

# EXECUTED

## TO SUPPRESS HIS MESSAGE



Christian Marriage and Divorce

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### ***Christian Marriage and Divorce***

Almost all Christian churches have rules and regulations regarding divorce and remarriage. And most of these rules are based upon four Scriptures:

“But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery” (Matthew 5:32).

“And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery” (Matthew 19:9).

“And He said to them, Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her” (Mark 10:11).

“Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery” (Luke 16:18).

All of these verses seem quite clear. And yet, when we want to clearly understand what another person is saying, it’s always important to consider the overall context of a discussion.

When Jesus said these things, He was speaking to crowds of Jews whom were under the Old Covenant. But since New Covenant Christians are not under this covenant, it’s prudent for us to not simply assume that the Lord’s words apply to marriages between Christians.

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## 1 — The True Nature of Marriage

Here is an amazing, but absolutely truthful statement:

*You can search the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, but you will not find the Lord God Jesus, one of the prophets, or even an apostle performing a marriage ceremony.*

Let's review a few examples of this. In Genesis 29, we find a wedding festival for Jacob. But there is no ceremony – and no one presided over the marriage to pronounce the couple “married.” Then in John Chapter 2, we read about a marriage feast where Jesus turned water into wine. But here again, there is no mention of a religious or civil ceremony.

And you can search the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, but you will not find an occurrence where a religious or civil authority pronounces a man and woman “married.”

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The first biblical story about marriage involved Adam and Eve:

*For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed (Genesis 2:24-25).*

As the story goes, God created Adam, then He took part of Adam's body and created Eve. But even though Eve was created from Adam's body, God did not consider them either “one flesh” or married. And how do we know this? Because the above Scripture states that Adam would have to be “joined” to his wife.

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So what do these references to “joined” and “one flesh” actually mean?

In Genesis 2:24, the ancient Hebrew translated into the English word “joined” is most interesting. According to Hebrew scholars, it means to adhere, glue, or attach oneself to something. And when Jesus quoted this passage in Matthew 19:5, He used the Greek word κολλάω, which also means “to glue or unite.”

Also notice how there was no marriage ceremony for Adam and Eve – and no one pronounced them “married.” Also notice how Genesis 2:25 implies this marital “joining” took place while Adam and Eve were naked.

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## 2 — Jacob's First Marriage

You may be familiar with the biblical patriarch Jacob's love for his wife Rachel, and how he served Rachel's father for seven years before he was allowed to marry her.

The story begins in Genesis 29:20-22:

So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her. Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my time is completed, *that I may go in to her.*" Laban gathered all the men of the place and made a feast.

The Hebrew translated into the English word "feast" means *to drink*. And indeed, it seems there was a great deal of alcohol involved with this festival. Also note how the phrase "go in unto her" is translated from the Hebrew אִיב, which means "to enter." So you can probably figure out what was on Jacob's mind.

The Scriptures also tell us that Jacob consumed a great deal of alcohol during this marriage festival. So when it came time for Rachel to come into his tent, Laban was able to substitute his other daughter Leah, and Jacob had sexual relations with Leah, thinking it was Rachel. Of course, this story provides a valuable lesson about the dangers of consuming too much alcohol – but there's a great deal more that we can learn here.

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Let's continue with Genesis 29:23-26 and see what Jacob's behavior produced in the morning:

Now in the evening he took his daughter Leah, and brought her to him; and Jacob went in to her. Laban also gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. So it came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?" But Laban said, "It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the firstborn.

Like it or not, when Jacob left his tent in the morning he was married to Leah!

And take special note of how there was no marriage ceremony. Neither did any one in authority pronounce Jacob and Leah “married.” Furthermore, Jacob did not even want to be married to Leah! And yet, just as in the case with Adam and Eve, after having sexual relations, Jacob and Leah were husband and wife.

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### 3 — Biblical Marriage

This kind of marriage where there is no ceremony and no officiating authority is in no way unique within the Bible. What follows are several more examples of such marriages. And take special note of how the phrases “went in to” and “go in unto her” are translated from the Hebrew נָיַב, which means *to enter*.

After Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, ***Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife. He went in to Hagar, and she conceived;*** and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her sight (Genesis 16:3-4).

Then Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" ***She said, "Here is my maid Bilhah, go in to her that she may bear on my knees, that through her I too may have children." So she gave him her maid Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her*** (Genesis 30:2-4).

"When you go out to battle against your enemies, and the LORD your God delivers them into your hands and you take them away captive, and see among the captives a beautiful woman, ***and have a desire for her and would take her as a wife for yourself, then you shall bring her home to your house,*** and she shall shave her head and trim her nails. "She shall also remove the clothes of her captivity and shall remain in your house, and mourn her father and mother a full month; ***and after that you may go in to her and be her husband and she shall be your wife*** (Deuteronomy 21:10-13).

And if we are being observant, we may noticed how all of these verses reveal something profoundly important:

*When a man and a woman bind in sexual union, a marriage is created.*

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## 4 — Marriage: The Way it Used to Be

The marriages of Adam, Abraham, Jacob, and the Israelite marriages described in Deuteronomy 21:10-13 were all “private” matters between the husband, his wife, and their parents. There was no official ceremony. And no one in authority granted, approved or authorized these marriages. And ancient societies continued to treat marriage as a private matter between individuals and their families for hundreds of years.

But then in 1,563 AD, the Catholic Church issued the Tamesti Decree at the Council of Trent, which mandated that all marriages must be approved by the Church<sup>1</sup>. And suddenly, marriage and divorce were no longer private matters between the involved parties and their parents.

Then as time progressed, marriages became increasingly subject to theological and governmental regulation and control. And thus today, we find almost every marriage and divorce controlled and authorized by local governments and/or religious doctrine and customs.

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## 5 — Biblical Instructions about Marriage and Divorce

Over 1,900 years after Jacob's unfortunate marriage to Leah, Jesus came to our world and reiterated God's Old Covenant teaching on marriage and divorce:

Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?" And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother *and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh*'? *So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.*" (Matthew 19:3-6).

Let's focus on that part of the passage where Jesus said "What therefore God has joined together." Here the original Greek translated "joined together" is a word that means *to fasten to a yoke*. The word is used only two times within the Bible (Matthew 19:6 and Mark 10:9). And in both cases Jesus was talking to Jews.

Greek dictionaries explain how this word is derived from two other words: the first meaning *together* or *union*, with the second meaning *to couple* or *team*. The word is often used to describe how two similar animals are coupled together on a wooden beam or "yoke" to perform labor. This concept may be familiar to students of the Old Testament, where the word is used in Deuteronomy 22:10:

"You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together."

So way back in Deuteronomy, God established a principle that it's not good to yoke unlike animals together. Different animals have different strengths and temperaments. And they work at different speeds. So they cannot be made to effectively work together.

But in Matthew 19:6 and Mark 10:9 (above), Jesus was talking about humans being *spiritually* yoked together in marriage. So the the Lord was telling us that God intends a married couple to work together as equal partners sharing common goals.

We find the apostle Paul mentioning this same principle in II Corinthians

6:14 (KJV):

*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?*

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## 6 — Christians and Non-Christian Families

Let's assume that you're a Christian. And you've found a potential mate who is not a Christian. This person appears "perfect" for you. You get along well, have similar interests and thoroughly enjoy each other's company. Furthermore, you both come from good families of honest people. And you cannot imagine what could possibly go wrong with your relationship.

So why would the Bible admonish a Christian to not marry a non-Christian, when everything seems so perfect? The answer is found in Matthew 10:34-36:

*"Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household."*

Jesus made this statement to His disciples. And in doing so, He warned how there would come a time when the non-Christian members of their families would turn against them. And here the Greek translated into the English "enemies" describes a hateful and actively hostile adversary.

Also note how Jesus made this statement before the disciples started to preach the gospel. So this adversarial problem was not necessarily associated with sharing the gospel with others. And without question, countless Christians have experienced this kind of family persecution.

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## 7 — Genuine Christians: A Changed Spiritual Nature

In I Peter 1:22-23, the apostle explains how a Christian is re-born as a new creation, led by a new and different spirit:

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, *for you have been born again* not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.

And notice how this “new birth” is not simply a theological analogy: it’s a genuine spiritual change that occurs when a Christian’s spirit becomes one with God the Father, Jesus Christ, and all of their Christian brothers and sisters.

But this magnificent spiritual conversion does nothing to affect the spiritual state of an unconverted spouse. And those who haven’t experienced this spiritual birth remain as those Jesus spoke of in John 8:44:

*"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father..."*

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## 8 – Pulling the Yoke With Unequal Partners

So consider what happens when a Christian marries a non-Christian. The unconverted spouse is still influenced — to one extent or another — by the evil spirits of the world. So the converted Christian is now dwelling with a spouse that may have antagonistic views toward God and His ways. And all too often, this leads to a situation where there are arguments and disagreements over religion and many other matters.

What should a Christian do if such things occur? Of course, they should their best to work the problems out and create a happy marriage. But what if this goal seems impossible? And then year after year, there is ever-increasing conflict and abuse?

In Luke 14:26, the Lord tells us what to do in such a situation:

*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:26 – KJV).*

This is an unfortunate translation, because the Greek word translated into the English “hate” means to hate or love less. And since Jesus doesn’t want us to hate anyone, we can safely assume that He wants us to love Him more than we love our physical families — and this includes our spouses.

So when a spouse is actively trying to separate us from God – and there seems to be no way that we can reconcile with this person – the Lord says that we have the right to separate from this person.

Of course, this raises the question of how much the Lord wants us to love Him more than our spouses. Jesus tells us in Luke 18:28-30:

*Peter said, "Behold, we have left our own homes and followed You." And He (Jesus) said to them, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life."*

Jesus was incredibly clear here. And He said that there indeed are situations where a Christian should forsake their parents, children, and even their spouse. So Jesus not only approves of leaving a spouse who comes between us and Him, He also promises great blessings for doing so.

And we find similar teachings in Mark's gospel:

And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life (Mark 10:29-30 - KJV).

We should note how the Greek translated into the English “left” can mean either “to leave” or “to send away.” So Jesus has granted us the freedom to allow a difficult spouse to leave, or to take the initiative and leave an unconverted mate that is unwilling to separate. And here again, we see how the obedient Christian is promised blessings for leaving an adversarial spouse that is hindering their relationship with the Lord.

And then in Luke Chapter 14:20 & 26, Jesus' reiterated these teachings in a much stronger sense:

Another one said, “I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come ...”

Notice how Jesus responded to this situation:

“If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate (Greek: love less) his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.”

Jesus was painfully clear here: A Christian's highest priority is to follow the Lord and to perform His will. And no human being — including even a spouse — should be allowed to interfere with doing what Jesus asks of us.

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## 9 – There Is a Place for Divorce

The Bible is very clear in stating how Satan and his demons may go to great lengths to use family – and particularly a spouse – as tools to persecute Christians. And this is much more likely when with there is an unbalanced spiritual yoke, where a Christian is married to a non-Christian mate.

But some Christians may argue that divorce is never an option, because Malachi 2:16 states that God hates divorce. And certainly this is true. But we should also take careful note of what is recorded in Jeremiah 3:8:

*"And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also.*

The Lord divorced Israel because they were unfaithful to His laws and His way of life. And this same remedy is available to those of us whom are under the New Covenant.

*The simple truth is that God would rather see a human divorce, than the spiritual abortion of one of His children.*

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## 10 – The Spiritual Perspective

The unconverted Sadducees of Christ's day were very concerned about the issues of divorce and separation, just as many pastors are today. So they asked Jesus how marriage problems would be handled in heaven:

"Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves behind a wife and leaves no child, his brother should marry the wife and raise up children to his brother. There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died leaving no children. The second one married her, and died leaving behind no children; and the third likewise; and so all seven left no children. last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had married her."

Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the scriptures or the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven" (Mark 12:19-25).

Jesus said that once we get to heaven, our earthly marriages will be things of the past. And so as Christians, we must know that our human marriages are not the most important issue in our lives. Instead, the most important issue is our relationship with God – along with our spiritual destiny in the Kingdom of God (Matthew 22:37-40).

And Christians should *never* allow a spouse to interfere with that goal.

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## 11 – Conclusion

God's name is "Father." While His closest personal relationship is with Jesus Christ, who was born as a human being so He could literally become God's son. And just as the Bible calls angels the "Sons of God," Christians are the literal sons and daughters of God the Father.

Thus God has *a family*.

And in order to build His family, God made human beings male and female. Then God created a special and intimate human relationship called marriage, which allows a men and women to create more human beings that can also become part of God's family. And the Scriptures tell us that God's ultimate goal is to have all of humanity become part of His spiritual family (see John 12.32 and Isaiah 45:22-23).

So God expects great things from those who partake in marriage: a life-long commitment, loyalty, responsibility, honesty, integrity, and loving care for children. While the intimate "relational glue" of marriage enables parents to properly raise their children in an environment of love and peace, which helps to prepare them for becoming God's spiritual children.

But since the responsibilities of marriage are so extraordinary, God leaves the decisions of whether or not to marry – along with whether or not we should leave a bad marriage – up to the involved individuals.

*God has never asked churches or governments to become involved in such matters.*

But God does give us guidelines. He says that once we enter into the intimacy of marriage, that intimacy should remain exclusive between the husband and wife. And He warns that violating this rule will likely destroy the relationship.

God also provides special instructions for married Christians. And this is because Christians have taken the first step into spiritual family relationships by becoming children of God. And once a person enters the spirit realm as child of God, the purposes and priorities for marriage must change.

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When a potter makes pottery, he first prepares a mold. Then he puts clay into the mold and places both in the fire. And when the fire has completed its work, the potter removes the artwork and puts the mold aside. Certainly, the potter requires and values the mold and its ability to form artwork. But the potter's objective was to turn his clay into a work of art – while the mold is dispensable.

*The potter would never destroy his new artwork to save the mold.*

And human marriages serve as God's mold, which He uses to prepare those who will eventually enter the Kingdom of God as His spiritual children. And just like the clay potter, the Master Potter has no desire that one of His spiritual children should be destroyed, just to save the mold of a human marriage.

So Jesus told those Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are really my disciples. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31-32 – ISV).

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(comments and suggestions are appreciated)

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