

Jesus' teaching on divorce

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[0 : 00] So we're going to look at Jesus and divorce. There are just four texts to look at but before! you think oh well that won't take long it's not quite as simple as that. I have been reading! very carefully this book by Stephen Clarke which I think is a very helpful book on this subject. He's a very clever man. I read that he studied law at Oxford then practiced as a solicitor. It does show actually. I sat next to him at a conference and I heard him speak and I thought he's so wise and learned. Well when I'm as old as he is I'd like to be as wise and learned as that. And then I found he was two years younger than I was so rather spoil it.

Okay. So what we're going to do first is to remind ourselves of the previous building blocks that we've looked at because I know that not everybody here this evening will have been to the previous studies. I'll try to do this quickly. In the first and second studies we looked in the law and the prophets looking at marriage and then divorce. We saw that in Genesis you have an original pattern.

One man and one woman, Adam and Eve. That's the pattern that's original but as we go on it doesn't, that pattern is very imperfectly expressed. In the law of Moses including, I should include Genesis in that, the focus on marriage is of the idea of a man taking a woman to be his woman. You have the same word for woman and wife in Hebrew. And the father gives the daughter, why have I put daughter-in-law?

That was, the word processor did that. The father gives the daughter to the man. So there's a giving and a taking and a taking. And it's almost a physical thing that the man would take the woman from his, from her father's tent to his tent and she would publicly and very obviously have moved from one family to another. Marriage in the Old Testament isn't proved. It just is. It's assumed. It's a given.

And it's part of what it is to be human. And even the pagans like Pharaoh in Genesis and is it Abimelech or Ahimelech? The man who nearly takes Abraham's wife by mistake thinking that she's not married.

[2 : 45] They're aghast at the idea of breaking a marriage bond. It's likened to a covenant, the covenant relation with the Lord. But it's not specifically called a covenant except in one or maybe a couple of passages.

There is a fierce guarding of sexual relations only within marriage boundaries. So you have very strong and fierce boundaries around this relationship. And the death penalty in many cases for people who break that boundary which would be called adultery. However, within the boundary in the Old Testament, we do find, strangely for us as Christians, but it's there, the possibility of multiple wives.

And we also find legislation for the possibility of divorce and remarriage. It's provided for and it's regulated and in particular there is a divorce certificate that must be given. It's in Deuteronomy 24. We looked at all that. I'm not going to repeat it all. Polygamy. Many wives is touched with the lightest of touches. Certainly no death penalty for polygamy. It's often portrayed as dysfunctional. The one flesh union. The one flesh union. Well, it doesn't really seem to be mentioned at all. The idea of the one flesh union being indissoluble doesn't seem to crop up. There's no emphasis on that at all. There is the strong emphasis on the wrongness of adultery. But there is provision for divorce and remarriage. And that seems to be just there. The fact that divorce is not the ideal.

It crops up. And in some cases, divorce is seen to be justifiable but regrettable. In other cases, divorce is seen to be completely unacceptable. So it straddles quite a spectrum of thought.

[5 : 07] But the one flesh union, which some writers put a great deal of stress on, I can't see that that's particularly stressed, at least not in the law of Moses. So that was by way of a bit of revision.

Was that okay? Yep. Of course, the other Wednesday we did a test, ladies and gentlemen. We did a test and see how many marks people got. And everybody got very, very high marks in the test, they said.

So in the New Testament, we looked at that marriage in the New Testament and we saw that the customs were pretty much as in the Old Testament. We met these interesting people, the sons of the bride chamber, who seemed to escort and attend the bridal couple in the course of their wedding celebrations.

And we found things like the idea of the bridegroom actually coming quite late in the day to claim his bride. And that crops up in a number of the stories that Jesus told.

And it seemed to me, and I don't know whether I'm misreading it, but it seemed to me that in the New Testament, marriage is very much focused through Jesus Christ himself. It's not focused through an ethical scheme.

[6 : 30] It's focused through Christ and his church. And interestingly, in Ephesians chapter 5, you remember that's the bit where you get perhaps the most intense teaching about human marriage relationships.

He says, And it's interesting that even at that point, he says, Christ and his church is where my mind keeps going to.

So that was a revision of number three. And now we're going to look at Jesus and divorce. So let me try and set this out for us.

Now, first thing I'd like to try and say is, Jesus does not say everything that he thinks about marriage and divorce in one place.

He does what you would expect him to do. He answers the questions that he's asked. And he answers the questions and the questions behind the questions in a certain context.

[7 : 44] And I think that that thought is significant for us as we look at the texts. He doesn't say everything all at once. So I put a bit about context, because context is important.

There's a social context. In the time of Jesus, the nation of Israel was under Roman occupation. So they're not free to live as under the law of Moses.

So, for example, the death penalty, which the law of Moses prescribed in certain cases, became much more complicated if you're an occupied power. It wasn't impossible, because you found a woman caught in adultery was being threatened with stoning in John chapter 8.

And Stephen, the martyr, is stoned in Acts. So they could lynch people. But it does make a difference to how the law of Moses was being applied at the time.

And also, as a social context, in the time of Jesus, we are within Israel. Jesus is not answering the questions that would come up in Corinth, for example.

[8 : 57] So in Corinth, as we hopefully will see later, unbelieving pagans might wish to divorce their Christian husbands or wives. Now, what do you do then?

Well, whatever you do, it's not a question that Jesus is asked about, because it hadn't arisen. And it simply isn't covered by Jesus' specific teaching.

And we'll see, hopefully, on another occasion, that Paul, when he's asked questions like this, he says, well, Jesus didn't give specific teaching on this. And also, I'd like to touch on the fact that we're going to be looking at the area where the Old Testament transmutes into the New Testament. It transforms into the New Testament. And we have things like people who are spiritually faithful and obedient within the Old Testament framework.

So like Simeon and Anna, beginning of Luke. And their faith meant that they believed their own scriptures and were looking forward to the kingdom.

[10 : 14] And theirs was a position of embracing what they had before the coming of Jesus Christ, and then at the coming of Jesus Christ as fresh light. And they embraced the fresh light.

And they would surely embrace. But we also have other people who are going to be talking to Jesus and questioning him, who would misread their own scriptures and didn't believe them, although they claimed to stand fully in the line of Moses.

And these people enter a conflict with Jesus, and he with them. They presented him as unfaithful to Moses, and he accused them of failure to grasp the kingdom, which stemmed from failure to understand their own law and prophets.

So that might not make too much sense until we have a look at some examples of it. So let me just give you the vocabulary, which I think I can do fairly simply. Sorry that I forgot to enlarge the font at

this point.

There is the word for divorce. There isn't a technical word for divorce. The word is just to send away. So let's look at Luke chapter, beginning of Luke.

[11:33] Do I mean the beginning of Luke? Or do I mean, where's the one where it says Joseph was minded to send his wife away?

Is it the beginning of Matthew or the beginning of Luke? I didn't write this down. It's the beginning of Matthew. Who would like to read for us?

I'd like Ben to read personally. Would you be prepared to read for us? Thank you very much. So Matthew chapter 1, verses 18 and 19, please.

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph, her husband, was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. Okay, so the divorce there is to send her away. And it has the effect of to divorce.

[12:39] Send away is used in lots of other contexts. So Jesus sends the crowd away. It also can mean release. So what did they do with Barabbas? They released him, same word.

So there's sending away. And there's also the word to commit adultery and adulterer. So I'm not quite sure how to pronounce these. Michevo.

Michevo. Michevo. To commit adultery. And then a person who commits adultery is a Michos. Michos. So you just don't really need to know much more than that.

There's words for to commit adultery and the person who does that is an adulterer. Right, so I think that's enough preparation. So we can now look at these passages.

So please can you find Luke chapter 16. So please could Ben kindly read for us Luke 16 from verse 14 to verse 18.

[13:52] Luke 16, 14 to 18. The Pharisees who loved money heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. He said to them, You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts.

What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight. The law and the prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached and everyone is forcing his way into it.

It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the law. Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Thank you. Right, so this is verse number one that we're going to look at carefully. Context.

Who is Jesus speaking to? If you look back at chapter 15 verse 1, you can see that here in chapter 15, which is part of the context, we have tax collectors and sinners gathering round to hear him and the Pharisees and the teachers of the law are there as well, not receptive but grumbling.

[15:13] So Jesus got an audience of two types of people. So there are some people who are keen and other people who are finding fault, not liking what he was saying and who are opposed to him.

If you go to chapter 16 verse 1, Jesus tells this story of the shrewd manager. And it's a story about money. It's a story about the correct use of money and it's put as a parable.

So in the parable, the hero of the parable uses his money shrewdly to make friends. And Jesus says to this parable, now what you guys ought to be doing is using your money shrewdly to make friends spiritually.

And he says that in verse 9, I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves so that when it's gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted very much.

Whoever is dishonest with very little will be dishonest with very much. And then, no man can serve two masters, verse 13. You cannot serve God and money, verse 13.

[16:33] And the Pharisees who loved money sneered. Now, so notice that the context is of people who want to be thought of as being real defenders of the Bible, the Pharisees, but who really Jesus is criticising very sharply and saying, well, you know, I can really put my finger on this.

You love money, you lot. You love money. That is not a godly thing to do. You can't serve God and money. And that is part of the context.

Notice also the use of the word detestable. You are the ones, verse 15, you are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts.

So you justify yourselves in the eyes of men. You say, we are very fine people. You know, we boast of our relationship with God. But God knows your hearts, and what is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight.

Which is a very strong thing to say. I think he is talking about them. What is, you know, people say, oh, you are very great, oh, Rabbi so-and-so, Rabbi so-and-so. So, but, that's what people think.

[17:49] But God looks on the hearts and he says, you are abominable. You are detestable. You are totally out of order. And interestingly, in the Old Testament, in the bit about divorce and remarriage, it says, if the married woman, the divorced woman cannot go back to her, cannot marry another man and then go back to her original husband.

For that would be detestable. That would be abominable. So, it's just an interesting thing that Jesus seems to pick up a bit of vocabulary from the Old Testament there in a rather unusual way.

Forget my little bits of notes there. The Pharisees, who consider themselves prime and admirable examples, are in fact detestable. And it is the context of moving from the law and the prophets to the kingdom.

Verse 16, the law and the prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom is being preached. And this is the situation that you're in.

There's everything to play for because we were under the law and the prophets. Now, how did you respond to that? And now, we're entering the time of the kingdom. And how are you going to respond to that?

[19:07] And he talks about people forcing their way into it. He's not obliterating the law and the prophets. It's easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the law, but he's fulfilling it.

So, we're on the cusp of this transformation. And if you were to look over into what happens later, there's the story about the rich man and Lazarus.

Again, it's about money and attitudes in this life and the failure of people who had the Old Testament.

In verse 31, the rich man says, please send somebody to tell my family on earth.

and the Lord says, I am quoting this right, I notice, Abraham says, if they don't listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.

[20:14] So, we're still on this. Are you grasping the law and the prophets? Are you embracing the law and the prophets? Because if you would, then you were going to embrace the kingdom. But if you're not even believing your own scriptures and obeying them, you're not going to, you don't stand a chance of entering the kingdom.

And it's into this context that Luke, or that Jesus inserts, it's not only money, it's the way you treat your wives.

That's what I've got against you. Your disdain for your own scriptures is shown not only in money, but the way you treat your wives. And that's where verse 18 comes in.

It is connected, you see. Whoever, I've got the AV here, whoever putteth away his wife and marrieth another committeth adultery. Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, another woman, commits adultery.

And the man who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.

[21:18] The man who marries the divorced woman commits adultery. I tried to put it into a little diagram. So what is he saying? It seems very simple.

It might not be as simple as it seems. You've got a woman on her own there. You've got a man and a woman married. He says, what happens if the man sends away his wife and then the man marries another woman?

Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman adulterizes. adultery. That's adultery. Says Jesus, this is what it is in the kingdom.

Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman adulterizes. and let's suppose, let's see where I've got that here.

Have I done that right? And the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery. Now why on earth have I put it like that?

[22 : 31] The man who marries a divorced woman. Yeah, this woman has been separated from this man and marries this man and this man adulterizes.

Does anything strike you as strange about that? So this man who marries this woman who was sent away from this man, he is adulterizing, he's committing adultery.

Does anything strike you as strange about that? Pardon? Yeah, it's the man that commits adultery. So we're, it's very male-centered this. Jesus is speaking in a context about the faults of men. I would have thought that he, you would only say he commits adultery if he was married, wouldn't you?

Or am I mistaking it? Because it doesn't say whether he's married or not. The woman was divorced. But he, he isn't already married and breaking through that bond.

[23 : 39] He's, he's marrying a divorced woman. Jesus says that's adultery. Well, I think it just strikes me as slightly what, not what I was quite expecting.

Because here's a woman, she's divorced, it doesn't say the man was tempting her, it just says he's a divorced woman. Then the man marries her and Jesus says that's adultery.

Now, it does, it's not quite what I would have expected. And I wonder whether Jesus is beginning to do the sort of thing that he does to redefine adultery.

adultery. To redefine adultery. It's a suggestion. Let's see whether it fits the text. Is he redefining adultery as being a repudiation of marriage or, marriage as a thing rather than breaking the particular bonds that one is in?

Because in this case, you see, he's not, the man is, it doesn't say that he's married, it just says that he marries a divorced woman and Jesus says that's committing adultery.

[24 : 56] I don't mean he's still with the man's wife. Well, she's, she's, she's divorced. Is it when the man dies when he's married?

We need to, probably need to microphone actually. Yeah, yes, okay, let's come to that bit. We'll come to that bit in a moment. I'll tell you what, rather than spend too much time debating it, we'll see how the texts stack up.

So let's, let's note, this is probably aimed at the Pharisees. I think it's definitely aimed at the Pharisees and he's pinpointing their shortcomings.

They love money and they treat their wives abominably. They've got a very lax attitude to marriage and divorce.

It is, I think this text is very male-centered. It doesn't say that the woman commits adultery, does it? It says the man commits adultery, so it's very male-centered.

[25 : 56] And I put the second man is not mentioned as married, but still adulterizes, and I suggest that Jesus is redefining adultery. And here's an important point. What was allowed under the law is not allowed in the kingdom.

Deuteronomy 24 makes provision for divorce under the law that for whatever reason the divorced woman would be sent away with a proper certificate and then she could remarry.

It was not a sin to remarry under the provisions of the law, but in the kingdom it's different. It's quite striking, isn't it? An interesting, Jesus makes no mention of the certificate of divorce.

His Jewish listeners would have been surprised at that because they set a great deal of store not by whether the divorce was inevitable or justifiable, but whether you got the paperwork right.

As long as you had the correct certificate of divorce, Jesus doesn't mention that. So there's one text and let's just see what it's saying. It's saying that in the kingdom there is an intensification and a deepening of the demands and expectations in terms of marriage and faithfulness and if you wanted to put the teaching in a nutshell, divorce is not on.

[27 : 32] It's not what was permitted and legislated for in the law of Moses is not permitted in the New Testament. That's as far as we get from that.

Let's look at Mark chapter 10 verses 1 to 12. Matthew, Mark. So here's Mark's quoting of Jesus on divorce and if Ben's still got the microphone, please could you read us Mark 10 verses 1 to 12.

Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again, crowds of people came to him and as was his custom, he taught them. Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?

What did Moses command you? He replied. They said, Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away. It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law, Jesus replied.

But at the beginning of creation, God made them female. For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one.

[28 : 55] Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate. When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. He answered, Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her.

And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery. Thank you. So it's slightly different there, isn't it? But let's look at the context. So there's a geographical context here.

Jesus left that place, it says, and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Now I am told, particularly by Mr.

Clark, who is a clever man, that this is the region of Herod Antipas. And if you flip back to chapter 6, verse 18, he was the king who got into conflict with John the Baptist, and John the Baptist criticised him, and he had John the Baptist's head chopped off.

And the question was, or what John the Baptist said in chapter 6, verse 18, is exactly the same word that's used in chapter 10, it is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.

[30 : 14] So don't worry about that, it's just proving to myself that it's the same word. Antipas had divorced his wife, who was the daughter of King Aretas of Nabatea, in order to marry Herodias, and Herodias had divorced her husband Philip, who was the brother of Antipas, in order to marry Antipas.

Can you get your head around that? It's like a soap, isn't it? So they've all got this terrible, complicated life. So the king divorces his wife, to marry this woman Herodias, and she divorces her husband in order to marry him, and the husband that she marries is the brother of the king.

So it's very complicated, and very loaded, because it's the king that's done this. And this is the area in which Jesus is being asked this question. So goodness knows, maybe some of the people listening are going to report this back to King Herod, and maybe Jesus will end up the same way that John the Baptist did on the score of this.

So that's part of the context. Also part of the context is in chapter 9, verse 32. It's part of a section in which the cross has been announced. The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men.

They will kill him, and after three days he will rise. And you get this in Mark, you get these announcements of the cross, and then between the announcements you get the shadow of the cross falls. What's it like to be a disciple?

[31 : 47] What difference does it make to have a crucified saviour? How does it affect all sorts of relationships and attitudes? So discipleship is part of the context, and also we're told it's not an honest question.

Chapter 10, verse 2, some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? So you see, it's in a context, this is.

And it is a strange question, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? Well, the answer is actually just simple, it's yes, due to the 1924, it's yes. But it's a trick question for Jesus, because if he says no, it's no longer lawful, or it isn't lawful, he risks attention and attack of Herod.

And of course if he says yes, it is lawful, says so in the law of Moses, then he is climbing down, distancing himself from John the Baptist, and distancing himself from the radicalness of this kingdom that he's talking about.

So you see Jesus is in an interesting position, and the way he answers it is obviously quite significant. So what Jesus says, he answers a question with a question, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?

[33 : 10] Verse 2, verse 3, what did Moses command you? And they say, Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.

So you notice the sending away word there. and Jesus now makes this distinction between the law and the kingdom.

He says, it was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law, but at the beginning it was not so. It is a concession.

It was a permission. You weren't commanded to divorce anybody, but there was a permission just to prevent life being unbearable for people who couldn't get on with each other or something like

that.

It was permitted as a concession to the law and the prophets where the people had hard hearts. And Jesus is implying that in the kingdom, it's a kingdom of people with new hearts.

[34 : 19] He's talking about the kingdom of people with new hearts. And he now wants to take back to the original pattern in creation. That's how it used to be. That's how it started.

And we now want to get back to that in the kingdom. And he says, well he says, this is what happened, for this reason a man will leave his father and mother, be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh.

Says that in verse 8. They are no longer two but one. Therefore what God has joined, let man not separate.

Let's think about that. So he says God has joined these two. The word is this, however you pronounce it, that looks quite difficult to pronounce, I wish I hadn't tried.

It means to fasten together, to yoke together, to pair. So God has paired these, and he says, let man not separate.

[35 : 26] Let man not separate. So there's another word there for separating. It's the same word as is in this famous text. Neither height nor depth nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

so he says that he talks about this separation from Christ and he says that's impossible.

We can't be separated from it. But he does say about divorce here, let what God has joined, let man not separate.

And I think it's fair to say, he's not saying it's impossible, he says it shouldn't be done. There are acts that human beings can do but should not do.

And he says what God has joined, let man not separate, let this bond not be broken. I think it's a fair reading to say it could be done, it's not a sort of conceptual impossibility, it's not so total and unbreakable that it couldn't be broken.

[36 : 48] He says it can be broken but don't do it. And they find this so difficult, verse 10, they go into the house and the disciples ask Jesus about this, we're not told what they asked, but Jesus brings this clarification, which is not too dissimilar to what we've already seen.

Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her.

Now, which is the her? Is that the original wife? So there's a man and a woman, the man sends his wife away, marries another woman, and the man, so that my little line has slipped there, the man, is that right?

The man commits adultery against her. I think it's the wife, do you think? And so an additional feature here is that Jesus puts it the other way around as well.

He says, and if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery. the same is true for a woman divorcing her man, she adulterizes.

[38 : 22] So again, we can say that what was lawful under the law and the prophets, because there was a provision for divorce, is not lawful in the kingdom. It is sin in the kingdom.

In this context, the context is different, male and female, he has men and women in mind in that text.

So anybody want to ask a question about that? Is that okay? We haven't got to those verses yet. We're just that we're doing, we're doing, we've done two, these two texts first, and they, they're in a context, they make statements within a context, and that's as far as we've got.

Okay? Right, I've lost my, right, let's now turn to Matthew chapter 5.

[39 : 50] So Ben, please could you read us in Matthew chapter 5 verses 27 to 32. You've heard that it was said, do not commit adultery, but I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.

It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell. It has been said, anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.

But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress. Anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery. Thank you very much.

Right, so we're now on the Sermon on the Mount. And the context of this, he's talking about life in the kingdom as fulfilling but not the same as either the current version of the Jewish life nor the law of Moses as it used to be.

[41 : 04] So he's got two things that he says are not. The way you do it now and what was said in the law. I've got something to say about both of those.

And notice the context here. He does redefine adultery here, doesn't he? He says that it isn't just that you're married and you have a physical act across that boundary.

He says you have heard it say do not commit adultery. Well that's what the Ten Commandments say. But I say to you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

So he's intensifying the idea of adultery in a rather sobering way actually. In a rather sobering way. And he says whether you're married or not, I'm going to use that word adultery for it.

And then I've got a load of notes there which you don't have to worry about. But he does, what do we say, it has been said whoever puts away his wife let him give her a certificate of divorce.

[42 : 11] Well that's the standard Jewish wisdom on it. Make sure you give the right certificate. But Jesus says, I'm not going down that line at all.

I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife except for marital unfaithfulness causes her to become an adulteress, makes her become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.

So let's look at those words. And as I think as Steffi was saying, there is an exception here. Ponder that in a moment.

Let's omit the exception first of all. It was said, whoever divorces his wife shall give her a certificate of divorce. I say whoever divorces his wife causes her to become an adulteress, forgive my spelling, whoever shall marry her that is divorced commits adultery.

So that fits pretty much with what Jesus has been saying so far. And from this I deduce the Jewish thinking puts the emphasis on the correct certificate, but Jesus says in the kingdom this is not allowable.

[43 : 28] It causes the woman to be in the position of an adulteress. Now how does that work? It's either that adultery really is a repudiation of marriage, whether you're in it or not, or to be forced to find a man via a process which is tantamount to adultery.

And I notice B, that the man marrying such a woman is complicit in the repudiation of marriage. And he says, this is a very strong line to take. And again we see what was possible in Deuteronomy 24 is not possible in the kingdom.

Please can I just pause and say, Jesus is not making legislation for nations and courts of law in the law of the land. He's saying this is what is in the kingdom.

This is what is for believers, people with new hearts. That's what he's describing. So that's what it says without an exception. It would be a sin to divorce your wife and it would be a sin to marry the divorced woman.

That's without the exception and there is an exception. In the case of marital unfaithfulness, so the word is *pornea*, fornication.

[44 : 57] So it's sexual intercourse, illicit sexual intercourse. And the most obvious example would be if one of the partners sleeps with somebody who is not their husband or wife.

And Jesus says this is an exception. Now, you have to sort of get your head around the fact that he's been very categorical in those other two texts, but now he says there is an exception.

So how do we sit with that? Now one way to do it is to say that Jesus actually never said this, that Matthew put it in for various reasons, to curry favour or something like that.

So we really shouldn't take any notice of it. So that would be one way around it. And I don't think that that is orthodox.

I don't think we believe that about the Bible, do we? We don't believe that the Bible has got mistakes in it. We believe that if it's in the Bible, that's the word of God. So I don't accept answer number one.

[46 : 03] But I think I would be happy with answer number two. Jesus doesn't say everything he has to say on every occasion. If he's asked a question by the Pharisees, he answers the Pharisees.

If he's asked a trick question in the territory of Herod, he answers as a trick question in the territory of Herod. But here, for the kingdom, he gives us his answer, which includes this exception.

Jesus' teaching is adapted for different audiences. He answers the question they're asking, so he didn't say everything on every occasion. And this exception says, in the case of poor Nia, it is not adultery to divorce, and it is not adultery to remarry.

a person. So this exception says, in the case of poor Nia, it is not a sinful thing to divorce one's partner.

It's very sad, very regrettable, but it is a course of action that is possible in the kingdom, and to remarry a divorced person under those circumstances is not a sinful thing to do.

[47 : 18] That's what the exception says. So we've seen the straight line teaching, and Jesus says, the main thrust of my teaching is that divorce is not on in the kingdom, but there's an exception, and in the case of the exception, it is not a sin to divorce, and it is not a sin to remarry the divorced person.

That's what I think it's saying. So let's look at one more text, and then we'll remarry. Yes? Would it be alright in the case where one part fits about the other part of the divorce again, would it be alright for both of them to remarry, although we're assuming the adult is first, would have been about the divorce taking place, would it be acceptable for either or only one of the parties to remarry?

Well, let's see. anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate. I say to you that he who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.

That is not the case in poor Neo. So, I don't know, I'm trying to get my head around the double logic of it. I think it's saying that the divorced, no, I'm not going to answer that, standing on my feet here, because I haven't got enough brain power to divorce, to answer that.

But he is making an exception to the previous rule. I think I'll just stay on safe ground with that.

Matthew 19, verses 1 to 12.

[49 : 12] This is like the Mark passage, so please could then read us Matthew 19, 1 to 12.

when Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea, to the other side of the Jordan. Large crowds followed him and he healed them there. Some Pharisees came to him to test him.

They asked, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason? Haven't you read, he replied, that at the beginning the creator made them male and female and said, for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate. Why then, they asked, did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?

Jesus replied, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard, but it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness and marries another woman, commits adultery.

[50 : 25] The disciples said to him, if this is the situation between a husband and a wife, it's better not to marry. Jesus replied, not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given.

For some are eunuchs because they were born that way, others were made that way by men, and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it. Right, thank you very much.

So this is the final text that we're looking at. I think for the context, we have Rabbi Shammai and Rabbi Hillel, and in something, in a Jewish document, which I haven't written down what it was, it said this, the house of Shammai say, a man should not divorce his wife unless he found in her something indecent, as it is said, for he finds in her an indecent thing.

And the house of Hillel say, even if she burned a dish for him, as it is said, if he finds in her an indecent thing. And there was a later rabbi who perhaps wasn't part of the context, but he said, even if he found another more beautiful, he was allowed to divorce her, which I think is pretty abominable, isn't it?

So this is what I was referring to before. The interpretation of Deuteronomy 24, is there something indecent, something really seriously some sexual unfaithfulness or something like that?

[51 : 53] Or is the indecent that she burnt the toast? So the two rabbis have these two different schools of thought on the grounds for divorce.

And I think this is what Jesus is being asked. Verse 3, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason? So Jesus, are you a Hillelite or are you a Shammaiite? Which side of this debate do you come down on? And it does say they came to test him, so he's being asked a trick question. And that's the debate. And Jesus does what we saw in the other text. He points back to the original, in which God joins and man is not to separate. And the law was a temporary and imperfect reflection. And he rightly says, you see in verse 7, they say Moses commanded that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce.

And Jesus says, well actually, under the law, Jesus permitted you to divorce your wife. He didn't command you to do so. He's never been commanded to do that. And he again says, divorce and remarriage are excluded with one exception.

[53 : 05] So in the case of marital unfaithfulness, verse 9, it is an exception. It is not then adultery to divorce the partner and it is not adultery to remarry afterwards.

So that's the exception. But the disciples are still rather scandalized about this. It's a serious commitment and it's a commitment and there's only one exception, which is in the case of marital unfaithfulness.

And the disciples say, well if it's as serious as that, it would be a good thing not to get married. And Jesus says, well, yeah. The kingdom is different from the law and the prophets. In the law and the prophets there was a strong pressure.

The normal thing was for everybody to be married. And in some cases it was a sin not to marry and in some cases it was a sin not to have children. It's different in the kingdom, says Jesus. Because there are some people who will not be married and will not be capable of being married and will not have children.

children. And he says in verse 12, some have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. And in the kingdom for some people it will be the right thing and a good thing and a noble thing to live the single life.

[54 : 25] And it will be a fruitful thing and a blessed thing to live as single people. And it's quite rather different from the law. marriage in the kingdom is not for everyone but each has their own different gift.

Where there is unfaithfulness it is not a sin to divorce and it is not a sin to remarry. And it's not commanded. The whole other subject is the beauty of reconciliation.

Because the gospel is a lot about reconciliation, isn't it? So I'm going to stop there. So we looked at really what we've done, taken a long time, we've looked carefully at the four texts.

Two of them give the straight line teaching and two of them give the exceptions. Would anybody like to ask any questions? Let's have the microphone.

Did you mention death? That's on, yeah? Yeah. Death. Death. What happens in the resurrection?

[55 : 37] There is neither marrying nor giving in marriage. So in the resurrection, there isn't marrying and giving in marriage. Yeah, but that's the resurrection I'm talking about.

Ah, death. Yes. Yeah, till death us do part. Yeah, Paul says in the epistles, doesn't he, that if the bond is severed by death and you can remarry.

Yes, that's correct. Yeah, at the back. Well, it doesn't go on the tape or the recording unless you use the microphone. That's the...

in those days, there seems to have been no recognition of the possibility of abuse. Women being abused and needing release from their partners because of that just doesn't seem to have been noticed.

These days it is. How do we deal with that? Well, the New Testament, we haven't finished looking at the New Testament, we've been doing this a bit at a time and the bit that we've been looking at is what Jesus teaching in the Gospels and from Jesus teaching in the Gospels, all I can say is he makes only one exception for unfaithfulness.

[57 : 02] There's more to be said but I haven't, we haven't got as far as that. Anybody else? Okay, we've, as I say, we're trying to build this up a brick at a time and that brick is the teaching of Jesus and as I said at the beginning, there are situations which crop up, say in Corinth and so on, which Jesus was not addressing because they weren't the situations that he was in and all being well next time we'll look at that which may include an answer to Lorna's question.

Let's sing together, shall we?