

Divorce and Remarriage

There are some very conservative Christian groups such as Anabaptists (Mennonite and Amish and spinoffs from them) who believe that once you are married to someone, that marriage is not annulled if either spouse commits adultery, or divorces and marries someone else (thereupon equally committing adultery, and causing the new spouse to commit adultery as well). In any such situations, they say that the rejected spouse can never remarry, unless their original spouse returns or dies. Their position is that nothing breaks the marriage bond except death. (Most interestingly though, the Mennonite founder, Menno Simons, held otherwise: that divorce was allowed in the cause of adultery. In fact, the "except death" position of the Mennonites was not officially added until as recent as 1983.)

Anabaptists are so adamant about this position, they go so far as to say that if anyone wants to join their group and they have been divorced and then married someone else, even if they now have children with the new spouse, they must divorce and either be reunited with the original spouse or remain single. While the devotion of those groups to marriage is exemplary and to be desired, in this specific matter they actually go beyond truth. How can we know this? First, by examining God's government whereby He effects the union of a man and a woman. And second, we have to look at the whole of the matter and not focus on one or two verses. The latter is proven to be true time and time again. And both of these proofs are critical and cannot be overemphasized.

To begin with, all of Yahweh God's commands are based on government, and government is both consistent and replicable. Government is at the core of everything Yahweh does. He is not lawless! Therefore, the truth concerning marriage and divorce is found upon examining His government. In this regard, the best way to understand the government of the union of a man and a woman is to see specifically what it is that makes two into one flesh. What is it that actually binds a man and a woman together? This understanding is critical. First though, it is not love that binds the two, albeit important for a fulfilling and profitable relationship. Nor is it compatibility. It is not fulfillment either. Or is it harmony in beliefs. And most certainly, it is not a piece of paper from a governmental entity. So then what is it that binds a man and a woman together as one? It is something that the Creator set forth from the beginning, and remains in force to this day.

In Malachi 2:14-16 we read a most important passage in answering this question. Here Yahweh declares:

"Yet you say, 'For what reason [do you reject our offering]?' Because **Yahweh has been a witness** between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife **by covenant**. But not one has done *so* who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did *that* one *do* while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. For I

hate divorce," says Yahweh, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says Yahweh of hosts."

How in fact is Yahweh a witness to every marriage of a man and a woman? You will notice here in bold that the union of a man and a woman is "by covenant." So, we must first examine specifically how that covenant is established. This is key to understanding the government of marriage—both its uniting effect, and as the potential for dissolution.

Genesis 15:7-21 gives us a most clear and exceptionally revealing and vital testimony of how Yahweh God has set forth the effecting of a covenant. Here He had Abraham take four different kinds of animals and split each of them in two (the two birds were not literally split) and laid the parts out opposite each other. Abraham was then put to sleep and a smoking oven and flaming torch passed between the split parts. Verse eighteen then concludes, "On that day Yahweh made a covenant with Abram." Thus we see that a covenant under the auspices of God is effected by one part passing between the split parts.

So what does this have to do with the covenant of marriage, to which Yahweh is a witness? As you will see, it has everything to do with it! First stated as early as Genesis 2:24 and repeated by Yahshua, as well as stated twice by Paul, we read: "a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." Specifically how is that one flesh effected? By conjugation. As set forth in the covenant pattern of Genesis 15, and clearly designed with effectual purpose by the Creator, the male passes between the split parts of the female, and thereupon the two become one flesh. A covenant is effected! This two-into-one-flesh union is of course directly evidenced by the fruit of that union whereby the haploid sperm unites with the haploid egg, producing the diploid child—the fruit of the two-into-one-flesh union of the man and the woman, even the "godly offspring" spoken of in Malachi 2.

In further confirming testimony to this consummating covenant in marriage, in Hebrews 10:29 we read about "the blood of the covenant" that is afforded through Yahshua's sacrifice. Thus we see that a covenant is attested by the shedding of blood. Of course there was the shedding of blood in the Genesis 15 covenant when the animals were cut in two. And very importantly, we see that blood is attested by Yahweh with clear and like purpose in the one-flesh covenant of a man and a woman. In times past, the public proof of a woman's virginity at her marriage was to hang the bed sheet out and for others to see the testimony of the blood—brought forth by the rending of the veil of the hymen in the woman. This covenant was likewise attested to in the rending of the veil of the temple when Yahshua's blood was shed. And again, just as the blood came from the split animals in the Genesis 15 covenant, so by Yahweh's attesting design blood comes from the split woman in the one-flesh covenant between a man and a woman.

Thus we see in this shedding of blood yet another physical testimony that the union of a man and a woman through conjugation clearly unites the two in a covenant relationship. And let it be noted, it matters not if that blood is literally shed upon the consummation of a one-flesh union. The important fact is, Yahweh God attests to this Himself by His design of the woman. Literally shed or not, that consummating act is indeed a blood covenant. And furthermore, the woman's monthly cycle continually affirms that this is the path of the blood covenant.

And finally, in Deuteronomy 22:28-29 we find yet a third testimony that the covenant of marriage is effected strictly in conjugation. There we read, "If a man finds a girl who is a virgin, who is not engaged, and seizes her and lies with her and they are discovered, then the man who lay with her shall give to the girl's father fifty *shekels* of silver, and she shall become his wife because he has violated her; he cannot divorce her all his days." This same law is found in Exodus 22:16-17, which adds, "If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the dowry for virgins." Why is this so significant? Because, once again, it demonstrates that it is the conjugal act between a man and a woman that makes them one flesh (though here the father had the authority to annul the union).

Having now seen the certainty and highly impacting relevance that the union of a man and a woman into one flesh is indeed a blood covenant whereby Yahweh is a witness, let us examine the teachings of Yahshua regarding marriage and divorce. We will not quote all the dialogue that He had with the Pharisees in Matthew and Mark regarding this. If you want to read more of it, you can go to those passages and read them in full for yourself. What we are going to concentrate on here is specifically this matter at hand: divorce and remarriage.

Beginning in Luke 16:18, we find an isolated statement by Yahshua regarding divorce. He said:

"Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery."

This is of course a most emphatic statement. And taken alone, one would certainly conclude that, as these very conservative groups hold, marriage is always for life. And in Mark 10:11-12 we find the like emphatic statement:

"Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery."

However, in Matthew 19:9 we find this identical statement by Yahshua, but now with a most significant exception. Comparing these two passages, they are both records from the same event. Both were from the same discourse at Judea beyond the Jordan, and the statements were very similar, with one clear exception, identified here in bold. We read:

"And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, **except for fornication**, and marries another woman commits adultery."

Is this the only time this exception is added to this emphatic statement regarding divorce? No. Once again in an isolated statement by Yahshua, in Matthew 5:31-32 we read:

"It was said, 'whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce'; but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, **except for the reason of fornication**, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery."

Before addressing the impact of this clear exception, let us ask: What is fornication? The best way to know is to find another passage where this identical Greek word is used, and hopefully has a more defining application. That would be in John 8:41, where we read the Jew's reply to Yahshua—which is quite possibly a response to the implications surrounding His virgin birth by Mary. They pointedly answered, "We were not born of **fornication**." Thus we see that fornication is conjugation in violation of marriage.

In the opening we noted that we have to look at the whole of a matter and not focus on one or two verses. If one took the emphatic verses in Luke 16:18 and Mark 10:11-12, then it could be concluded that indeed all marriages are for life. And in fact, I wish this were the practice. However, because of the sinful nature of flesh man, fornication is going to happen. So, what is its legal outcome?

And for your information, these two emphatic verses are what these very conservative groups default exclusively to, holding to them and then explaining away the exception in the two verses in Matthew. But as noted at the outset, it is a great mistake when one or two specific verses are focused upon, as they do so, and the whole of the matter is not taken into account. In this case, they fail to give due credence to the twice-stated exception, as well as consider the relevance and prevailing effectual impact of the law and government of the one-flesh covenant of marriage. Thus one must ask: Is explaining away the exception justified; or, is the exception consistent with the whole of the Scriptures and the works and ways and government of Yahweh, thereupon allowing in a specific instance divorce and remarriage? When we look at all the evidence, clearly, a covenant such as marriage can indeed be violated with terminating effects. Let us now examine this.

In these two verses in Matthew containing the one stated exception (the Matthew 19:9 verse being the same quote as that in Mark 10:11-12, but with the exception added), Yahshua clearly provides the sole release from the one-flesh covenant between a man and a woman that is legally possible, and that is if one of them commits adultery. Therefore, the question arises: Knowing that "sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4), specifically how is the law of God violated by the act of adultery/fornication? Also, do we see this lawlessness specifically relevant to a covenant elsewhere in the Scriptures?

Are you aware that God divorced Israel? Indeed He did. And what do you think was the specific cause for that divorce? Would it surprise you that it was equally for the cause of adultery? In Jeremiah 3:8 we read, "And I [Yahweh] saw that for all the **adulteries** of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce." Here we see Yahweh doing the very thing Yahshua spoke of—divorcing a wife, putting her out of the house, because of adultery.

Are there testimonies regarding Yahweh rejecting His people specifically over their rejection of the covenant He made with them? Indeed so. In Exodus 24:6-8 we read about that covenant. And as we saw regarding marriage, it too was a covenant effected by blood. Verse 8 states:

So Moses took the blood and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, "Behold the **blood of the covenant**, which Yahweh has made with you in accordance with all these words."

But did the people keep this blood covenant? Not at all. They committed harlotry with the nations—the like act that effects the annulment of the marriage covenant. In 2 Kings 17:15 we read:

They rejected His statutes and His **covenant** which He made with their fathers and His warnings with which He warned them. And they followed vanity and became vain, and *went* after the nations which surrounded them [adultery], concerning which Yahweh had commanded them not to do like them.

What were the consequences for their rejection of His covenant? As we have seen, He divorced them and sent them away. In verse 20 we read:

Yahweh rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them out of His sight.

And He did the same with Judah as well. As we read in Jeremiah 22:9, they too “forsook the **covenant** of Yahweh their God and bowed down to other gods and served them.” For this reason, He sent them into captivity in Babylon.

But you might object that after seventy years, Yahweh brought the Jews back to Jerusalem and restored them. Indeed He did, and He can always choose to have mercy, just as a man or wife can have mercy on an adulterous spouse and forgive them. That is always the better option if there is indeed true repentance. It is worthy to note that in every case with regard to Israel or Judah, they first had to repent. It is a wonderful thing to forgive a truly repentant person for any offense, including adultery. But there are many occasions when the adulterous spouse has no desire whatsoever to repent or to remain with the faithful spouse. And when that is the case, their violation of the covenant stands, and the offended spouse is no longer obligated to it and is free to be joined to another.

As we have seen, it was by conjugation that the blood covenant was established in the witness of Yahweh God. And thus it is by conjugation outside of that covenant whereby the offending spouse joins himself/herself in a one-flesh union to another, thereupon annulling the former covenant. The act of adultery is entirely a matter of not being faithful to uphold one’s one-flesh blood covenant, and making a covenant with another. The unfaithful spouse is indeed a lawless **covenant breaker!** And when that covenant is broken, the offended spouse is in no way bound to that person (unless they choose to forgive the offense and stay united). By adultery/fornication they are released from the lawless spouse.

So you might ask: Is there any evidence in the New Testament that confirms what we are seeing here? Very much so. We have seen in the Old Testament where this outworking of a covenant is indeed practiced by Yahweh God, and in the New Testament we see the same government. Remember, Yahshua did away with *carte blanche* divorce provided under the law of Moses (Matthew 19:7-9). But when we understand the government of the one-flesh blood covenant between a man and a woman, we can understand why He had to maintain the provision for the annulment of that covenant by unfaithfulness. Knowing what we now know about the one-flesh marriage covenant, we can see why infidelity was indeed the only thing that was and is grounds for divorce.

What then do we find in the New Testament that upholds this? Again, it is this matter of a blood covenant, and here it is the covenant that is afforded to us by the blood of Yahshua.

It is interesting and even contradictory that Anabaptists, who hold to this belief of marriage for life and that fornication does not negate a one-flesh marriage covenant, actually reject the belief of "once saved, always saved." They believe in "once married, always married," which is based on a blood covenant; but then reject "once saved, always saved," which is equally based on a blood covenant. But a blood covenant, is a blood covenant. Here again, as noted at the outset, Yahweh God's commands are based on government, and government is both consistent and replicable.

If you believe in one of these two covenants, by the very nature and government of the blood covenant, you have to believe the same regarding the other. If you believe in once saved, always saved; then you have to believe in once married, always married. And conversely, if you do not believe in once saved, always saved; then you cannot believe in once married, always married. You cannot have it both ways, holding to two beliefs that are contradictory to each other, for each is a like blood covenant that is set forth by Yahweh God.

So, is the doctrine of once saved, always saved true? If it is, then there are many scriptures and principles you have to totally ignore. That doctrine dangerously removes all aspects of personal accountability, giving a person a fateful license to sin (Jude 1:4). Yahshua clearly stated that when He comes, He will "repay every man according to his deeds" (Matthew 16:27). And Paul warned that we are to "work out [our] salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). Grace is not a blank check to do wrong, but the power and obligation and responsibility to do what is right. As it is clearly written, "anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God" (1 John 3:10).

Furthermore, regarding this personal accountability, let us consider the following, especially in light that it addresses the blood covenant through the blood of Yahshua. In Hebrews 10:26-31 we read:

For if we sin willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on *the testimony of two or three witnesses*. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the **blood of the covenant** by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Here again we see that, just like in marriage, the issue is equally one's faithfulness relative to a blood covenant. And in Hebrews 6:4-6 we see the identical message of faithfulness to the covenant by which one has joined oneself to Yahshua:

For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted

the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and *then* have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.

Do you see that after accepting this blood covenant through Yahshua, if we sin willfully there is no longer a sacrifice for our sins? And if we continue on that path, it is impossible to renew us to repentance. We have regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant, and thereupon lose the benefits and rights of that covenant. It has been set aside. We have violated the covenant, and are no longer a party to it. And do you now see that this is exactly what happens when a spouse regards as unclean the blood of their own one-flesh covenant and rejects repentance, thereupon equally annulling it?

The reality is, when there is a covenant between two parties, there is responsibility on the part of both of them to keep and maintain that covenant—whether it be a contract between two people, or entering into the covenant afforded by the blood of Yahshua, or equally in the one-flesh blood covenant between a husband and wife. As we have seen, that one flesh is effected and maintained in one way—in the covenant of conjugation! And in any covenant, if one of the parties is unfaithful, they thereupon abandon the covenant and are held accountable. This is especially true with adultery, for it not only violates the first covenant, but at its expense it establishes a covenant with another.

Therefore, if one is going to rightfully hold that once saved, always saved is error; they have to accept that once married, always married is equally error. Both are blood covenants, and both require responsibility, faithfulness, and accountability to the covenant so as to keep it and not annul it. If the covenant with Yahshua is not kept through fornication with the world, then it is annulled and the offending person is held accountable for their willful sins. Likewise, if the covenant with a spouse is not kept through fornication with another person, then it too is annulled and the offending spouse is held accountable for their willful sin(s). Thereby, in the case of Yahshua or the offended spouse, they are no longer obligated to fulfill the covenant. And, the offended spouse is then free to be joined to another. Otherwise, Yahshua would have never made the legal and just exception for divorce—“**except for fornication.**”

There will certainly be those who have held to this erroneous application of the Scriptures out of a misguided sense of doing good, which even so is exemplary, but now see that it is not right and that they are free. Yet even with seeing the truth, some might fear the change. If this is you, I offer to you the following from 1 John 3:19-20: “We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things.” May the peace of God guard your heart and your mind in Yahshua.

Postscript: One of the passages that always arises in this particular matter is 1 Corinthians 7. For a careful examination of that passage, [click here](#).

[E-mail your comments or ask to be notified of future publications](#)