

Divorce is so common in our world that it is hard to find a family who has not been affected by it. Divorce is spiritually devastating to lives and to society. Because of the epidemic proportions of unscriptural divorce and remarriage, a number of preachers have either stopped preaching on it or have changed their doctrinal view. As a result people are often taught to remain in marriages disapproved of by God. Because of the lack of preaching and teaching there exists wide-spread ignorance on this subject. Unfortunately, many will be eternally lost as a result of their ignorance about sinful marriages (Hosea 4:6). This brief study will be dealing with unscriptural marriage, divorce and remarriage as it relates to the question of baptism: "Does baptism sanctify an unscriptural marriage?"

The first marriage on earth stands as a pattern for all marriages that would follow. In the first marriage God formed one man, Adam, and one woman, Eve, and brought them together as husband and wife. By inspiration Adam said: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). This statement implies that marriage was permanent in nature. Four thousand years later Jesus recited this same verse when asked if a man could put away his wife (divorce) for every cause. The Pharisees asked the question and Jesus responded by stating the Genesis passage: "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?" Then Jesus added: "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matthew 19:3-6). Nothing had changed between the time of Adam and Eve and the time of Jesus. Heaven has decreed that God's marriage bond must not be broken and yet people are breaking it on a regular basis.

Jesus only allowed a scriptural divorce and a remarriage under one and only one condition. He

said, "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matthew 19:9). The one exception is when one spouse commits an act of fornication; this would include adultery, homosexuality, and even bestiality. If there is a physical act of fornication then the innocent spouse can scripturally put away the guilty party and marry someone else who is scripturally eligible. Being scripturally eligible would be a person who has never been married before, someone whose spouse has died or a person who is the innocent party in a scriptural divorce (Romans 7:2-3). The person who is guilty of committing fornication, once put away, is no longer eligible to scripturally marry. That individual must repent of his sin and remain unmarried if he hopes to gain entrance into heaven.

It is also possible for this marriage to continue even if fornication is committed by one (or both) of the spouses. If the spouse who commits an act of fornication repents and the innocent spouse forgives the erring spouse and wishes to stay in the relationship, they can. Divorce does not have to occur in every case of fornication if the innocent spouse has the inclination to forgive. It would be a wonderful thing if the husband and wife could remain together.

The thing that needs to be understood by today's world is that God has not authorized divorce for any other reason except for fornication. Often divorces are desired simply because the husband and wife do not get along. They divorce because they are tired of arguing and not because someone committed fornication. This would be an unscriptural divorce. This is a divorce that the devil would encourage, not God. Mark 10:11-12 says, "And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband and be married to another, she committeth adultery."

God's word says marriage is binding until the death of a spouse: "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man" (Romans 7:2-3). Here we learn that the husband and wife are bound together for as long as they are alive on this earth. When death severs the tie, then the remaining spouse is at liberty to marry another. However, if a second marriage occurs before the death of the spouse then the act of adultery is committed and continues to be committed as long as she (or he) remains in the relationship with the second man. If a person leaves their spouse without the cause of fornication and begins a second relationship, God identifies that as the sin of adultery.

Adultery is a work of the flesh that will result in a person being lost in hell. Notice what Galatians 5:19-21 says, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I told you before, as I have also told you times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." No sin, including adultery, is worth losing your soul over, but it will happen if a person does not repent.

This is why the Corinthians repented of their adultery when they obeyed the Gospel. Paul pointed this out in this statement: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And

such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). They gave up adultery in the same way that a drunkard would give up his drinking, or a thief would give up his stealing. They stopped practicing the sin of adultery because the result would be failure to reach heaven.

If a person is in an unscriptural marriage, the Lord calls it adultery. Adultery is a sin that will keep people out of heaven. How can this particular sin be forgiven? Like any other sin, its practice must be discontinued. How can an unscriptural marriage be made right before Almighty God? In the same way a homosexual relationship or a polygamist’s relationship is handled. The two homosexuals must separate. The man and his multiple wives must disband because plural marriage is unscriptural. The man and woman that have entered into a second marriage without having obtained a scriptural divorce are in a sinful situation and must separate.

Baptism cannot sanctify an unscriptural marriage. It cannot do this for the homosexual, or for the polygamist, or for a man and woman that are unscripturally joined together. When John the Baptizer spoke to Herod John did not suggest baptism, but rather pointed out Herod’s unlawful relationship with another man’s wife. The passage says, “For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias’ sake, his brother Philip’s wife. For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her” (Matthew 14:3-4). If baptism would have corrected this relationship, then John would have suggested it. Instead, he informed them that they were in an unlawful relationship. The unlawful relationship could not be sanctified by baptism.

If the idea were true that a person can marry and divorce for any reason and then be baptized and keep the second or third wife it would actually encourage people to divorce before baptism. Yes, it would in fact teach that divorce was acceptable

before baptism. A young man or woman in the church could be taught this doctrine to wait to be baptized until you had been married for a few years to see if the marriage was going to work. If the marriage did not work, divorce that person, marry another and then be baptized. This logic would promote multiple marriages before baptism. That you could be married ten or twelve times and then on the thirteenth marriage, be baptized and all would be well before God. Now, WHO CAN BELIEVE THAT!?

Baptism will only sanctify a person who repents (Acts 2:38). Repentance means a person must stop his stealing, or lying, or drinking, or homosexuality, or adultery (Ephesians 4:17-5:5).

Marriages must be kept pure and most certainly this is true for the Lord’s church (Ephesians 5:25-27). The only way that marriages can be kept pure is by obeying God’s word, the truth (John 17:17). God does not want more divorces in this world. He wants fewer. Because millions of people are living in adulterous marriages does not mean the Bible is wrong; it means those people are wrong and need to correct their ways.

This is a hard saying for some, but it is the truth of the Bible. I encourage you to study this subject further with a good and honest heart for it is vital to the saving of your soul.

This tract is condensed from a lesson presented at the  
29th Annual Mid-West Lectures,  
“*They Shall Be Turned Unto Fables*”

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**“They Shall Be Turned  
Unto Fables”**

# **“Baptism Sanctifies An Unscriptural Marriage”**

by  
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*International Bible Studies  
Tract Series*