

Divorce and Remarriage 2_2_19750104_WCG_IPM

He said the same thing as he did to Moses.

He said, Look to the disciples.

Not everybody can understand or receive this saying and put it to practice any more than they could in the days of Moses.

So I gave Moses the right to permit exceptions beyond even porneum.

That's why Jesus says here, There are some who are eunuchs born that way, who court of course, fulfill the law from birth.

Some made eunuchs by men who would have no problem in fulfilling the law, and some who have denied themselves for the kingdom of heaven's sake.

There are individuals who, in terms of being married to someone, both coming into the church, there may be problems, who would deny themselves, if there has to be a separation, deny a remarriage.

To live separate instead, like a eunuch, for the kingdom of heaven's sake.

He that is able to receive it, let him receive it, and Jesus leaves it up to the individual to do so, and we must be very careful how we handle this problem.

Because Jesus said, Who can receive it, let him receive it, and if somebody can't receive it, that's up to the individual, but they have to know where they stand in terms of the kingdom of God and what resurrection they want to come up in.

And it doesn't absolutely mean, if you miss the first, you're ending in the third.

I think Jesus states that very clearly here.

He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

But there are those who are married to whom Paul said that they're not to be remarried but to be reconciled if possible, or if not at least to be separate.

And that's the third category.

So Jesus in private recognized, interestingly, before the disciples that there are people who cannot receive the teaching of the Bible in this connection because they don't have the Spirit of God in the same way that Jesus recognized it in Moses' day and allowed Moses to give him permission.

In Moses' day it was a public permission, in a row, for all the people basically who were unconverted and colonized.

Jesus' statement here is an administrative matter issued in private to the disciples so they would understand how to administrate a matter, but what people should aim at in terms of the kingdom of God, in terms of the law as defined and magnified under the New Covenant, that is something that he stated publicly, and he gave only the exception of porneia, which allows for divorce.

I think this should be very clear that in private Jesus shows that there are individuals who are unconverted, of course, and can't all be expected to obey the intent and purpose of the law.

Now then, how do we administer it today? The answer is we must find then, in terms of Jesus' own exception, broader than porneia, because he would not have had to define this when he was saying, not all men can receive my saying, he was saying that even in terms of the exception clause, that not everybody can receive it even with one exception clause.

So he is allowing us to see his mind at this time as he did before.

How then does God intend marriage to be regulated outside of the jurisdiction of the government of God, where you have contact with Christ, God the Father in heaven, on whom you can call and have the Holy Spirit, the advice of the ministry, and others who are older and experienced, and the encouragement of the brethren? What do you do when you don't have all this going for you? This is what we had to come to in the May Conference in terms of the world around us.

Now we will take a look at how it was administered.

We will go through the law just broadly, chapter 21, the good place to begin with in the book of Exodus.

And here we are told about the case of a man who briefly enters into a state of servitude until released.

The wife belongs to the master if his master has given him a wife, and she has borne him sons in verse 4, daughters, and the wife and her children shall be his masters.

Now when you look at the commandment, you don't find this.

In the commandment it says, you shall not covet your neighbor's house, your neighbor's wife.

A woman is a man's possession.

A man is a woman's possession.

Most women don't think of it that way because they don't want to be possessed, maybe, is the reason by the man.

I finally convinced my wife that she possesses me because I know I possess her.

Now here is a law that implies that although the master gives the worker a wife, he actually still retains ownership of her.

Now if, of course, he goes out and he lives nearby, I presume he could continue to live with her if they would make such an arrangement, it isn't discussed.

In any case, he has to make some arrangement because she and the children belong to the master.

And the law didn't even alter this custom, it just assumes the custom and now it regulates the relationship because the assumption is that the young man probably does not have the word with all to support the woman and her children, and the support in terms of housing, the support in terms of food is more important to her in general than the sexual relationship, and therefore she must remain the masters in order to have the wife and children taken care of and not to have some man who hasn't saved enough suddenly become responsible and doesn't have another job.

That's how God's judgment regulated it, and if the man lives somewhere else in another tribe, then he wouldn't even live with her again, and since she belonged to the master, she was subject to whomever he would give her.

That's the way the law was regulated where you had a certain servitude.

This presumes without any question that separation, and hence the potentiality of divorce and remarriage is built into this system.

If the man v. 7 shall sell his daughter to be a maid servant, and that has happened, of course, in many cultures, she shall not go out as the men's servants do if she doesn't please her master who has betrothed her to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed.

To sell her to a strange nation, he shall have no power, seeing he dealt deceitfully with her.

Now, the betrothal here is stronger than the term engagement.

He has betrothed her to himself but not yet entered into the second aspect of the Jewish marriage.

Now, in this case, Mr. Armstrong mentioned in the booklet that later was withdrawn that the Jewish custom had a legal betrothal, and a later ceremony in the time in between was a way of guaranteeing whether there would be the possibility of pregnancy.

See, that's a way of finding out.

Now, this legal betrothal was so binding that it could be set aside only by a divorce.

And I want to show you in the New Testament it was the same way.

Let's turn to 1st Corinthians, again, chapter 7.

Now, our culture is different, and I want you to know the difference.

Our culture does not live on engagement as of legality, but only a social arrangement with no legal force.

It might lead to some emotional crisis, as obviously it would if broken down.

Now, concerning virgins 25, I have no commandment of the Lord, but I give my judgment as one that has obtained mercy, I suppose therefore that it is good for the present distress for a man so to be.

Are you bound to a life? Now he's talking about virgins, concerning virgins.

Seek not to be loosed.

Are you loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife.

But if you marry, you have not sinned, and if a virgin marry, speaking of the female, she has not sinned.

Nevertheless, such a lot of trouble in the flesh, but I spare you.

Now look, here the concept of being loosed and the concept of being bound, see, that's very plain.

Are you bound to a wife? Are you loosed? Then seek not a wife that if you have entered into a betrothal, that demanded being loosed by a decree of divorcement since you had not lived sexually with that person, you're loosed if and when you are loosed if you marry, verse 28, you haven't sinned.

So we learn here that if a culture has established a situation where there's a betrothal, that betrothal is binding, but it is only the first step in such a culture where there was a second step that was assumed to be followed immediately by living with one another.

The case of Joseph and Mary is an illustration.

Before the second step, before they came together, Joseph was betrothed to Mary and, listen carefully, when he thought about the problems since she was pregnant, he decided to put her away.

That means a divorce.

We have a different cultural pattern, but I want you to understand that a legal betrothal still involves a divorce, not even the annulment is used.

The same terms all the way through, putting away, loosing, these are basic terms that mean the severing of a legal contract.

But if he takes himself another wife, now going back to Exodus, here's a man who allows the woman to be redeemed, verse 8, to sell her to a strange nation he is forbidden, seeing he is dealt deceitfully with her, that is, he decided after the betrothal not to accept her.

If he has betrothed to his son, he shall deal with her as if she were his own daughter now.

He becomes responsible as a father to a daughter.

Now if he takes himself another wife and decides to keep the first woman, then her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage shall he not diminish, so that he keeps this woman and now is allowed a second wife.

And the food, the clothing, or shelter, and the duty of marriage, which means nothing other than sexual relationship, and it doesn't mean building a house for her.

Some try to make this mean her food, her clothes, and building a house.

I won't comment any further on that.

Her duty of marriage.

You can build a house for somebody else and it isn't any duty of marriage.

The duty of marriage pertains to sexual responsibility, to fulfill another's needs.

That shall not be diminished, so here the law permitted legally polygamy.

You see how many exceptions there were that didn't even follow the pattern of they too shall be one flesh, as in Genesis chapter 2? And of course, if the first man, or if the man does not fulfill these three, the law says that if you take a second wife, if you don't live sexually with both of them equally and fairly according to their needs, then that woman automatically becomes free.

That's the same as saying that the law permitted polygamy and in that state God demanded that the man be responsible sexually for as many wives as he had.

Is that clear so you'll understand how God saw the institution in terms of administering it among carnal people? These were unconverted people.

That if you're going to have polygamy, then you have to fulfill the requirements of a marriage contract with each.

Now, brethren, according to the true spirit and intent of the law, all of this led to some kind of unhappiness.

Thus we learn of the wife who was loved and the wife who was hated, or any woman who isn't loved as much as she deserves to be would consider that the lack of love by a husband is a form of hate.

And that's true.

That's why the Scripture says that.

Now we learn that God permitted these things because it was better to permit them with the hardness of the human heart than to be rigid, even though spiritually the people were reaping a penalty.

Why? The woman who had the second wife to contend with couldn't be happy, and the second wife could hardly be proud of the situation.

The man who decided he couldn't take care of his wife and children and left and the boss became responsible and gave her to another, these didn't make people happy.

But it was better to administer it this way in a society cut off from God spiritually with only the law and the letter and the administration of death, the death penalty, rather than the spirit of God being made known so that we can become converted.

Now we have to then look at it as God looks at it.

If God did not impose any more rigid situation on the people, then we would have to say that we should administer these things in terms of the situation as God himself would have wanted them administered.

After all, I have happily not been confronted with the problem in Africa of a man who comes with two or three wives.

I will tell you this, in the earliest years of the college, I'm not sure if my wife was here at the time when we had an Ethiopian who always brought his two wives to church.

I'm sure Dr. Zimmerman would think that was a scandal in the Church of God, but this was done in headquarters when we hadn't yet sunk into sin.

I thought you'd appreciate that.

But after all, the man came among us, we had no real authority yet over him.

I don't think he ever was converted, but it was an experience, I'll tell you, to greet both Mrs. and so-and-so.

But you see, God looks at the situation as it is in society, and the Old Covenant didn't correct all those situations that only regulated it.

The Old Covenant didn't institute divorce, rather, and it didn't institute tithing.

It didn't institute the Sabbath.

It didn't institute slavery.

It only regulated tithing, regulates the Sabbath, regulates slavery, regulates divorce, regulates polygamy.

By the very nature, God was not intending to change the human heart, but to have a knowledge of God, God had to reveal that certain things needed to be done in such a society.

And so it was important that they at least have the Sabbath, and God made it very easy to tell them just rest.

And you didn't try to change all these other things, whether it be good or evil, but they regulated them according to the letter of the law.

Now I will go on, the last few minutes here, to Deuteronomy 22, just to let you know, and you see the principle, if a man take a wife, verse 13, and there are problems that arise, you even see the possibility here of stoning with stones, because she was found to be a whore in her father's house.

So in this case, there are plain and simple statements made that a young girl or a young woman, I should say, who was found to have been playing around as a whore in her father's house, that particular person was stoned.

Now let me make plain that there are differences in administration and differences in conduct.

There are many girls in the world who submit to men who are their dates, and it is now rather taken for granted.

In the world, and it must never be in God's church, that a man is not ultimately satisfied with a date if they've had a delightful time in some social occasion, or perhaps a movie or a dinner or a dance, but they must now go somewhere and be involved sexually.

Now such a girl is not playing the whore, she's being a fool.

Now I'll tell you what one is like, and there was such a girl, a member of a family where the mother was converted and the father was not, who would slip out at night through the window of her bedroom.

I had to deal with this case to go out and to be a whore or prostitute with fellows at school.

There are girls who have sex relations only with one fellow.

There are all kinds of exceptions to the law of God that people make.

And when there is this kind of thing, to have played the whore in the father's house, that was dealt with very severely.

And then it gives other illustrations here in verse 22, if a man be found lying with a woman married to her husband, there was a direct punishment visited here.

They both were to be punished, both the man that lay with a woman and the woman.

They should die, stoning with stones was usual custom, so you shall put away evil from Israel.

If a damsel that is a virgin be trothed to a husband be found in the city because she cried not.

The man because he has humbled his neighbor's wife and the girl shall be put to death, put away evil from you.

That was made very plain.

Verse 25, if a man find to be trothed, damsel in the field, the presumption there is that she is innocent.

But if it is in town, in the close proximity, now those towns were very close, and any girl could have been heard.

If you know how crowded those little towns are, I have excavated in Ashtad, it was a Philistine town, but they are all built in the same pattern, and some rooms, brethren, are twice as big as the top of this podium here in front of me.

Just big enough to sleep in, little, little places, so there wouldn't be any question the houses were crowded right next to one another.

In our big cities today it's like practically being in a country because we live in palaces by standards of those days.

And if a man, in that case a woman was considered guiltless, if a man find a damsel it is a virgin which has not been betrothed, and lay hold on her and lie with her, then the man that lay with her shall give to the damsel's father so many shackles of silver, and she shall be his wife because he has humbled her, and it says here he may not put her away all his days.

Now the fact that she was not ever to be allowed to be put away all his days, that's if the father of the girl accepted it, that's the same as saying that others then could be put away.

That's a recognition of the opposite of the custom.

The custom allowed for divorce.

But here is now a statement that in this case if a fellow takes advantage of a girl and the father doesn't intervene, the father of the girl, that the fellow therefore later can never put her away apart from her death.

Others therefore could be put away as the presumption, so we find in Deuteronomy 24 when a man has taken a wife and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her.

Now here's some uncleanness, or matter of uncleanness, different translation, is basically the same expression as Jesus' statement accepted before Porneia.

Accepted in the Hebrew it is a broader expression.

It is not as definable as it is in Jesus' statement Porneia, that it includes Porneia, but it is a term that is so vague that some Jews said this could be a cause for every reason.

This is an excuse, rather, for every reason.

And some said, no, it must be some sexual reason.

Some said, well, it certainly doesn't exclude burnt toast, and it can go all the way.

I hope that will be a reason on occasion, but happily the children and I like it.

So then let him write her a bill of divorcement, give it into her hand, and send her out of his house.

And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.

You see, when we understood the doctrine but not the administration, Mr. Armstrong couldn't understand this verse.

He was forced in his mind to find a rigid meaning, the covenant relationship of the New Testament here, because he saw in his mind he thought that God couldn't permit sin, well, brethren, God permits the whole world to lie in sin.

God does not institute divorce for any reason.

God here is regulating sin because the people are sinful.

He regulated war.

He regulated theft.

People were going to steal, so he said, all right, this is the penalty.

They're going to divorce.

There's nothing you can do about it.

People will leave one another.

And I don't care if a government in the church or any government, a state government, was absolutely rigid.

Let me tell you what happens in a country like Italy.

In Italy where they had no divorce, everybody finally knew that Mussolini had a wife and someone else.

That land is full of secondary wives because you can't stop it.

There is no way unless you kill off everybody who even tries it.

Now, that might be a German solution.

Maybe that's why it occurs to me.

It's certainly not the Italian approach, and it isn't God's approach.

Mussolini says, all right, that's what people are going to do.

He doesn't say, I therefore want you to divorce.

He said, if that's what you're going to do in any case, there must be a writing of a bill of divorce, and then she can be another man's wife.

This is clear.

She can be.

The time element is not defined.

It just means when or in the process of time.

It merely says in verse 1, and it comes to pass.

She doesn't say up to a certain point.

This can happen years afterward.

There's no regulation of that.

Now, if the later husband, that is the second one, or the latter husband, hate her, just like her, that means doesn't show her the kind of love that he should, and he decides to write her a bill of divorcement and gives it into her hand, or if the latter husband dies, the former husband, which sent

her away, may not take her back to be his wife, because, brethren, she really is defiled, so because she should have lived with the first man.

And the Bible defines it as a defilement.

Spiritually it is.

Spiritually it is.

There isn't a way that us, there isn't in some way spiritually defiled by our past sins.

Now, the question is, you defiled your spiritual right, shall I say, or your conscience by breaking the Sabbath.

You defiled it by steering God's time, by swearing, if that's your habit.

There are any number of things, and people have defiled their right, let's say, defiled their bodies too, by being involved sexually.

We do not say, we didn't say in May, and we don't say now, that the spiritual law regulating marriage has been so bent that this was not a defilement.

The permission of polygamy still recognizes that the result of it leads to the hatred of one woman and the love of another, because you can't live as any Arab will tell you with more than one woman and love them all equally.

It doesn't work.

So we discover that even though divorce is permitted, that kind of thing, in fact, in some way defiled the person.

But after the person was defiled, look, God even says, you can't take that woman back.

Here's how God regulates it.

Now, we didn't really understand this.

That's admitted.

We thought therefore she had to be bound to the first name.

No.

The authority of the land was sufficient in the Old Covenant, and if it was sufficient at Israel, God is no more harsh on the Gentiles where other forms of government regulated that aren't God's form of government.

And here God did not even allow this woman ever to go back to the first name.

Did you see that? She was defiled.

It was spiritually defilement because it had broken the intent of marriage.

But nevertheless, the law of the land, as God said it up, regulated that marriage.

Then the law of the land, which was essentially administrative.

The law defines this in an administrative term.

When the law issues, the judge, I should say, issues a divorce, that divorce severs the contract.

Now, the only exception is, if she had no sex relations with a succeeding man, then she could go back to the first name.

But when they were carnal and unconverted, God even forbade that and said, No, that would just give people the chance to try one woman out and then try another and decide to go back to the first name if you thought you liked her better.

God said, That will never happen.

To prevent that from happening, God prohibited this woman from going back.

And that is the same as saying, A recognition of divorce as being legal among the unconverted is absolutely indicated in the 24th chapter through the enemy.

Now God shows, however, that once people have repented and all the past is forgiven, after all, God was willing to accept Israel back, but he was of a spiritual mind.

And of course, we're not necessarily told that Israel had married another nation like the Jews had, but those things are not important.

But I would say spiritually, that God wipes away all sin, and if both people are converted, then we're no longer dealing with the letter of the law, we're dealing with the intent, and here we're dealing with how God would spiritually deal with it.

If a divorce has taken place and they never got along and they both become converted, they're not bound, they can go their way because the divorce is valid.

It is valid right here.

But if on the other hand they have both spiritually completely repented, there is no question in my mind, and I think I can speak here for all that I know, if there were unfortunate circumstances that broke them apart, relatives, friends, money, some tragedy, this is after all regulating the letter of the law, but it is called a foulness, and therefore there is no reason why they could not go back.

And what we're learning, brethren, is that God regulates states of affairs among people who are unconverted in a way that we never understood before.

Now, beside giving permission beyond porneia, for divorce, there is one other thing we must take note in Deuteronomy 7, verse 3, there were not to contract marriages with Gentile nations that were not of the faith of Israel.

Now in Nehemiah 13, we have such contracts set aside, verses 23 to 31, and in Ezra 10, many verses there, just remember that the marriage was voidable.

Those were marriages entered into in Nehemiah and Ezra's day, Ezra 10, Nehemiah 13.

They had to be set aside by divorce because they had been legally entered into, but these marriages were voidable but not void.

They were voidable because the law said they should not actually have been contracted, but they were contracted nevertheless, and therefore divorce had to be utilized to set them aside.

The law therefore really prohibited marriage with someone who was unconverted.

This is why Paul says when people are converted, you should now not do what you read of in the Old Testament example, put away the unconverted mate, and that's what some of the people did right after me.

They said, Look, our marriage isn't bound.

That wasn't so.

Their marriage was bound.

It was still legal.

It hadn't been divorced.

And their marriage, not legally, divorced was bound, and yet some people presumed immediately after me to set it aside because the unconverted mate was, as they thought, not bound by God in heaven.

That was false.

God enters into some contracts because we asked him, but other contracts nevertheless are binding, and God recognizes the legitimacy of that contract because every society has a right to regulate it.

And even if there is no contract and you merely take a right, and you enter in all sincerity to do so, that is binding on you in terms of your conscience.

That law becomes a law unto yourself because you know that is your obligation.

Now, that normally doesn't happen, but that is the basis of the common law marriages in the world.

I was really not dwelling on that, but I did bring that up last night.

So here, if Ezra and Nehemiah had not set them aside, the marriages would have been bound.

But they were legally voidable on religious grounds, not even porneia, per se.

All right.

Paul says, No.

I tell you that if the unconverted leave, then it's like what happened in Ezra's and Nehemiah's day, but let them do it.

But if, on the other hand, they're willing to live at peace with you, then don't put the unconverted away.

That is, how do you know that what your unconverted wife may finally become converted, or your unconverted husband may finally become converted, as I see here sometimes in the audience? You know, it can happen over years' time, but if you put away the unconverted mate, the likelihood of conversion would be zero.

Agreed? I think it's great, but that's what they got intended it to be.

I happen to know cases like that here.

The point is, the Paul now shows that spiritually we should not deal in the latter of the law, but according to the intent and purpose.

And it is the intent and purpose that marriages be held together in cases like this for possible.

So if they can live at peace, then we no longer administrate it according to the letter of the law, but to administrate it according to the spirit of the law, and to keep marriages together so long as it is possible.

And if ten years after, or five years after, or ten days after, or five days after, your unconverted mate decides to leave you, you're no longer in bondage to that contract.

That's called teaching.

The time element is not stated, because in the first place the law allowed the marriage to be set aside, because the other person is not of the same faith.

Now, the probability of the last ten years is something wrong with you, but it can happen.

But it is enough to put away the other person, that's Paul's pure teaching, in First Corinthians 7.

Now, the authority of human governments to regulate this is recognized in terms of sanctioning, legalizing the marriage, registering it, issuing a decree.

The world should be doing it God's way.

The world should be teaching what we teach, spiritually, but it doesn't.

And since the world is unconverted, God is no more harsh on the Gentile world than he was in ancient Israel.

And when we see that he allowed through Moses in Deuteronomy 24, he allowed commissions beyond what the spiritual intent was.

And yet the contracts, the legality of those contracts was valid.

If it was set aside, that was valid.

If there was a remarriage, that was valid.

If judges, if ministers, and God's church make these decisions, we're going to be held in response to them before God in accordance with his will.

If we make a mistake in judging the people who come to us are absolved from it, it's our responsibility if we make such a decision.

The courts of the land that promiscuously grant divorces instead of counseling people and trying to get them together, we're going to be held responsible.

If they issue the decree, there's issues, and God will judge the judge.

That's the way it has to be.

That's the way it was in the Old Testament, or we have anarchy.

If people presume to do their own thing, then there's anarchy.

And we have to recognize the authority that is vested in the world in regulating these matters, as in regulating all areas of society, just as God and in the Church must recognize that there is a government in God's church under Christ that does administer these things.

And if you want to, you're both in the church, you're both in converted, if you think you can get away with divorcing your mate who's in the church, and you're in the church, and go marry somebody else in or out of the church, you're making a mistake, there is government in the church to stop it, not to stop you, but to stop it from being a bonus.

And we must not let it happen, because I know there are people who would like to take advantage of the situation instead of counseling and learning to love and appreciate the mate that God has given you.

Maybe you should focus in on how wretched you are and forget how wretched he or she is.

And that would solve most of the problems now, wouldn't it? Shall we have a closing song with a late sorry about that?