

DIVORCED YET STILL MARRIED?

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I believe that brethren err who say that the "put-away" partner, for causes other than fornication, is still married to the first spouse and conclude that in God's sight the second mate is not actually the spouse of this second marriage covenant. This is the basis for the continuous adultery theory. This position denies Jesus' statement and what Moses taught. Jesus said, "Whoso shall put away his wife," a word which means, "let go, send away, dismiss - a divorce, send away" "And marries another," - enters into matrimony makes a covenant with her, and so the second is no longer the spouse of the first partner but becomes the spouse of another. If God recognizes that the two are bound by the marriage covenant, and not in the sex act, then the "continuous adultery" theory is false.

God recognized the betrothal covenant as marriage, and not the sex act, as that which makes a couple husband and wife. This is evident from God's statement to Moses, "If there be a damsel that is a virgin betrothed unto a husband [note, she is a virgin], and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city and ye shall stone them to death with stones; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbor's wife: so thou shalt put away the evil from the midst of thee" (Deut. 22:23-24). She was a virgin; she was betrothed; she was the man's wife to whom betrothed; clearly, it was the betrothal that made her the man's wife and not the sex act.

The same principle is indicated in the case of Joseph and Mary (Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-35). "When Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband," would have put her away, but an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife-" and Joseph, "took unto him his wife; and knew her not till she had brought forth a son" (to 18-25). Mary was betrothed to Joseph; she was his wife; he was her husband, before they had come together; and he knew her not until she had borne Jesus. Clearly, it was the betrothal and not the sex act that made them husband and wife. Therefore, the breaking of a marriage covenant becomes the basis of the wrong.

Since adultery was in breaking the marriage covenant and making another covenant to suit their pleasure, Jesus answered the Pharisees' question, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" He dealt with their treacherous purpose, which was to put away a present wife and marry another. No, such was not lawful (consistent with the law of Moses); it violated God's ideal for marriage (Gen. 2:18-24); it violated the law of Deuteronomy 24:1-4; and it violated the sacredness of a covenant relationship by dealing treacherously with a companion (Mal. 2:10-16). (THE NEW COVENANT, pp. 56-57).