conversation with two different adulteresses - **Jn. 4:16-18; 8:3-11**.
 - 3. Other New Testament texts - **1 Cor. 6:9,10; Hb. 13:4**. Cf. **Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Thess. 4:3-8**.
 - 4. The seriousness of disregarding a vow once made - **Eccl. 5:1-5**.

III. THE DURATION OF MARRIAGE: HOW LONG IS THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP TO LAST?

- A. The Old Testament background to Jesus' teaching.
 - 1. God "hates divorce" (**Mal. 2:16**).
 - 2. Yet, under certain circumstances, divorce was tolerated in the Old Testament - **Deut. 24:1-4**.
 - 3. By the time of Christ, the rabbis were divided over the grounds for divorce under the law of Moses.
 - a. The school of Hillel: divorce was allowable for any cause at all.

- b. The school of Shammai: divorce was allowable only for immorality approaching adultery.
- B. The conversation of Jesus with the Pharisees on the subject of divorce - **Mt. 19:3-12; Mk. 10:2-12.**
1. The Pharisees' question - **Mt. 19:3**: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?"
 2. Jesus' answer - **Mt. 19:4-6**: "**So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.**"
 3. A further question by the Pharisees - **Mt. 19:7**: "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?"
 4. Jesus' answer - **Mt. 19:8,9**: "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. 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.**"
 5. The disciples' question and Jesus' answer - **Mt. 19:10-12.**
- C. Summary.
1. **Marriage is intended by God to be a lifelong union - Mt. 19:6.**
 2. **Only one cause for divorce is allowed: adultery** (*porneia* = sexual immorality) - **Mt. 19:9.**
 - a. In the absence of scriptural cause, *divorce itself is wrong* - **Mt. 19:6.**
 - b. When remarriage takes place, the additional sin of adultery is committed.
 - 1) By the man or woman who wrongfully puts away a mate and remarries - **Mk. 10:11,12.**
 - 2) By the one put away who remarries - **Mt. 5:32.**
 - 3) By the one who marries the one put away - **Mt. 5:32.**
 - c. Unscriptural divorce *invites* the additional sin of remarriage and adultery - **Mt. 5:32.**
- D. Some practical implications of Jesus' teaching on marriage.
1. **The need for us to work on making our marriages what God intended them to be.**
 - a. *Adequate appreciation of the permanence of marriage.* Marriage cannot scripturally be ended for incompatibility of temperaments, disagreeable habits, loss of love, mistakes made in choosing a mate, etc.
 - b. *Determination to overcome the obstacles that threaten marriage.* Sometimes even when there is a scriptural right to divorce, marriages are given up without adequate effort to save them.
 2. **The need for the young to be taught what the Bible says about marriage.**
 - a. Formation of proper attitudes toward marriage in the pre-teen years.
 - b. Exercise of common sense in deciding those whom one will date.
 - c. Wise and prayerful selection of a lifelong mate in marriage.
 3. **The need for the Lord's people to demonstrate that marriage can work as God intended.**
 - a. Christians' marriages need to be living examples of the "workability" of God's plan.
 - b. This need becomes greater as the divorce rate in the world climbs higher.
 4. **The need for Christians to be well grounded in Bible teaching on divorce and remarriage.**
 - a. Much untruth is taught, unfortunately even within the Lord's church.
 - b. The truth must be laid alongside this untruth so clearly that people can see the difference.
 5. **The need for congregations to carry out scriptural discipline when it is necessary.**

Conclusion

- A. **Mt. 19:3-12** clearly teaches (1) that God originated marriage and (2) that the union is to last as long as both partners live.
- B. May we resolve to make our marriages last and to impart to our children the biblical view of marriage.