

It should come as no surprise that the threat of false teachers is ever present. For this reason we must constantly be vigilant and always be aware of their damnable heresies. The apostle John warned, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

Rather than striving to be justified before God, many seek to justify themselves in their sin. To strive to be justified before God is to bring oneself into alignment with the will of God. It is to have godly sorrow for sin which leads to true repentance and humble submission to the gospel. To strive to justify oneself is to rearrange the gospel to fit one's desires and/or manner of living. Its foundation is in pride and the refusal to admit sin and to change. As sad as it is, many people never admit being wrong and therefore do not strive to please God. With that in mind, no wonder Jesus said, "...for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat" (Matthew 7:13).

One such way people justify themselves is by rationalizing those in unlawful marriages. It is sometimes claimed that since they are not Christians, they are not amenable to the law of Christ. Further it is argued that since Christ is King over His kingdom, then those outside of Christ are not in His kingdom, and therefore not amenable to His laws. Thus, we must ask, "Are Jesus' laws of marriage, divorce, and remarriage only applicable to Christians?" To answer this, let us be like the noble Bereans and examine this in light of the scriptures (Acts 17:11).

In all discussions of this sort, definitions of terms are always in order. "Non-Christians" are alien sinners. They are those who know not God and have not obeyed the gospel of Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:8). They are "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12). The term "amenable" means "liable to be brought to account: answerable" (Merriam-Webster). God's marriage laws refer to the Divine laws governing marriage as per the New Testament (e.g. Matthew 5:32; 19:9).

To what law are non-Christians amenable? There are three laws that various individuals claim men are

amenable: the law of civil governments, the law of the conscience (moral laws), and the law of Christ. To be sure, the Bible teaches all mankind are amenable to all three of these laws and not simply one of the three.

According to the scriptures, all men are amenable to the laws of civil governments. Paul wrote, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Romans 13:1). Peter also added, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake..." (1 Peter 2:13). Clearly, all mankind is amenable to civil laws.

In accordance with Divine writ, all men are also amenable to the laws of the conscience. In defining sin Paul exclaimed, "...for whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). Contextually, Paul is speaking of eating meats and violating one's conscience or the conscience of a brother in Christ. Further John wrote, "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things" (1 John 3:20). If we condemn ourselves by violating our own conscience, how could we ever think God who knows our hearts will not do the same. Without doubt, the conscience must be properly trained. Nonetheless, the point is well made: to violate one's conscience is sin.

Since Jesus is "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Timothy 6:15) and "all authority" has been given unto Him (Matthew 28:18), and since the New Testament is His law, then all men are amenable to the law of Christ. Also, since "all authority" has been given unto Him "in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18), then His law is an universal law over all mankind and not just over the citizens of His kingdom. In other words and to be absolutely clear, ***all men are amenable to the law of Christ***. In fact, the reason all men are amenable to the laws of civil governments and to the laws of the conscience is because they are amenable to the laws of Christ. Christ's law teaches men to obey civil authorities and not to violate their consciences.

However, some who want to justify unscriptural marriages say alien sinners are only amenable to civil governments. To be sure, laws of civil governments regulate the actions of its citizens, but civil laws do not regulate such things as idolatry, witchcraft, covetousness, fornication, lewdness, lust, and lying.

Christ's law clearly does (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:18-21; Ephesians 4:17-22). For example, citizens of ancient Corinth were guilty of fornication associated with the worship of idols. It was not illegal in Corinth to practice such, yet Paul by inspiration condemned such atrocious actions. The same could be said for ancient Ephesus with its many temples of fertility gods and goddesses. Ancient Athens reveals the same. Furthermore, a casual look at politicians of the past and of the present clearly reveals they are unconcerned with covetousness and lying since the vast majority of them do both.

Those who espouse the view that alien sinners are only amenable to civil governments believe that no matter how many times a person has married and divorced before becoming a Christian, he has not sinned as long as he has not violated civil laws. However when earnest thought is given, their inconsistency is plainly revealed in the end. They would have you to believe that sex between consenting adults is not sin because it violates no civil law while jaywalking is sin because it violates civil laws. Further, they would have you to believe that a person could trade spouses like trading cars and as long as it does not violate civil laws, it is not sin, but raising chickens within the city limits of many towns and cities to feed your family is sin because it violates civil laws. The words of Isaiah 5:20 ought to ring loud and clear. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"

Others say that men are only amenable to the law of the conscience. However since the conscience ought to be properly trained, then it is only logical that it can be improperly trained, and an improperly trained conscience is not a good standard of behavior. Remember, Paul persecuted Christians "in all good conscience" (Acts 23:1), and some apostates have "their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Timothy 4:2). In addition Jeremiah wrote, "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (10:23). Solomon's words in Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25 are also fitting. He wrote, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." For these reasons, careful students of the Bible have

abandoned the thought that men are only amenable to the law of the conscience.

All people are amenable to the law of Christ, but not all parts of the law is applicable to all people, and there are prerequisites to various laws. What is meant by the first part of that statement is there are laws concerning various individuals in the church and in the family. What may apply to elders may or may not apply to others. For example, elders are not to be novices, but there can be, and hopefully are, novices in the church (i.e. newly baptized individuals). Also men are to be the heads of their families which does not apply to women or children. Another example is the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments. They were given to Israel who God led out of Egyptian bondage and were part of the law of Moses (Exodus 20:2) which was abolished at the death of Christ (Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14).

In addition, there are prerequisites to various laws. A prerequisite is “something that is necessary to an end or to the carrying out of a function” (Merriam-Webster). For example, belief and repentance are necessary before a person is baptized. All men are amenable to God’s law on baptism but not all are qualified to be baptized because they do not believe or have not repented. The same could be said of worship. Hear the words of Solomon in Proverbs 28:9, “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.” Does God want abominable worship? Of course not. Before a person can offer acceptable worship, he must get his life in order. At least in part, that was the problem with Cain’s worship. Cain “was of that wicked one” (1 John 3:12) while Abel “was righteous” (Hebrews 11:4). Was Cain amenable to God’s law? Yes, of course. His sacrifice was judged of God as unacceptable. Are men today amenable to God’s law concerning worship? Yes. However they need to get their lives in order before they are qualified to offer acceptable worship. Righteous living is a prerequisite to acceptable worship.

If all men are not amenable to the law of God, then there are several implications and denials that must be brought to light. First, it is a denial that all have sinned, and yet the Bible teaches all have sinned (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8,10). In fact, sin is the

transgression of law (1 John 3:4), and we learn what sin is by the law (Romans 4:15).

Second, it is a denial of the standard of judgment. If a person is not amenable to the law of Christ, then he will not be judged by that law. However Jesus said, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48; see also Acts 17:31; 2 Corinthians 5:10). Notice this included those who were alien sinners who rejected the words of Christ.

Third, it is a denial of the universal authority of Jesus (Matthew 28:18; 1 Timothy 6:15), and that disobedience to His laws will lead to eternal destruction (2 Thessalonians 1:8). If a person is not amenable to Christ’s law, then the Lord Jesus has no authority over that person. However, Jesus said, “all authority has been given unto me.” If He does not have all authority, then Jesus must have lied.

In Matthew 19:9 Jesus set forth the sole scriptural reason for divorce – fornication. Despite the Pharisees’ trickery, Jesus took them back to the beginning design of God for marriage. One man and one woman has always been God’s design. It surpassed the law of Moses, and it was in effect before the law of Christ. Furthermore, in Matthew 5:32, Jesus applied the marriage law to “whosoever” which includes and applies to every accountable person in the New Testament age. Though men may wrest and twist the scriptures in order to justify themselves in their sins, they do it to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16). A person may approach the scriptures like a “New York lawyer,” but one day he will stand before God to be judged by the very words he twisted.

This tract is condensed from a lesson presented at the  
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**“They Shall Be Turned  
Unto Fables”**

# **“Non-Christians Are Not Amenable To God’s Marriage Laws”**

by  
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