

## Episode #837 Matthew 19 Part 2-Marriage and Adultery

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. We are recording our 400<sup>th</sup> radio program, praise God! The Pharisees were testing the Lord by asking if divorce is lawful for any reason. The rabbis argued if this was true, or if a more serious reason was needed. The Lord argues out of compassion for the mistreated, often helpless women who were divorced.

III. Lawful Divorce. Matthew 19:1-12.

- A. Verse 7. This refers to Deuteronomy 24:1. This certificate of repudiation made it official that this one is no longer his wife. Again, a woman without a man was in dire straits. Yet adultery was punishable by death. A woman sent away from her husband almost had to find another man. But if she had no official document of divorce, they could be charged as adulterous and executed! How could she ever find a man in that case? She needed this certificate of divorce. Yet these religious leaders had turned this verse around and made this an excuse for every kind of frivolous divorce on the part of the man!
- B. Verse 8. “Hardness of heart” is used in the parallel in Mark 10:5, and only elsewhere of the eleven for not believing the reports of those who saw Him after He rose, Mark 16:14. It was to protect a dismissed wife from a hard-hearted and vindictive former husband, who would try to harm her for seeking another man to take care of herself. This did not mean that the Lord liked or approved of divorce! Again we have the significant phrase *ap arche*, about which we must ask “from the beginning of what?” In this case, from the beginning of marriage, when God gave Adam the woman. At that point, the intention was for the two to be joined together and become one flesh. The hard-heartedness came in with sin, and the law of a certificate with Moses.
- C. Verse 9. “Sexual immorality” refers to any illicit sexual conduct, in this case outside of marriage. Understand that a woman who was unfaithful to her husband was to be executed, Leviticus 20:10. This included if a man found his wife not a virgin on their wedding night, Deuteronomy 22:13-21. The husband at that point, of course, was free to marry another. The same would be true of a woman whose husband was executed for adultery. Yet Israel at this time was under Roman law, and not their own. Many Jews could no more have an adulteress put to death than a Jew in our country could do so. So what other recourse did they have? Divorce. But should a man whose wife was divorced when she ought to be dead be accused of adultery himself if he married another? Of course not. Yet some would try to apply this to today. This is foolishness, and misapplication of God’s law. Yet this had nothing to do with divorces over money, or because we argued too much, and so forth. The Lord had no sympathy for men who were sending their wives off into poverty just because he no longer cared.
  - 1. Our rules for marriage in Ephesians 5:22-33 would make the two join together in love and would leave divorce out of the picture altogether.
  - 2. God’s law from Moses regarding divorce was out of compassion, and Christ’s condemnation here was about compassion as well. Today neither men nor women are helpless if divorced. Our main focus of compassion should be on children, on whom the failure of their parents to hold their marriages together

dumps a huge load of emotional and psychological anguish. Malachi 2:15. How dare we be so uncompassionate towards children as our society of free divorce, and even relationships and breakups without marriage at all, allows? If Christ was speaking today, no doubt it is towards the children of divorce that He would show compassion.

3. He committed adultery because the Lord does not count it that he had any good reason to divorce his wife in the first place. The Lord is under no obligation to recognize our decisions. He had no sympathy with these heartless, careless divorces that many of these men were engaging in against their wives and leaving them destitute.

IV. Conclusion: The lax and hard-hearted reality of divorce in their day left women who were suddenly without a husband in dire straits. The Lord had compassion on them and condemned this free and easy divorce on the part of the man. Our society too can be very hard-hearted toward divorce, not so much regarding the wives as regarding the children, who are just expected to live with the chaos their parents create and suck it up. Do we dare condemn the ways our society is hard-hearted regarding divorce? Will we show the kind of compassion the Lord displayed for the innocent victims of our selfishness?