

Concerning Divorce.

Mark 10:1-12.

Sunday morning, April 20, 2008.

I. The setting.

- A. We come here to the Perea ministry of our Lord. Perea being the region East of the Jordan river opposite Jerusalem and Judea.
- B. Our Lord started His ministry in Galilee. It lasted the better part of two years. It was followed by the retirement ministry, spent in the outlying regions North and East of Galilee. October - December of the Lord's final year was spent in and around Jerusalem. Then follows the Perea ministry from January - April leading to the Lord's suffering and death.
- C. This was Herod's country; Herod who had married his brother Phillip's wife after she had divorced Phillip. As such the question regarding divorce is raised.

II. The Issue.

- A. The Pharisees had no regard for Christ's teaching; for them this was a matter of "divide and conquer." There were two schools of thought among the Jews regarding the matter of divorce, and they were trying to get Christ to choose sides, thus alienating the other side.
- B. Moses had taught in Deut. 24:1 "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found '*erwath dabhar*' in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce..."
 - 1. What does "erwath dabhar" mean? The phrase seems to be deliberately vague. Something scandalous; some indecency; something improper; something offensive; something shameful;

something objectionable. These are all valid renderings.

2. The Lord sheds light on the vagueness of the command saying that it was because of the hardness of man's heart that the Lord left the door of divorce open as far as He did. Perhaps to prevent the evils of violence and murder.
3. The school of Shammai taught that "erwath dabhar" should be limited to unchastely or adultery in its application.

The school of Hillel taught that the phrase should be given the full range of latitude that the phrase permits, linguistically speaking. This meant divorce for just

about

anything.

The school of Hillel was in the vast majority, and its practice ruled the land in the days of Christ. The

reaction

of the disciples to the teaching of the Lord concerning divorce in Matt. 19:10 "If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry" might well indicate that they too were taught along the lines of Hillel.

4. In the days of our Lord it was the Sanhedrin that issued the divorce certificate. The Sanhedrin was composed of a supreme court seated in Jerusalem, and lower courts dispersed throughout the land. Paul served most likely on one of these lower courts.

C. The Lord's teaching.

1. The Lord seems to side with the school of Hillel in their interpretation of what Moses had said. Yet He adds the explanation that Moses did so only because of the hardness of man's heart.
2. The Lord sides with the school of Shammai in discerning that the Lord would have no divorce except for reasons of sexual immorality.
3. He bases His teaching not on Moses, but on the creation

ordinance of marriage Given to us in Gen. 1:26,27.

“Then God said, let Us make man in our image,
according

to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” He further bases it on Genesis 2:24
“Therefore a man shall leave His father and mother and be joined to His wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

4. Based on these words from Genesis He adds the conclusion: “Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

III. Lasting significance.

A. The hardness of men’s heart.

1. The hard heart needs all kinds of things so it can enjoy life, but God would give us a life that can enjoy all things.
2. The hard heart demands, and dominates others, to get the things it wants.
3. The hard heart begets a harvest of resentment in the hearts of others.
4. The hard heart leads you to distance and divorce.
5. The hard heart must find its end in experientially being crucified with Christ.

B. God’s purpose in the permanence of marriage.

1. The marriage bond is the earthly representation of the heavenly and spiritual relationship between Christ and the Church, or Christ and the believer. Eph. 5:24-33.
2. The stated purpose of Christ entering into union with the Church is “that He might sanctify her...”
Ephesians 5:26.

Your sanctification, or your being set apart to God's agenda rather than your own, is God's overarching purpose in the permanence of your marriage. By ending your marriage you would miss that calling.

3. Once you abandon your own agenda and sacrifice it to the cross of Christ, and you purpose with your heart to come under the yoke of Christ, and to be His servant in the lives of your spouse and children, you will find that His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

Then it becomes unimportant whether the people you serve are pleasant or not; easy or difficult, for you take your strength and encouragement; your joy and your glory from the Lord alone. And from Him alone will be your reward.

4. Still thinking about a divorce? Is your spouse too difficult? Are you an easy spouse for the Lord? Should He give up on you? Be careful, with the measure you mete it will be measured to you again.

Luke 6:37,38.