

THE

HARVESTER

"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." [Luke 10:2]

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"BUT FROM THE BEGINNING IT WAS NOT SO"

The question is frequently raised, "May a Christian put away his wife (or husband) for the cause of fornication and then marry another?" This is indeed a most important question. It warrants much more consideration than it often receives among our brethren, for we have increasingly allowed trends of a permissive society to dictate our behavior.

Instructions which relate to this question are found in 1 Cor. 7:10-11, where Paul taught that in event of departure the partners of a marriage were required to either "remain unmarried or be reconciled." These were the only two options. No other provision is mentioned or is even alluded to in inspired

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writings directed to the New Testament church.

The next question which arises concerns the application of Matt. 5:32 and Matt. 19:9, where Jesus Himself used the terms "*saving for the cause of fornication*" and "*except it be for fornication*" It is to be readily admitted, of course, that if Jesus provided for an exception to Christians, then such must indeed be taught and allowed. The problem in understanding the matter lies in determining:

1. To whom was Jesus addressing His comments?
2. What was the exception to which He referred?

TO WHOM WAS JESUS ADDRESSING HIS COMMENTS?

The last three and one-half years prior to the establishment of the Christian era was surely a time of transition. That which had been "*added*" to the promise, the Law (Gal. 3:19), was about to be superseded by "*the beginning*" (Acts 11:15) of a grand and final age not limited by the old Law. During this transition period many preparatory provisions are to be noted in Jesus' teachings and actions. These are such as:

Authority and humility among the disciples
(Matt. 20:25-28)

The communion (Matt. 26:29)

The great commission (Matt. 28:19-20)

Some of Jesus' teaching was directed to matters which applied at that time and which had no continuing application. These consisted of such as:

Preparation for the Passover (Luke 2:9-13)

Offering for cleansings (Mark 1:40-44)

Offering at the altar (Matt. 5:23-24)

Observance of the Ten Commandments
(Matt. 19:16-22)

Adherence to the old Law (Mark 1:40-44)

Then there were those situations where Jesus clearly admitted the application of the old Law but demonstrated a principle which would prevail in the Christian era: e.g., Woman taken *"in the very act"* of adultery (John 8:3-11).

In both Matt. 5:32 and 19:9 Jesus' comments were clearly made and applied to those who were acquainted with Moses' teaching. To have taught contrary to the law then in force would have made Jesus at variance with His own teaching in which He said, *"Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled"* (Matt. 5:18). Had Matt. 5:32 (which mentions an exception and which some say was a new law) not applied to those to whom He was speaking, then Jesus would have been teaching and making applicable a new law before all had been fulfilled.

To pursue this just a bit further, every contrast made by Jesus in His sermon on the mount (Matt. 5, 6, and 7) had its basis in Old Testament writings:

"Ye have heard... but I say unto you... whosoever is angry" (vs. 21-22), found in Lev. 19:17.

"Ye have heard... but I say... whosoever looketh on a woman" (vs. 27-30), found in Job 31:1 and Prov. 6:25.

"It hath been said... but I say... saving for the cause of fornication" (vs. 31-32), found in Deut. 22 and 24.

"Ye have heard... but I say... swear not at all", found in Exo. 20:7 and Deut. 6:13, 10:20.

"Ye have heard... but I say unto you... turn to him the other also" (vs. 38-42), found in Isa. 50:6, Exo. 21:23-25, Lev. 24:20, Lam. 3:30, Prov. 20:22, Deut. 15:8-11, and Prov. 25:22.

"Ye have heard... but I say... love your enemies" (vs. 43-48), found in Lev. 19:18, Prov. 25:21-22, and Exo. 23:4-5.

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication intended to encourage all men everywhere to become laborers into God's harvest (Lk. 10:2). This paper is mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address, and all correspondence to:

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As these observations demonstrate, Jesus' remarks regarding an exception were made and were applicable only to those then living under the old Law.

WHAT WAS THE EXCEPTION TO WHICH JESUS REFERRED?

In both Matt. 5:31 and 19:8, Jesus acknowledges what had been commonly understood from Moses' writings in Deut. 24:1-4, the putting away of wives by a writing of divorcement. But in Matt. 19:8 Jesus further states that what Moses suffered was because of *"the hardness of your hearts."* It was not God's desire, but rather what God permitted because of their hardness of heart. This is comparable to God suffering Israel to have a king (1 Sam. 8) and to the time of ignorance referred to in Acts 17:30. Of the putting away of companions, Jesus states in verse 8, *"But from the beginning it was not so."* In view of this direct statement by Jesus, we reach three necessary conclusions:

1. God has never approved of divorce and remarriage
2. Such was permitted only because of hardness of mens' hearts
3. It was something "suffered" against God's will.

How can we possibly understand, then, that Jesus in the very next verse authorized what He had just condemned?

The "*saving for the cause of fornication*" and "*except it be for fornication*" must be understood, therefore, to have some other application. Since Jesus was speaking to those who knew the Law and were inquiring as to its meaning, He was certainly not going to teach something contrary to the Law. He said, in effect, that what Moses suffered was not what God intended from the beginning. It was not what God had required in Deut. 22:13-30, where God's provision was to "*put away evil from among you*" by stoning (Deut. 22:21,22,24). The writing of divorcement allowed in Deut. 24 appears to have been a later provision suffered "*because of the hardness of your hearts*".

The exception referred to by Jesus was not at all to permit divorce and remarriage. He spoke of marriage as a permanent bond entered into for life and dissolvable only by death (Matt. 19: 3-6). The exception of which Jesus spoke was for fornication, which when committed, was punishable by death. Upon the death of the fornicator, the remaining companion to that marriage could remarry. Why could he do so? Because the marriage had been dissolved by the death of the fornicator. This cannot be effected during the Christian era, of course, because of our instructions against violence and unto peace. Such a situation during the Christian era should be handled in accord with Paul's teaching in 1 Cor. 7:10-11, "*remain unmarried or be reconciled*".

WHEN AN UNBELIEVER DEPARTS

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes of the believer who is married to an unbeliever. In verse 15 of chapter 7 he says, "*But if the unbelieving departs, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God has called us to peace*." If it be that the bondage of which Paul speaks is marriage, then the believer has

an exception and may again marry while his first companion still lives. But this is simply not so! The bondage referred to by Paul is the injunction he had just made in verses 12 and 13, *"If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him."* Verse 15 acknowledges the fact that if the unbeliever will not remain with the believer, then the believer is under no obligation to Paul's previous instructions in vs. 12 and 13. You cannot live with someone who is determined not to live with you; and this is emphasized by the conclusion of verse 15, *"But God hath called us to peace."*

(Editor's Note: Due to the length of this important article, the remaining portion will appear next month!)

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SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. How many people were aboard the ship on which Paul went through the storm?
2. What relation was Eunice to Timothy?
3. Proverbs 25 through 29 were Solomon's proverbs. What king had them copied?
4. The last two verses of the Old Testament are a prophecy of what event?
5. What was Manna described as tasting like?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. How many sons did Ishmael have? TWELVE
(Gen. 25:13-15)
2. Peter's first denial of Jesus was to whom?
ONE OF THE MAIDS OF THE HIGH PRIEST (Mark
16:66-68)
3. In the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus,
what color did the rich man wear? PURPLE
(Luke 16:19)
4. In Zechariah, what does the Lord want from
the people of Bethel in place of their insincere
fasting and feasting? TRUE JUDGMENT, MERCY
AND COMPASSIONS (Zech. 7:9)
5. Who are the four major prophets? ISAIAH,
JEREMIAH, EZEKIEL, AND DANIEL

WHAT DIVIDES PEOPLE?

Feelings that may deceive (Prov. 14:12)

Prejudices that may blind (Acts 28:27)

Creeds that may confuse (Mark 7:7)

Indifference that may stupefy (Acts
28:27)

Watchmen who will not warn (Ezek. 33:8)

Husks that will not satisfy (Luke 15:16)

Imaginations that will not yield (2 Cor.
10:5)

Leaders who cannot see (Matt. 15:14)

Ears that will not listen (Acts 7:57)

Dust that may obscure (Acts 22:23)

Cowards who may compromise (2 John
10:11)

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GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place & Time</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
October 1 - 3 (F- Su)	West Gadsden Church Gadsden, AL 7:00 evenings	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
October 1 - 3 (F- Su)	West Broad Street Wedowee, AL 7:00 evenings	Bill Prince (Oxford, AL)
October 4 - 10	Estesburg Church near Summerset, KY	V. W. Boland (Gadsden, AL)
October 11 - 15	Oak Grove Church near Summerset, KY	V. W. Boland (Gadsden, AL)
October 11 - 15	New Bethel Church Stanford, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
October 20 - 24	Marrowbone, KY	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)

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PUT THE MAN TOGETHER

A father reading his paper came across a map of the world. He clipped it out, cut it into pieces, and told his small son to put the world together. After a while the boy called, "I've done it!"

His father marveled, "As quick as this? How did you do it?"

The son said, "I turned it over and on the back was a picture of a man. I put the man together -- and the world was right!"

Perhaps instead of spending so much time trying to straighten out the rest of the world, it would be easier to put "ourselves" together first! What do you think?