DIVORCE AND RE-MARRIAGE IN THE LIGHT OF MATTHEW 19:1-12

Student name

Assignment

Date

**Divorce and Re-Marriage**

**Introduction**

Matters of marriage, divorce and remarriage do not seem to us, the authors of this teaching, as extensive as we thought when we began to study this topic. We came to certain conclusions much faster and easier than originally thought. It does not follow from this that this is a simple question, and it can be taken lightly. Applying biblical positions to divorce / remarriage issues in numerous real-life situations is often fraught with difficulty. The position of the Bible in this matter is very important, since there are many students who have gone through a divorce in the past, or who are currently experiencing a difficult marriage. The kingdom is growing, and the complexity of this issue is also increasing. The reason of this paper is to analyses the theological understanding of divorce and remarriage and it should flow mainly from exegetical work in Matthew 19:1-12, supported by Matthew 5:32, Deut. 24:1-4; and 1 Corinthians 7:10-16 and study of other relevant passages. The goal of this paper is to solidify the theological understanding of divorce and remarriage in the light of Matthew’s work. The first verses of the New Testament on marriage, divorce, and remarriage are as follows: Matthew 5: 31-32; 19: 3-12; Mark 10: 2-12; Luke 16:18; and 1 Corinthians 7: 8. They are included in this paragraph for a general overview, starting with simpler verses in Mark and Luke.

**II. Doctrinal Position**

“Marriage is a sacred union made in the face of the Lord. Adultery, as well as flirting, viewing pornography and other manifestations of infidelity are unacceptable in a Christian marriage.” [[1]](#footnote-1)

According to the Holy Scriptures, marriage is a covenant that people make once and for all life. There are no canonical reasons for divorce: divorce from a biblical position is unacceptable (Mark 10: 5-12, Luke 16:18). We instruct and teach that believers must by all means strive to preserve their family and marital relations. Church priests are called upon to help strengthen families by teaching the biblical principles of married life through seminars, counseling, and otherwise. Families experiencing a crisis in a relationship or on the verge of a divorce should be provided with the necessary pastoral assistance (crisis counseling).

*Matthew 19: 3 . And the Pharisees came to him and, tempting him, said to him: is it for any reason permissible for a man to divorce his wife?*

The Pharisees came up and asked, tempting Him: is it permissible for a husband and wife to divorce? He answered them: What did Moses command you to do? They said, "Moses allowed me to write a divorce letter and get divorced." “ And if a wife divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery. ” [[2]](#footnote-2)

Neither Matthew nor Mark clearly indicate the reasons why the Pharisees approached Jesus Christ right now and offered him just such a question. But one can observe that, according to evangelists, such performances were the result of an increasingly developing hostility to Christ. “And indeed is observed that Hebrew and Christian moralist in condemnation of divorce and directed not against the exercise of the right , but against its abuse.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

*Matthew 19: 5 . And he said: therefore a man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they will be two with one flesh, (Compare Mk. 10: 7–8 ).*

The speech given by Matthew is a continuation of the previous one. So far, Christ has left unanswered the tricky question of the Pharisees, which they really wanted to offer, namely, can a person after taking a divorce from his first wife take another one, and he argues exclusively within the framework of the proposed question as such. A man should not leave a woman, because, according to the law given by God, he cannot remain alone and live in a celibate state. In order not to be lonely and celibate, he leaves even the people closest to him, his father and mother. The quote is borrowed from Genesis. 2:24 , where these words are not attributed to God, but to Adam. “If Mt. 1.18-25 relates itself to 5.32 and 19.9 as an example to a precept in the matter of divorce, it may also, I should like to suggest, profitably be connected with the word about eunuchs in 19.10-12.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

*Matthew 19: 6 . so they are no longer two, but one flesh. So, what God combined, that man does not separate.*(Compare Mk. 10: 8–9 ).

The words of Christ in this verse are a conclusion from what He said before. The man’s abandonment of his wife, or divorce, is primarily contrary to nature, because at the same time “the same flesh is cut” (St. John Chrysostom), and, further, to the law of the Lord, because “you are attempting to share what God has united and I didn’t order to divide. ” It is noteworthy that the Savior does not say “whom” God combined, those people do not separate, but “what” ( ὅ ) God combined, etc. Speech, as this place is correctly interpreted, is not about two bodies, but about one body, which is expressed through “what”.

*Divorce letter and divorce it?(Compare Mk. 10: 3-4 ).*

The objection made to Christ seemed to the Pharisees to be very strong and irrefutable. This is expressed in the word ἐνετείλατο , which means not “allowed”, “allowed”, but “commanded”. Judging by the previous words of Christ, God “commanded” that the husband and wife should be one body, and, therefore, according to the intention and law of God, divorce is unacceptable. This commandment given by God was set forth by Moses in a book he wrote. But the same Moses set forth another commandment, which is also contained in the book of Deuteronomy that he wrote ( Deut. 24: 1 ). Those who object to Christ thus continue to adhere to the text of Deuteronomy, while the Savior Himself refers to the book of Genesis. Favorite Pharisees word ἐνετείλατο(He commanded, gave the obligatory commandment) somewhat strongly, because from the indicated place of Deuteronomy it is not clear that a man must and must give his wife a divorce letter even in the presence of “Ervat Dabar”. But if you do not pay attention to all this, it will be seen that there was a clear contradiction between the original doctrine of marriage, as explained by Christ, and the permission to give divorce letters, and school casuistry was required to eliminate it. How does Christ resolve this contradiction? If the best Jewish casuists Hillel and Shammai argued about this and were disagree with each other, then how will Jesus Christ come out of the predicament in which, according to the Pharisees, they put Him?

*Matthew 19: 9 . but I tell you: he who divorces his wife not for adultery and marries another, commits adultery; and marrying a divorced adultery.(Compare Mark 10: 10–12 ; Luke 16:18 ).*

If the Savior’s speech (verses 4–8) gave an answer to the question of the Pharisees (verse 3), then here He obviously answers the thought that they have not said, that after a divorce you can take another wife. He who does so commits adultery if only a divorce is made for any other reason. The Savior does not say that for a divorce it is imperative to admit. It should be noted that, according to Matthew, this speech of Christ was spoken to the same Pharisees with whom the Savior spoke earlier, but, according to Mark ( Mark 10:10 ), it was said in response to the question of the disciples when they together with the Savior entered a house. Since Matt. 19 and Mk. 10: 10-12have not the same connection, it is more likely to think that Matt. 19 the Pharisees were told, and in Mark, these expressions in speech were repeated only to the disciples and in the house.

*Matthew 19:10 . His disciples say to him: if such is the duty of man to his wife, then it is better not to marry.*

Verses 10–12 are found only in Matthew. Speech, as you need to think, was spoken to the students in the house and privately. The word "duty" (in the Russian Bible), apparently, inaccurately and incorrectly expresses the idea of the original. The Greek word αἰτία does not mean “duty”, but “guilt”, “reason” and in this sense is used in many places of the New Testament ( Acts 10:21, 22:24 ; 2 Tim. 1: 6, 12 ; Tit . 1 : 13 ; Matthew 27:37 ; Mark 15:26 ; John 18: 38 , John 19: 4, 6 , etc.). But the literal translation “if, therefore, there is a reason (or fault) of a man with a woman, it is inconvenient get married ”would not make sense. Therefore, it is possible not an exact, but only a descriptive translation. Meaning: "if the cause of divorce between a man and a woman can only be adultery, then it is better not to marry."[[5]](#footnote-5) Other translations, like Russian, also cannot be considered completely accurate and clear.

The disciples, obviously, understood the previous speech of the Savior correctly in the sense of the complete inadmissibility of divorce, if there is no adultery on either side. Adultery of one of the parties is, of course, an extremely grave family misfortune, a complete violation of marriage and family relations, making the continuation of life together not only difficult, but even unthinkable and unacceptable. "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery," Jesus said, "and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery" (Luke 16:18; cf. Matt. 19:9, Mark 10:11-12).”[[6]](#footnote-6)

In the Old Testament law, the death penalty was established for adultery ( Lev. 20:10) But besides adultery, there can be other reasons that aggravate family life. Jerome offers such questions regarding women: (what if (the wife) is inclined to drink, will be angry, immoral, wasteful, greedy, windy, quarrelsome, evil-tongued, should she be restrained in that case too?) Then, expressing briefly and correctly the teachings of Christ, Jerome answers: (willy-nilly you need to keep this one).[[7]](#footnote-7). A further increase in Jerome is characteristic and written, obviously, in an ascetic spirit: although being free, we voluntarily submitted to such slavery). The essence of the disciples' question was precisely what Jerome outlined in more detail. Bible-believing Christians are generally committed to the premise that marriage is forever. As designed by God, it is to last “until death do us part” (cf., Mark 10:6-9).”[[8]](#footnote-8)

The Cato dictum is known: mulier malum necessaries (a woman is a necessary evil). But if it is a necessary evil, is it not better, prudent, or more useful for a person to be free from such evil? Is it not better to renounce marriage, when you can expect so much evil from them, and without any hope to get rid of them, when the wife, for all her shortcomings, will remain marital and will not allow such guilt as adultery?[[9]](#footnote-9)

*Matthew 19:11 . But he said unto them, not all they receive this word, but to whom it was given,*

Regarding the words of the students “it’s better not to marry” The Savior here gives explanations, borrowed partly from historical, and partly from psychological experience. Responding to the Pharisees, He contrasted them with the wrong and erroneous opinions of the divine law on the establishment of marriage. In answering the disciples, He contrasts their opinions with the physical law. Since the latter acts in people, as in animals, it is natural that not everyone can obey the condition under which a celibate life is approving, namely, to observe moral purity in a celibate state. In His answer to the disciples, the Savior could not say: “He must not marry.”[[10]](#footnote-10) Such a speech would contradict not only the physical (established by God), but also moral (also established by God) and, moreover, having a lofty character law, as well as Christ's own words about the sanctity of marriage. On the other hand, He could not say: “Everyone should marry,”[[11]](#footnote-11) because there are conditions under which evasion of physical law is necessary. Who are these people who are not subject to physical law? This is explained in the next verse.

*Matthew 19:12 . for there are eunuchs who were born from the womb of the mother so; and there are eunuchs who are scattered from people; and there are eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven. Who can accommodate, yes accommodate?*

Instead of “they made themselves eunuchs,” it’s more correct to translate “they oversaw themselves”, although the meaning is the same in either case. This verse, literally understood by eunuchs, serves as the factual basis of a monstrous phenomenon - ecclesiasticism; exists and even thrives to this day. To justify their opinions, the scribes refer not only to the verse in question, but also to the words of the prophet Isaiah: “Let the eunuch not say,“ Here I am, a dry tree. ” For the Lord thus speaks of eunuchs: who keep My sabbaths and choose what is pleasing to Me and hold fast to My covenant - to those I will give in My house and in My walls a better place and name than to sons and daughters; I will give them an eternal name that will not be destroyed. ”[[12]](#footnote-12)

The words of the prophet cannot, of course, serve as the basis or encouragement of assemblage, but have only prophetic meaning and, of course, refer only to eunuchs of the first and second categories indicated by the Savior, i.e. to persons who themselves were not guilty of their insults and did not engage in insulting others. But not only the eunuchs-sectarians held and hold the opinion that the words of the Savior give the right to artificially maintain and disseminate eunuch ship. There is a known case of Origen, who scattered himself in his youth, discovering in this case his "immature youthful mind" (Eusebius of Caesarea, Church History, VI, 8). As an old man, Tsang observes, Origen repented of his deed, and his repentance influenced his interpretation of the place being examined. In general, in antiquity, if the literal interpretation of the 12th verse was not approved, then, apparently, peculiar to some, even outstanding, people. Among others, Justin misunderstood the words of the Savior, telling without censure (Apologia, I, 29) about the case when, about 150, a Christian in Alexandria, in vain asked the authorities for permission to castrate himself as a doctor. Eusebius knew many Christians who voluntarily castrated themselves. “Within Hebrew society, women were considered more like property than equal companions. As such, Jewish men were free to divorce their wives, but Jewish wives could not exercise a similar prerogative against their husbands.”[[13]](#footnote-13)

**III. Are pastors/elders biblically held to a higher standard regarding divorce and remarriage?**

Is such a literal interpretation right or false? Undoubtedly false, because Christ, in any case, could not offer teachings here that are unnatural, pose a danger to life and do not achieve the goal that is meant, but, on the contrary, serves only to enhance covetousness and secret debauchery. Further, in the Law of Moses, clear decisions were made regarding the eunuchs, which also completely disagree with the literal understanding and interpretation of the words of the Savior. So, in Deut. 23 the priests say that they cannot "enter into the congregation of the Lord," but into Leo. 22: 24–25 commands not to sacrifice even scattered animals and accept them from foreigners "as a gift to God, because they are damaged, vice against them: they will not gain your favor . “From Tertullian’s perspective, the apostle cannot mean that widows are allowed to remarry.”[[14]](#footnote-14)

" In addition, it is commanded: “Do not do this in your land”. In view of all this, it was natural if not only the first Christians encountered only extremely rare cases of a literal understanding of the Savior’s words regarding the “third category of eunuchs”, but also direct and strong oppositions against such an understanding. St. John Chrysostom is especially arming himself against him. “When Christ says,“ copy it to yourself, ”it’s not about cutting off the members - let it not be! - but the extermination of evil thoughts, because the cut-off member is cursed, as Paul says: “Oh, that they corrupted you that were cut off!” ( Gal. 5:12) And very fair. The Pharisees ask: why?”[[15]](#footnote-15) The Savior answers: because ( ὅτι ) Moses, etc. The name of Moses (and not God) also has an obvious correspondence with the same name in the question of verse 7. The Pharisees could not say that God commanded the giving of divorce letters. The Savior confirms this by saying that Moses allowed it.

The word “hardheartedness” is used by Matthew only here and in the New Testament by Mk. 10: 5, 16:14 . In the last place it is associated with disbelief. It is considered “highly characteristic” that in His answer Christ replaced "commanded" - verse 7), used by the Pharisees, the word ἐπέτρεψεν - allowed, allowed. But in Mark ( Mark 10: 3–4 ), Jesus Christ and the Pharisees express themselves on the contrary, and there these changes are just as pertinent as those of Matthew. The thought expressed here is similar to Gal. 3:19. “When a marriage or bond between spouses is broken in one of these ways, the Christian is free to remarry. Throughout Scripture, it is said that whenever legal divorce occurs, a new marriage is permitted.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

Some believe that the permission to give a wife a divorce letter was due to the need that otherwise the husband could torture his wife because of his “hardheartedness”, and the divorce letter was thus the “defense” of the wife against her husband’s ill-treatment. This, of course, could be one of the reasons for the divorces permitted by Moses, but not the only one. The main reason was “hardheartedness” in general — a word indicating “uncircumcision of the heart”, the rudeness of the Old Testament man’s disposition, his mental and moral underdevelopment. Pastors successfully defend ended their positions with the policy statements: “I am sorry ;I just don’t marry divorced persons”(1-p.13)

 Obviously, the Savior Himself considers this Mosaic institution to be human and not divine. It was given as a temporary adaptation of a higher and eternal law to the spirit of the times and was only temporary. The error of the Pharisees was that they looked at this temporary law given by Moses too high, considered it equal to the commandments of God. But it was “Concilium hominis”, “non imperium Dei” (Jerome). In the Old Testament, many such decrees were given, which are only temporary. In a state of cruelty, divorces and divorce letters were permissible, but" at first it wasn’t like that . "[[17]](#footnote-17)

The Savior ’s words “who can contain, may contain” cannot be regarded as a requirement that all Christ's followers take vows of celibacy for life, which most people cannot fulfill. Christ had here in mind only special human characters, special natures, who are capable of exalting themselves above family life by the power of their spirit in order to more fully surrender to the service of the Kingdom of Christ. “And most pastors never remarried divorced persons”(1-p.13)

Almost all authors are of the opinion that, based on Rom. 7: 3, the death of one of the spouses is the basis for remarriage. N.T. Wright in the comments on Matt. 5:31:32 writes: “So, the apostles considered divorce acceptable, but only under certain conditions, given the potential for remarriage for one of the spouses”.[[18]](#footnote-18) Martin Lloyd Jones, in his apologetic article, emphasizes: “We can go even further and say that legal divorce ends the marriage and that a person can remarry. Divorce breaks the bonds of marriage, as our Lord says. It makes a man free and allows him to treat his ex-wife as if she had died. An innocent person has every right to remarry.

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1. Heb. 13: 4; Matthew 5: 27-28. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Mark 10: 2-12 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Amram, David Werner. The Jewish Law of Divorce.,p.25-26 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Allison.,“Divorce, Celibacy and Joseph,P.5 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Mack. Interpretation of the New Testament books of Matthew 1-7. Page 342 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Wright., “Marital Imagery in the Bible”, p446 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Wright., “Marital Imagery in the Bible”, p446 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Barber.,“Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage:”P.171. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Barber.,“Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage:”P.171. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Mack Arthur D. Interpretation of the New Testament books of Matthew 1-7. Page 342 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Wright., “Marital Imagery in the Bible”, p449 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Isa. 56: 3-5 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Weibling,. “Reconciling Matthew and Mark on Divorce”, p223. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Lehtipuui., “To Remarry or Not to Remarry? P.37 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Lehtipuui., “To Remarry or Not to Remarry? P.37 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Lloyd Jones M., “Christ's Teaching on Divorce.”P.2 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Wright., The gospel . Page 36 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Wright. The gospel . Page 37 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)