

Sunday, January 11, 2026 am

WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER (2)

Husband and Wife for Life

Matthew 19:1-12

Last week we began our 2026 theme, “What God has (and has not) joined together”. We noted this year will be a study of some doctrinal issues. We want to notice some teachings that are compatible with each other even though many teach otherwise. The foundational text of this theme is Matthew 19:6. We briefly introduced this phrase last week and related it to our theme. Today, we want to address the context AND the point Jesus was making.

We live in a time where divorce is far too common. Marriages are often entered into without lifelong commitment. Divorce for any reason is the law of most states. Some marriages begin with pre-nuptial agreements implying that we MIGHT decide that this doesn’t work so if it doesn’t “you cannot have my stuff”. Others will leave, “Til death do us part” out of their vows. Many intend marriage to be for life, but they do not enter into the covenant understanding its permanence with divorce being a viable option. Some might argue that today there are fewer divorces than in times past. And while statistically that may be true it does NOT reflect greater morality. Instead, more and more choose to not marry and just cohabit. The commitment and legal binding of marriage is not there at all. And this too is accepted, and at times preferred in our society.

But is that God’s intent? Furthermore, SHOULD one divorce what does God’s word teach about the parties involved? Matthew 19:1-12 factors into this discussion. And what the text teaches is not popular and dismissed (i.e., ignored) or reinterpreted by many, if not most. But that does not change what it says. So let us address the subject of marriage, divorce and remarriage as it relates to Matthew 19:1-9.

NOTE: In this lesson we do not have time to answer all the varying interpretations of this text, but we will address what it actually says and then make some applications.

I. The context – Matthew 19:1-9

- a. Jesus is in the midst of His ministry – teaching and traveling. He comes to Judea, likely approaching the end. Great multitudes are following Him and Jesus heals them and teaches them (Mark 10:1).
- b. The Pharisees come to Him to test Him and ask, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?”
 - i. It is possible that they were seeking clarification about who was right among the Jews based on Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Among the Jews there was 2 different schools of thought as to why a man could divorce his wife. One view, taught by a Rabbi Shamai (who was a contemporary of Jesus and died around the same time as Him) took a conservative view that divorce could only take place for sexual impurity (unfaithfulness, possibly lesser acts provoking lust, etc.). The other view was advanced by Rabbi Hillel who believed that the expression, “finds no favor in his eyes” meant one could divorce a wife for any reason, as long as he did it legally (giving her the certificate of divorce). This latter view was the more popular and progressive view advocated by the Sadducees.
 - ii. The Pharisees were **testing** Jesus. This implies their motives likely were less than sincere. We read of other times they *tested* Him. Matthew 15:1-2 asking why His disciples did not wash their hands; Matthew 16:2 demanding a sign from heaven; Matthew 22:15ff – asking if it is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar; Matthew 22:35 – what is the greatest commandment, etc.
- c. **Jesus answered – NO!** And this is where we need to begin our discussion.

- i. He appeals to “the beginning”. Jesus goes back to Genesis 1:26-27 where man was created in the image of God. God created them male and female (which counters same-sex marriage). Genesis 5:1-2, describing the genealogy of Adam and mentions the same thing.
- ii. Then He quotes Genesis 2:24, ***Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*** This passage describes marriage BASED on a plan that God intended from the very beginning. The scriptures give no set procedure on how this happens. How a marriage takes place is based upon culture. In America this involves a ceremony which includes the exchanging of vows AND a license. So, submitting to the laws of the land, to be married, we need to comply with this.
- iii. He concludes that when a man and woman are joined together, they become one flesh.
- iv. ***Therefore, what God has joined together do not let man separate.*** When one marries they need to understand that God intends that it be for life! You have entered into a covenant in the presence of God! When a man and woman who HAVE THE RIGHT to do so (some do NOT have that right – e.g., Herod – Matthew 14:4; homosexuals – “man and woman”, etc.) marry, God is the one who joins (yokes) them together. And it is the God joined union that man is not to separate (dissolve, sunder).
- d. The Pharisees then ask another question. ***Then why did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce and to put her away?***
- e. Jesus elaborated.
 - i. Because of the hardness of hearts Moses permitted it. NOTE: When you study Deuteronomy 24:1-4 you find the INTENT of the text was to protect a woman who had been put away. If he put her away, it was to be done
 - ii. BUT from the beginning it was not so. What beginning? Consider our context.
 - iii. Vs. 9, Jesus makes a declaration. ***Whoever divorces his wife, except for fornication (sexual immorality) and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.*** What Jesus is saying is this:
 - 1. Divorce is ONLY recognized by God if one has been unfaithful BY committing the act of fornication (which is defined as any sexual relations outside of that between a husband and his wife).
 - 2. If one divorces for any reason OTHER than fornication and marries again, THEY are in an adulterous relationship (unlawful and NOT recognized by God).
 - 3. If one is divorced (put away) because they were guilty of fornication and marries again, THEY are in an adulterous relationship.
 - 4. Only the INNOCENT party in a divorce has the right to remarry without sin.
 - iv. Other passages of the teachings of Jesus confirm this! Matthew 5:32 essentially teaches the same thing. Mark 10:11-12 (is a parallel gospel where Jesus taught this w/o the exception) elaborates by noting this applies with both husband AND wife. Luke 16:18, on another occasion accords with Mark 10:11-12. Consider also Romans 7:1-3 which emphasizes that this lasts as long as one’s spouse is alive.

II. Making application

- a. This passage is first and foremost about marriage. Understand that marriage was instituted by God as the foundational unit of a home. It is sacred. Hebrews 13:4 notes that *Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.* It is NOT something to be entered into lightly. And we need to emphasize the importance of marriage, INCLUDING carefully choosing your mate because it is intended to be for life. Far too many choose divorce rather than seeking to reconcile.
- b. God hates divorce – Malachi 2:13-16. Whenever there is divorce there is sin. This is always true of at least one party, and often both. Even if a divorce takes place on scriptural grounds (the exception of

our text), it is because of sin – a spouse has broken the covenant they made to faithfulness. In our text Jesus is condemning the divorce. Marrying another is further complicating the sin of divorce. Consider 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, *Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.*

c. Some argue that Jesus was dealing with the LOM.

- i. Was He? While He was addressing what Moses taught and how they had abused it, what He taught went BEYOND the LOM.
- ii. Consider the penalty for adultery under the LOM. Deuteronomy 22:22, Leviticus 20:10 listed among “capital crimes.” If the Jews were interested in following God’s laws, both parties in an adulterous relationship would be stoned to death.
- iii. Also, Jesus went back to “the beginning” and quotes from Genesis which predated the LOM. What Jesus taught with the exception goes beyond the LOM which He came to fulfill – Matthew 5:17-18.
- iv. The teaching of Jesus were intended for a better covenant which He would establish (Colossians 2:13-14). Whenever you see differences between what Jesus taught and what the LOM taught, we must keep this in mind.

d. It is about entering the kingdom of heaven – Consider the rest of the context of Matthew 19:10-12.

- i. ***The disciples declared, “If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry.”*** The disciples realized the impact of what Jesus was teaching. If marriage is for life are you not better not marrying? Not necessarily (which Paul dealt with in 1 Corinthians 7). BUT the point is UNDERSTAND what your commitment if/when you do marry. HOW much effort are you putting into finding the right spouse?
- ii. Jesus declares, ***All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given.*** Jesus is NOT in this expression declaring it is ok for one in an adulterous relationship to remain in that relationship. Instead, He is observing that not all are WILLING to accept the cost of being disciples of Jesus. The question is, will one truly repent (cf. Acts 2:38, 2 Corinthians 7:10-11)?
- iii. He elaborates on this by noting different types of eunuchs. A eunuch was one who unable to have sexual relations with another. Jesus gave 3 examples:
 1. Those born that way – birth defects
 2. Those made such by men – in history many kingdoms would make certain servants eunuchs for the sake of trust in their service.
 3. ***There are eunuchs who have made themselves such for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.*** This would describe someone who has counted the cost of following Jesus. We must understand that to be a true disciple of Jesus means He is first in everything. That means we give up anything that hinders our service to Him.
4. Consider Mark 10:29-30 (NKJV) where Jesus spoke of some being willing to leave house, brothers or sisters, father or mother, or wife (NKJV) or children or lands for His sake but we would be rewarded. NOTE: Some earlier MSS leave out wives (as do NASB, ASV, LSB, etc.). BUT consider also Luke 14:26-27 which describes the cost of discipleship. It calls for us to be willing to “hate” anyone or anything that hinders our service to Jesus. This was the point Jesus was making in our text.

The teachings of Jesus on this subject are admittedly hard, personal and unpopular. But if we desire to make Him Lord in our lives, we will accept His teachings, even if it means ending an unscriptural relationship. The question really amounts to this: Who are you willing to put first in your life? What God has joined together, let us not separate. Think about it!