

LESSON FIVE - MARRIAGE, DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

"MENTAL DIVORCE"

(By Jerry Fite)

INTRODUCTION:

Some see the person who is NOT guilty of fornication being put away, and having to REMAIN SINGLE is too strict a doctrine. "It is NOT FAIR" to be deprived of sexual companionship due to the sinful putting away of another. Therefore, the theory of "mental divorce" finds acceptance. The important question is, "Does the Word of God teach this doctrine?"

I. "MENTAL DIVORCE" DEFINED:

- A. Divorce for reasons other than fornication is NOT ACTUAL DIVORCE IN GOD'S EYES. Therefore, two people who divorce for reasons other than fornication are still MARRIED IN GOD'S EYES. When one of the divorced people remarry, the other person can then DIVORCE IN GOD'S EYES for the right cause and remarry without sin.
 - 1. Since the "first divorce" involved the PHYSICAL "sending away", the "second divorce" is MENTAL - "Mental Divorce"
- B. When Bob puts away Alice for not keeping a clean house, though it is a civil divorce, they are not really divorced. It is called divorce only "accommodatively". If Bob marries another woman, he, being guilty of adultery can now be put away "mentally" by Alice. This is the "real" divorce. Now Alice is free to remarry.

II. THEORY EXAMINED:

- A. "Divorce" used ONCE but with TWO MEANINGS.
 - 1. used as "actual" divorce and "no divorce" at the same time.
 - 2. Violates rule of literary interpretation: "A word can have but one fixed meaning in the connection in which it occurs." (PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION, Louis Berkhof, p. 75 - Quoted by Gene Frost, Gospel Anchor, Vol.XIII, No. 5, January 1987).
 - 3. Jesus is not guilty of "equivocation" - misleading hearers by using a word with two meanings.
 - 4. There is nothing in the context of Matt. 19:9 demanding the word "divorce" used in an accommodative sense. Must be interpreted in its actual or literal sense.
- B. Equates "Marriage" and "bond"
 - 1. Advocates of mental divorce theory assume if one is "married" he is "bound" to mate; If one is "divorced", he is "loosed".
 - a) Therefore, a distinction is made between marriage that is civil (in the eyes of man) and that is real (in the eyes of God).

- b) We are told if it is scriptural, it is real; if not scriptural, then the "marriage" or "divorce" is not real, only used "accommodatively".

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2. Scriptures teach that husband and wife are not just bound to each other in God's eyes, but bound to each other in God's eyes BY LAW. (Rom. 7:2, I Cor. 7:39).
 - a) Nature of Law: Permits and Restricts at same time.
 - b) When divorce is not for fornication, both never have right to remarry (Matt. 19:9).
 - c) When divorce is for fornication, the innocent party may marry another, while the guilty party is still "bound" by law.
 - d) Case of Herod and Herodias: Were "Married" (actual, real) yet their relationship was "unlawful" (Mk. 6:17-18). She was bound to Philip.
- C. Adds to Jesus' words and takes away from doctrine Jesus taught.
 1. Adds intent: the put away person says, "I do not want divorce".
 2. Takes away from Jesus' words that disallows remarriage: "... Whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery" (Matt. 5:32, 19:9).
 3. Promotes a "different doctrine"
 - a) One has a different doctrine when his doctrine NEVER FITS WITH JESUS' WORDS!
 - b) When does the REMARRIAGE of one ever allow the other to remarry WITHOUT COMMITTING ADULTERY? (Mk. 10:2-12; Matt. 5:32, 19:3-9; Lk. 16:18; I Cor. 7:10-11)
 - c) Promotes the "waiting game" - just remain celibate until your put away mate remarries before you do, then you can "mentally divorce" and be free to remarry.
- D. Mark 10:11
 1. "Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery *against her*."
 2. Assume the "her," against whom adultery is committed is the "divorced" wife and not the "another."
 - a) "another" is the nearest antecedent of the pronoun her.
 - b) Nigel Turner suggests the word "epi" translated "against" has the meaning here of "with" (THE BIBLE TRANSLATOR, Oct. 1965, pp. 151-152).
 - (1) "...and the thought behind the phrase is that of immorally *going after her*, for the action of *neighing to* (*chremitizo epi*) was equivalent to that of committing adultery with.
 - c) If the "her" is the "put away wife," there is not one authoritative word in Mark 10:11 granting remarriage for the "put away" one. Jesus forbids her in Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9: "...and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery."

E. Reverses the order of the text:

1. According to Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, the one who has a right to remarry is one who has first put away his mate for fornication.

a) Fornication (on part of the mate)

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b) Put away the fornicator

c) Remarriage

2. Mental divorce position:

a) Put away (no fornication involved)

b) fornication

c) Remarriage

3. To pervert order of this text is just as wrong as perverting the order of Mark 16:16:

a) Believe - Baptized - Saved (Mk. 16:16)

b) Believe - Saved - Baptized (Denomination perversion)

F. "Let not" means "cannot" in Matthew 19:6.

1. Mental divorce position: "man cannot (it is impossible) sever (really) a marriage unless fornication is involved. Therefore, when a man puts away his wife for a cause other than fornication, the marriage has not really been severed until he remarries another. When he does, the divorce is real and the put away wife can remarry. "

2. The issue under consideration is what is "lawful" not what is "impossible." Jesus in Matthew 19:6 implies man has the ABILITY and the POWER, but not the AUTHORITY and PERMISSION to put asunder what God has joined together.

3. "let not" passages mean "should not" , not "could not."

a) Matthew 6:3 - "...let not they left hand know what thy right hand doeth."

b) John 14:1 - "Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me."

c) Romans 14:16 - "Let not then your good be evil spoken of:"

d) Mark 10:9 - "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

QUESTIONS:

1. Since God does not "recognize" divorce for the cause other than fornication, two people are still married in God's eyes if they have divorced for causes other than fornication. (T) (F)

2. Cite passage showing if a marriage or divorce is unscriptural, it is still a marriage or divorce:

3. Jesus allowed the one put away for a cause other than fornication to remarry if they did not want the divorce and protested against it. (T) (F)
4. Give the passage showing that the put away one can remarry without committing adultery: _____.

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5. Mark 10:11 does not mention remarriage on the part of a put away one. (T) (F)
6. What is wrong with this statement: "Brethren, you cannot remarry unless adultery is committed against you. If you do marry without that reason, you are committing adultery, and the one that put away has a possibility."

7. The clause "and he that marrieth her when she is put away..." found in Matthew 19:9 (a) has one exception, (b) has no exception, (c) has several exceptions.
8. The scriptural order of events in Matthew 19:9 is _____, _____ and _____.
9. The order the mental divorce advocates have is _____, _____ and _____.
10. How do you answer the charge that if no put away person can remarry, it is a matter of a race to the lawyer's office.

11. The standard by which we determine right and wrong is (a) the Bible and it alone, (b) what seems fair to us (c) the position of some well-respected preacher.
12. Discuss the consequences of the "mental divorce" theory.