

Matthew 5:31-32 (Divorce and Remarriage; Cont.)
What about the “exception clause”?

Introduction

- I. The clear teaching of Matthew, Mark, and Luke
- A. Luke 16:18 – Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced [sent away] from her husband commits adultery.
1. Jesus calls _____ remarriage after divorce adultery.
 2. Jesus even says that the man who marries the “_____” victim in the divorce commits adultery.
 3. This means that there is _____ divorce that actually breaks the one-flesh union that God creates at marriage.
 4. Jesus is contradicting our cultural assumptions. So we can’t read into Jesus’ words our cultural assumptions! (Just assume an exception for adultery)
 5. Jesus is contradicting our assumptions about the Law! So we can’t read into Jesus’ words our assumptions about the Law! (Just assume an exception for adultery.)
 6. The first readers of Luke didn’t have _____.
- B. Mark 10:10-12 – Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.
1. Jesus calls _____ remarriage after divorce adultery.
 2. Jesus’ statement contradicts our cultural assumptions and our assumptions about the Law, so we can’t read into His statement our cultural assumptions or our assumptions about the Law. (Assume an exception in the case of adultery)
 3. The first readers of Mark didn’t have _____.
- C. Matthew 5:32 – Everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced (sent away) woman commits adultery.
1. When a woman who has been the _____ of an illegitimate divorce remarries, she commits adultery.
 2. Not until the woman *remarries* does she become _____ of any sin.
 3. Whoever marries a woman who was _____ sent away by her husband commits adultery.
 4. Matthew also teaches that _____ remarriage after divorce is adultery.

III. The “exception clause” exists only in Matthew

Matthew 5:32 – Everyone who divorces his wife, *except on the ground of sexual immorality* [porneia], makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Matthew 19:9 – Whoever divorces his wife, *except for sexual immorality* [porneia], and marries another, commits adultery.

- A. The Traditional Interpretation – Most people assume that “porneia” refers to “adultery” in this context (NIV). So in the case of adultery, divorce and remarriage are acceptable.

- B. Problems with the traditional interpretation
 1. Jesus didn’t use the Greek word for _____ (moicheia). Instead, He chose to use the word porneia (_____).

 2. Who brings about the dissolution of the one-flesh union?
 - a. The act of adultery does not break the one-flesh union.
 - b. But the one-flesh union *must* be dissolved if remarriage is not to be considered an act of adultery.
 - c. Therefore, according to the traditional interpretation, the one who initiates the divorce (the “faithful” spouse?) is the one who chooses whether or not to bring about the dissolution of the one-flesh union.

 3. “Whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.” *Unless* that woman was divorced because of sexual immorality?
 - a. According to the traditional interpretation, if a woman was divorced by her husband because she committed adultery, then she is no longer one-flesh with him.
 - b. This is what frees her former husband to marry someone else.
 - c. Is she therefore also free to remarry according to God’s holy Law?
 - d. Is it alright to marry a woman who was divorced by her husband because she committed adultery but not alright to marry a woman who was divorced by her husband because she spoiled his meal?

 4. Is Jesus (like Moses) still making a concession to hardness of heart?
 - a. If Jesus allows a man to divorce his wife because she committed one act of adultery, He is certainly allowing something less than the ideal that He Himself has stated (Mat. 19:6).
 - b. Do we have to “temper” and qualify Jesus’ own words with His other teaching on the importance of pursuing reconciliation?

 5. Is Jesus just siding with one group of Pharisees (the school of Shammai) versus another group of Pharisees (the school of Hillel)?
 - a. The Shammai Pharisees taught that it was lawful to divorce your wife only in the case of adultery.

- b. The traditional interpretation means that Jesus' teaching was little, if no different than the teaching of the Shammai Pharisees.
6. The *biggest* problem with the traditional interpretation of the exception clause is that it _____ the explicitly clear statements of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

C. Question

1. _____ did Mark and Luke choose to leave the exception clause out?
2. _____ did Matthew choose to include the exception clause?

D. Jewish betrothal

1. In the betrothal relationship, the man and woman were commonly thought of as _____ and referred to as _____ and _____ – even though their union had not yet been finalized by the marriage ceremony or consummated sexually.
2. Betrothal was “*The first _____ of marriage* in Jewish culture” (NASB marginal note for Matthew 1:18).
3. If you wanted to undo the betrothal contract, you would actually have to “_____” the wife that you were *bound* to.
4. 1 Corinthians 7:25, 27 – Now concerning the *betrothed*... Are you *bound* to a *wife*? Do not *seek to be free*.
5. The most commonly accepted ground for this divorce of a betrothed wife was _____.
6. Matthew 1:18-19 – Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her *husband* Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to *divorce her* [literally “send her away”] quietly.
7. Joseph did not believe Mary to be guilty of *moicheia* (adultery), but of *Porneia* (fornication).
8. Adultery was not _____ so long as the marriage was unconsummated and the covenant vows not finalized.

E. *Porneia* (unchastity) and *moicheia* (adultery) in the Gospels.

1. Matthew uses “*porneia*” (fornication) three times and Mark once (Mat. 5:32; 15:19; [cf. Mk. 7:21] 19:9), and each time “*moicheia*” (adultery) is also used in the same sentence.
 - a. When “*moicheia*” and “*porneia*” are used together, it is a very *strong* hint that they are being used to refer to two _____ things.
 - b. Matthew 15:19 (cf. Mk. 7:21) – For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery [*moicheia*], sexual immorality [*porneia*], theft, false witness, slander.

- c. 1 Corinthians 6:9 – Do not be deceived: neither the *sexually immoral*, nor idolaters, nor *adulterers*, nor men who practice homosexuality...
 - d. Hebrews 13:4 – Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the *sexually immoral* and *adulterous*.
2. John 8:41 – [The Jews] said to [Jesus], “We were not born of sexual immorality [porneia]. We have one Father—even God.”
- a. The Jews could not accept the _____ birth.
 - b. The Jews could not imply that Jesus was born of _____ (moicheia).
 - c. They *could* imply that Jesus was born of _____ (porneia / sexual unfaithfulness during the betrothal period).
- F. Matthew’s distinction from Mark and Luke.
1. Matthew wrote his gospel specifically for the _____.
 - ✓ Matthew includes the exception clause because his Jewish readers would have wondered if Jesus was even forbidding divorce in the case of sexual unfaithfulness during the betrothal period.
 2. Mark and Luke were writing primarily to _____ and _____ readers respectively.
 - ✓ Mark and Luke leave out the exception clause because their readers would not have been familiar with the Jewish betrothal customs.
 3. Matthew is the _____ Gospel writer who describes Joseph’s intent to *divorce* his *wife* Mary.
 - a. So another reason Matthew includes the exception clause is because of what he said earlier about Joseph wanting to divorce Mary (his betrothed) because he was a _____ man (Matthew 1:18-20).
 - b. Since Mark and Luke do not include the part about Joseph wanting to divorce his betrothed, they still have no need to include the exception clause.
 4. Matthew 5:32 – “Everyone who divorces his wife, [*except on the ground of fornication during the betrothal stage of marriage*], causes her to commit adultery.”
Matthew 19:9 – “Whoever divorces his wife, [*except for fornication during the betrothal stage of marriage*], and marries another, commits adultery.”

G. Matthew 19:3-12; cf. Mark 10:2-12

1. Matthew 19:3 – Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife *for any cause*?
 - a. Mark 10:2 – Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? (Period)
 - b. Mark didn’t think that “for any cause” was necessary in order to properly understand the question.
 - c. So I assume that the Pharisees were asking: “Is there _____ that would justify a man divorcing his wife?”
 - d. Jesus responded: “What... God has joined together, let not man separate.”

2. Matthew 19:3 (cf. Mk. 10:2) – And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking...
 - a. The Pharisees were trying to _____ Jesus in what He said.
 - b. If Jesus had permitted divorce/remarriage for adultery, then the Pharisees would have had no hope of trapping Jesus on this topic.

3. “What God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:6).
 - a. Most people interpret/qualify this clear statement in light of the exception clause (three verses later).
 - b. It is much better to interpret the exception clause in light of Jesus’ clear statement about not separating what God has joined together.
 - c. The exception clause refers to the betrothal stage of Jewish marriage. In this stage, God has _____ joined anyone together.
 - d. NOTE: The fact that Jesus included the _____ “exception clause” indicates that it is, indeed, the _____ exception.

4. Matthew 19:10-12 – The disciples said to him, “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.” But he said to them, “Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.”

Conclusion

A. Summary

1. We interpret the exception clause in light of Jesus’ explicitly _____ statements in *all three* of the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke).
2. Once we understand the exception clause in Matthew to be referring to sexual unfaithfulness during the betrothal period (not adultery in the context of a consummated marriage), then the teaching of the Bible is unmistakably _____.

3. _____ remarriage after divorce is _____ adultery.

B. The heart of the matter

1. In Jesus' teaching on divorce and remarriage, He is not just prohibiting something. *He is* _____
the "sacrament" (mystery) of marriage.
2. Ephesians 5:31-32 – "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.
3. In light of this mystical and sacramental aspect of marriage in the one flesh union that God has joined together and that can be separated only by death, _____ remarriage after divorce _____ constitutes an act of adultery.

C. What does the heart of the matter mean for the divorced?

1. The prohibition of remarriage is not a _____. It is the fruit of God's goodness and holiness.
2. God always gives abundant _____ to live according to His will.
3. We must _____ God's sovereign direction and control of our lives and believe that He will use our single state for His greatest glory and our greatest _____.

D. What does the heart of the matter mean for the single (never married)? – Be _____ who you marry!

E. What does the heart of the matter mean for the married and remarried?

F. *Everyone* should be compelled to _____ the God who gave us marriage.