

A Young Preacher's Dilemma

by Robert Waters

Written in the form of a play, this is a fictional account of a young preacher, Phillip, who is faced with a dilemma when he discovers that his friends, George and Angela, are, according to the traditional teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, in an unscriptural marriage. How will Phillip react? Will he convince George and Angela that they need to divorce to get in a right relationship with God? What will he do if they refuse?

Characters:

PHILLIP – A young gospel preacher who is faced with a dilemma.

GEORGE – A new convert who does not readily accept traditional "Church of Christ" teachings but who seeks the answers from God's word. George has always sought answers through a diligent study of God's word. George is a lawyer by profession, and a quick learner, and one who has a strong desire to know the truth and to do what is right.

ANGELA – George's wife. Prior to marrying George, she was married to John for three years and then he divorced her when she confronted him concerning his unfaithfulness.

DON – A gospel preacher who is a friend of Phillip's. It is Don's sermon that puts Phillip in a dilemma.

HAROLD – One of the elders where Phillip used to worship. Phillip goes for advice.

Setting for the story:

Phillip, a gospel preacher in his twenties, has just begun his first work. He is working with a congregation in a rural community. The church is modest in number and has three elders. As an evangelist, Phillip understands his responsibility is to seek truth and to preach the whole council of God. He also recognizes the importance of personal work and knows how to get results.

After a few weeks, Phillip is convinced that he made the right choice in coming to work with this congregation. The first person he baptized was a young single lady that had come to town to visit a relative who was a faithful member of the church.

It was during this time that Phillip met a middle-aged married couple, George and Angela, in the local supermarket. Phillip learned that George had been a denominational preacher for five years but quit and went back to school to complete a law degree. He was in his second year of practicing law. His specialty was writing and interpreting wills. After the small talk, Phillip revealed that he was an evangelist and hoped that he would meet someone today who would be

interested in studying the Bible. Phillip was thrilled when they agreed to have a home study.

After several studies George and Angela, and their two children, obeyed the gospel (Rom. 6:17; 10:16) and began to worship with the congregation where Phillip preaches. Others were persuaded to obey the gospel in the months to follow.

One day, Phillip received a call from an old friend, Don. He offered to hold a meeting for Phillip's congregation at no charge (since they were a "small and struggling group"). Having discussed this with the elders and brethren, a meeting was arranged.

Don's topic on the third night of the meeting was "Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage" (MDR). He read Matt. 19:9 and then stated his conviction regarding who has a right to a marriage:

- 1) One who has never been married;
- 2) One who has been previously married but whose former companion is dead; and
- 3) One who has been previously married but whose former companion was guilty of fornication and was divorced by him or her for this reason.

He concluded by saying that all who have been divorced by their spouse are still married "in God's eyes" and if remarried they are living in adultery.

Phillip did not have a problem with Don's preaching because that was exactly what he had heard all his life. However, following the meeting George approached Phillip.

GEORGE – Phillip, I need to talk to you about what Don taught the other night regarding who has a right to marry.

PHILLIP – Sure, let's go into my study.

[What Phillip was about to hear was the beginning of his troubles – matters that would require much thought, study, and prayer before an acceptable solution would be found.]

GEORGE – Do you agree with what Don taught on marriage, divorce and remarriage (MDR)?

PHILLIP – Yes, Don is a very respected and sound preacher of the gospel, and I believe he preached the truth.

GEORGE – Phillip, if what Don taught in his sermon is true then Angela and I are not married and we cannot live together.

[Phillip was astounded; having no idea that Angela and George's marriage was "unscriptural."]

GEORGE – Angela first married at the age of 17 to a fellow who did not really want to be tied down to one woman, and continued to play the field. Angela told him she could not continue to be his wife if he continued to see other women, so he divorced her. He married someone else within a few months. Angela was broken hearted and even thought about killing herself, but her friends and family helped her through it all.

PHILLIP – But, George, Angela is still bound to that other fellow and "in the eyes of God" you and Angela are not married. Angela must remain unmarried until the death of her husband.

[George saw inconsistencies in Phillip's statement about Angela still being bound to the man who divorced her and married another, that he and she were not presently married, and that the scriptures require her to remain unmarried; but he made no comment about it.]

GEORGE – Phillip, I want to do what is right, but you have taught me not to blindly accept what preachers say but to look to the word of God to find what it says. Do you still believe that?

PHILLIP – That is exactly right.

GEORGE – I want to study this matter for a few days, and then we will discuss it again together. Is that acceptable to you?

PHILLIP – Sure, let's plan on meeting here in my study at 7:00 p.m. two weeks from today. Our goal will be to study all the scriptures on the subject and to arrive at a conclusion that is hermeneutically sound.

GEORGE – That's fine, and I think we can do that because God's word is truth.

[George has a computer with some good Bible software and he knows how to find the scriptures that relate to a particular subject. He looks up all words related to the study and also studies the passages from several translations. George begins to see things that do not seem to harmonize with what Don taught.]

[Phillip calls Harold, a respected elder at the church where he attended services for several years, and talks to him about the dilemma with which he is presently faced. After hearing Phillip's situation and questions, Harold speaks to Phillip.]

HAROLD – Phillip, there have been differences of opinion on MDR for as long as I can remember. You want me to give you an answer that is a simple solution to the problem you face, but I cannot tell you that you must tell this couple they

need to separate. That is something you must decide for yourself. You need to study what the scriptures say and come to a conclusion that you can defend with confidence.

PHILLIP – Harold, I've always heard it taught that it is a sin for people to "live in adultery" and if we fellowship someone in that condition then we, too, are guilty.

HAROLD – Yes, Phillip, I know where you are coming from. We have faced this situation several times and have seen several families torn asunder and seen many hearts broken. A prophet of God said, "The way of the transgressor is hard." However, I've been rethinking and restudying, and I'm not so sure any more that we have been right. I just don't know. I've read some books on MDR and attended debates, and some are making some good arguments that the position that we have sought to uphold is not sound. There just seem to be too many assumptions. At this point I'm really on the fence and need some time to study before I would even know what I would do if I were in your shoes.

[The two weeks pass and Phillip and George meet to study.]

PHILLIP – George, let us begin with a prayer:

"Almighty God, we thank you for Your word and the power it has to save us from our sins. Help us to realize our dependence upon You and that we are sinful creatures in need of direction. As we study Your word in seeking to determine the truth regarding marriage, divorce and remarriage, we pray that You will help us to remove preconceived ideas from our mind that we might be able to see clearly. Help us to be fully honest that we might be willing to properly act upon the truths that we learn from your word, no matter what the cost. In Jesus name...amen."

GEORGE – Phillip, evidently you are in agreement with Don that Angela and I are not married "in God's eyes," as is commonly said. Let us begin our study by you providing the scriptures that you believe support your position.

PHILLIP – Actually, what I said was, Angela is "still bound" to her first husband. Jesus taught, in Matt. 19:9, that the only way she could have become unbound, and therefore free to marry another, was that she divorce him "for fornication." If one divorces and marries another, it must be for fornication, otherwise the marriage is adulterous.

GEORGE – Phillip, Angela was completely innocent of any wrongdoing. I see your doctrine as being contrary to God's justice and grace. God has never made a law that punishes innocent people for the sins of another. Had I known that you people believed this.... We will be looking for another congregation – one that does not require something that is contrary to God's word.

PHILLIP – George, please do not make a hasty decision. We have become good friends and have demonstrated that we can study the Bible effectively together. I have to admit that your response is the same as mine would be if I were in your shoes, and I have always had some doubts about the position I hold on MDR. It does not seem right that Angela must remain celibate just because she did not initiate the divorce, and certainly it is too late for her to do it now.

GEORGE – It is not right. Nevertheless, since you question it yourself I will stay with you awhile and see if we can come to an agreement. We might as well continue as we were before I got riled up. What other passage do you think supports the idea that Angela and I cannot live together?

PHILLIP – George, Paul taught in Rom. 7:3 that one is bound to his/her spouse as long as he/she lives. To apply this to you and Angela, she is bound to her first husband because she did not initiate the divorce "for fornication."

GEORGE – OK, what else do you have?

PHILLIP – The fact that John the Baptist told Herod, regarding his wife, that it was unlawful for thee to have her (Herodias), is evidence that one can be married but not bound.

Also, Paul, in 1 Corinthians 7:10 & 11, tells those who have divorced to be reconciled or remain unmarried.

One more passage: Matt. 5:32.

"But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." Here Jesus said that those who marry a divorced person commit adultery. Thus, since Angela has been divorced you are committing adultery by living with her.

GEORGE – Phillip, right off I see several problems with your position, and I have some questions regarding the passages you use to support it. I have made notes regarding what you have said and I want to study for a few more days. Then we will discuss these passages and others.

PHILLIP – George, what passages do you think will help you? The passages that I have presented are clear. Any other passage that you think will offer you any hope will only contradict Jesus' teachings. Therefore, your conclusion would be seen to be wrong.

GEORGE – I have some questions. First, who was Jesus addressing (Matt. 19:9) and what were the circumstances?

PHILLIP – Jesus was addressing the Pharisees, who were trying to entrap him, but what He said is truth and it applies to us.

GEORGE – My other question is, “Who was Paul addressing when he wrote on this subject and what were the circumstances?”

PHILLIP – Well, Paul was addressing the questions that were presented to him by Christians.

GEORGE – Then maybe we should conclude that it is proper for us to first understand what Paul taught and then seek to understand and harmonize Jesus’ teachings with what Paul taught.

PHILLIP – Yes, I suppose you are right. I have never thought about that. It certainly makes sense. To be honest, my biggest problem with the position Don presented is that Jesus could not have changed the Law at the point that he addressed the Pharisees, because that would have been contrary to the Law, which would be transgression. It would seem that since He was answering the Pharisees’ questions, and was Himself a Jew subject to the Law, that He answered them in view of, and in accordance with, the teachings of the Law.

GEORGE – Phillip, I have enjoyed the study and I appreciate your clear head and candid speech. We don’t want to move too fast on this lest we miss something important and come to the wrong conclusion. I can see that what we are studying is a very important matter.

PHILLIP – I think we should end the study for now and resume next week. Frankly, I do not want to continue this until I have had plenty of time to study and think about it.

GEORGE – That sounds good to me. I have been thinking about what I want us to study. I want us to study and talk about the marriage as a contract or covenant.

[Phillip and George part after setting the time and place for the next study. The week goes by rapidly as both George and Phillip use all available time to study and ponder what God’s word says regarding who may marry. They meet as planned. After greetings and small talk Phillip begins the discussion.]

PHILLIP – Let us begin our study with a prayer:

"Lord, we realize that You are all wise and have set forth the guidelines for the things we should do and not do and the way we should live. Help us to put from our minds any prejudices that either of us might harbor so that we can clearly see what Your message to us is. In Jesus name...amen."

George, I took your suggestion and studied and thought about marriage as a contract or covenant. It appears to me that this is the right track to be on in studying about MDR. Our questions regarding MDR have to do with whether or not a contract is still in place after one or both parties have broken it and both consider it ended. Indeed, marriage is a covenant or agreement between a man and a woman to be faithful to each other as husband and wife.

GEORGE – God was faithful to the covenants He made with Abraham, Moses, and Israel. The people of Israel were often not faithful to the covenant, which meant they disregarded it and did what they wanted to do – things contrary to the agreement with God. The covenant between God and Israel was actually spoken of as a marriage. (Jer. 3:18) – "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you:"

Phillip, Don taught in his sermon (during our meeting) that the only way a man can be free from a marriage is if he divorced his spouse "for fornication." But doesn't it seem logical to conclude that when one person in a covenant breaks the covenant by divorcing and going his own way the other person is no longer bound by the terms of the covenant? Of course the person faithful to the covenant could be patient, forgiving, and plead for repentance, but to conclude that the innocent person is still bound to the contract until the death of the partner, seems to be unjust. It just looks like the innocent is being punished for something that someone else did.

PHILLIP – George, we must obey God's word regardless of whether we think it is just or reasonable.

GEORGE – Phillip, I agree that we must obey God regardless...but don't you agree that God is just, wants us to be just, and that He wants us to reason with Him? Also, if we find that we have come to a conclusion that is obviously unjust and unreasonable, shouldn't we consider the possibility that we may be wrong?

(Deu. 16:20; Deu. 32:4; Isa. 1:18; Isa. 45:21; Zec. 9:9; Matt. 1:19; Mk 6:20; Acts 7:52).

Look with me at Pr 17:15: "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both [are] abomination to the LORD."

We want to be sure that we do not seek to justify a marriage that is sinful. On the other hand, we do not want to condemn a marriage that is not sinful. To impose celibacy on people who have a right to marry would be punishment that the writer of Proverbs condemns: Pr 17:26 – "Also to punish the just [is] not good, [nor] to strike princes for equity."

Don used the apostle Paul's teachings, in Rom. 7, to teach that a person is free to marry another only after the spouse dies. Of course he said there was an

exception to that, as found in Matt. 19:9, where one was guilty of fornication. I studied Romans chapter 7, and am unconvinced that Don has properly used this passage. Let's read it:

(Rom. 7:1-4) "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

Paul is writing to Jewish Christians to teach them the consequences of acting as if they are still married to the Law of Moses, while at the same time being married to Christ. He tells them that the death of the Law released them from it. Paul compares the situation to a marriage. If a woman's husband dies she is free from the law that bound her to him. However, if her husband is still living and she marries another man she will be called an adulteress.

The intent of Paul's message is to encourage faithfulness. To practice polygamy or bigamy would be an act of unfaithfulness. A married woman cannot act as if she is not married - committing adulterous acts with others or marrying another while her husband is living. The passage does not say, nor imply, that one is bound to his or her spouse after a divorce. Paul does not deal with that matter in this passage.

PHILLIP – Perhaps Don did misuse this passage.

GEORGE – What Don needed to do was prove that people who are divorced are still married. This passage does not provide the proof.

PHILLIP – Well, Don may have misused Paul's teachings in the Roman letter, but Jesus taught that only God joins a marriage and only God unjoins a marriage.

GEORGE – Phillip, this seems to me to be a critical point in whether what Don taught is true or not. Let's look at what Jesus said: "What God has joined together let not man put asunder." Now, this passage tells us that God joins people in marriage, but it does not say that man CANNOT put asunder, nor does it say that only GOD can UNJOIN. The passage says, "Let not man put asunder." "Let not" and CANNOT are very different matters. Also, God "giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts 17:25). Who would contend that only God can take one's breath, life and things?

[Neither George nor Phillip speaks for a moment as George allows Phillip time to contemplate on his argument.]

PHILLIP – George, I'm beginning to have serious doubts about what I have believed and taught on MDR.

GEORGE – Why don't we continue this in our next study?

PHILLIP – No, I want to hear what else you have learned that makes you seem so confident. I'll just sit back and listen.

GEORGE – OK, let's first go to the teachings of Paul, and then we will look carefully at what Jesus said. After all, the Lord used the apostles to teach his doctrine to churches (Mt. 18:18; 1 Cor. 14:37). Thus, when questions were posed to Paul he answered them; the words were recorded and are now the inspired word of God.

Phillip, I think you will agree that Paul addresses some matters pertaining to our study that the Lord had not taught him previously. Paul said (1 Cor. 7:12): "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord." I suppose that a lot of our brethren are contending that what Jesus taught the Jews about divorce and remarriage is OUR teaching about divorce and remarriage and that we must somehow harmonize what the apostles taught with what He taught. We have to seek harmony, but it is improper hermeneutics not to consider whom is being addressed and what law was in effect at the time, or to put more emphasis on obscure passages than clear passages. Nevertheless, I expect that when we get to the bottom of this we will see that Jesus did not contradict Moses and that He taught nothing on MDR that would contradict what Paul later taught.

Let us look at some of Paul's teachings that deal with the question regarding who has a right to a marriage. We will start with 1 Cor. 7:2. "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband."

It appears that this passage clearly states that persons who have no marriage, and need a marriage to avoid fornication, are to be allowed to marry.

PHILLIP – But the passage only applies to persons "eligible" to marry.

GEORGE – Yes, I agree that a person must be eligible, or meet certain qualifications, before he/she may scripturally marry. Did not Paul address this matter? I think he did. Look at verse 36.

"But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry."

The female must have reached "the flower of her age" and the male must be a "man."

PHILLIP – Yes, I see where you are coming from. Indeed, Paul addressed the matter of qualifications and I do not see where he says anything about divorced persons being ineligible for marriage. Of course, one who is married is not eligible for marriage because if he were to marry it would be adultery (Rom. 7:1-4).

GEORGE – That is a good point, Phillip, and perhaps this is the key to our understanding what Jesus taught. Perhaps where He said if you put away your spouse and marry another you commit adultery, He was talking about a situation where you did not legally divorce and you commit adultery against your spouse because you are still married to him/her (Mark 10:11).

PHILLIP – What are you saying, George? Do you think put away does not mean divorce?

GEORGE – I am looking into that. Have you not noticed that the American Standard Version, which is widely considered to be the most accurate and reliable version, says put away where many of the modern versions say divorce?

PHILLIP – You may be on to something here. If put away, rather than divorce, is the correct translation, then I can see how this subject could be much simpler. I know nothing about the Greek language from which the New Testament is translated, but I know a little about English. If the ASV is correct a "put away person" is simply one who is put away, which does not mean he/she has been divorced. Naturally, a person merely put away could not marry without committing adultery, and one who would marry one put away would also be guilty of adultery.

GEORGE – Yes, and since Deut. 24:1-4 was the topic of the discussion between Jesus and the Pharisees, it may be helpful for us to go there. Notice verses one and two:

"When a man taketh a wife, and marrieth her, then it shall be, if she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some unseemly thing in her, that he shall write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's [wife]."

You know, it appears that the men were actually commanded to write the bill of divorcement and give it to the woman. Why would God command such a thing?

PHILLIP – There must have been some reason for it, if He did.

[George does a search of the word “command” using his laptop, limiting the search to the gospels, and quickly finds what he was looking for.]

GEORGE – Phillip, we need look no further for the answer as to whether the men were actually commanded to give the bill of divorcement because Mark 10:3 says: “And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?”

PHILLIP – Evidently the men were commanded to divorce their wives and I am confident that God had a good reason for giving the command. We should end our study for now and see what we can find out about the reason for Moses’ command.

GEORGE – Our study has been interesting and profitable and I look forward to our next study. Same time and place next week?

PHILLIP – Sounds great.

[Phillip and George both have Internet access and do a considerable amount of research before the next study. They meet at the scheduled time and after a prayer George starts the conversation.]

GEORGE – Phillip, I want us to study more of Paul’s teaching in 1 Cor. 7, but first I must show you what I found regarding our question as to why God commanded divorce.

I did a search on Google for “Mosaical legislation” and an article by Mike Willis, editor of Guardian of Truth (formally Truth Magazine) came up. Here is what he said in explaining Deut. 24:1-4:

A reading of this passage demonstrates that Moses was trying to legislate in such a way as to aid the woman because of the manner in which man was abusing her. According to what I can understand was happening in the days of Moses, a man would put away his wife without any concern for her future. She would not be free to go out and marry another man and yet she could not live with her husband. This left her in destitute circumstances quite frequently. Hence, what Moses was trying to legislate was something that would aid women who had been put away by their husbands.

“The Mosaical legislation said that if a man was going to put away his wife, he had to give her a bill of divorcement that showed that she was free from him and had the opportunity to remarry. Hence, it was designed to protect the women from the harsh treatment husbands were giving to them. ”

Willis, Mike. Truth Magazine XXIV (April 13, 1980): 227-230.

PHILLIP – WOW! That is interesting and it really makes sense. Evidently this was the passage that authorized divorce. The mere fact that a wife was sent out

of the house (put away) did not constitute a divorce, which dissolves the marriage and frees the parties involved.

GEORGE – Yes, I believe you are correct. A legal/scriptural divorce involved three things, as specified in the text:

- 1) write her a bill of divorcement;
- 2) give it in her hand, and
- 3) send her out of his house.

PHILLIP – George, things are really beginning to make sense now. Jesus' discussion was with Jews who were obligated to follow Moses' Law, and Jesus too was obligated to follow and teach it.

I am wondering something. If we can find evidence that the Jewish men of Jesus' day were putting away their wives and not freeing them with divorce papers, I may become convinced that Jesus was condemning such a practice and was not even addressing the matter of legal divorce.

GEORGE – Actually, I did find just what you are talking about. I found an article on the Web that is evidence that the Jews are even to this day dealing with their wives as brother Willis explained was being done in Moses' day. Here it is:

Jewish Women in Chains

By Norma Baumel Joseph

Reprinted with permission from www.socialaction.com

“Jewish divorce, like any other, can be simple or complicated; a release or a tragedy; straightforward or a swindle. It can set people free to resume or reinvent their lives, or it can embroil individuals and families in a never-ending cycle of abuse. The intent of rabbinic Judaism was to ensure a tolerable disengagement. Regrettably, the current implementation of the halakhic (Jewish legal) system does not meet that minimal standard.

“Many individuals, women and men, rabbis and volunteers, have labored to maintain a fair practice. And in some cases it does work.

“However, the biblical account of divorce found in Deuteronomy, while accepting marital breakups, establishes a procedure that is at the heart of the problem. “When a man has taken a wife, and married her, and it comes to pass that she finds no favor in his eyes, because he has found some unseemliness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorce, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.” (Deuteronomy. 24: 1-2) Clearly, the man is the initiator, the actor. And while rabbinic law established that there need be no grounds for divorce other than mutual consent, it enforced the structured order of the verse: the male

is the active legal principle. He must initiate, author, and give the document to her. She receives it and only then is free to resume control.

“While in most cases Judaism's tolerant acceptance of divorce enables a decent split, in too many situations this male prerogative becomes the means for extortion, vengeance and affliction--certainly not a biblical ideal. Thus, although her consent to the divorce is necessary, the woman is still at the mercy of the man. In the course of the development of Jewish law, many improvements have been incorporated into the system in an attempt to limit the man's unilateral power and prevent the misery. The rabbis were aware of and sensitive to women's vulnerability. But... A Jewish divorce requires a get, a document that a man freely gives to his wife and she must voluntarily accept. Without this document neither partner may remarry according to Jewish law. Today, this affects Conservative, Orthodox and all Israeli Jews. The Reform movement often relies on local civil divorce courts and the Conservative movement has empowered its central court to intervene and act unilaterally to effect a divorce when there are insurmountable problems.

“But throughout Israel and in the Orthodox community outside of Israel, the pattern of insisting on the biblical directive has left too many women agunot. An agunah is a woman who cannot remarry because her husband is unable or unwilling to give her a get. The term literally means "anchored" or "tied down" and is first found in verb form in the biblical story of Ruth (1:13). The original talmudic use of the word was limited to cases in which the man had disappeared and literally could not act as a legal instrument in the Jewish divorce proceedings. Recently, popular usage has expanded the term to apply to all cases of women who are unable to remarry because their husbands will not acquiesce and give the divorce document.

“The problems for women within this system are obvious. Procedurally dependent on her husband and on a rabbinic court, her future children also become pawns in this tug of war. If a woman without a get gives birth, her newborn children will be considered the product of an adulterous union and hence be categorized as mamzerim, Jews who are not allowed to marry other Jews. There is no remedy. To be sure, both a man and a woman can be found guilty of adultery, but the category depends on the marital status of the woman only. The applicable result is that the woman suffers the most from an incomplete divorce: not only from the possible consequences for future children, but in being chained to a marriage that has for all intents and purposes ended.

“The irony is that if the Jewish process of divorce was established to set one free, even to encourage remarriage, the current reality is one in which the process itself has created a group of people who are not free. And the numbers and problems are increasing--but the numerical dimensions of this issue should not become the primary consideration. Our social activism should not become a matter of counting heads. Where there is injustice, we are commanded to pursue

justice. I personally know many silenced women suffering the fate of an anchored life. Their stories, not their numbers, are our call to action.

“For Jewish society today, for all of us, divorce constitutes a major moral problem. Not because of the increase in numbers or because of the guilt of either party, but because of the inequities of the process and the indifference of the larger community. People no longer married, no longer living together, are still tied to each other. Bound together and abandoned. The credibility, viability, and continuity of Judaism are on the line.

“The proliferation of unsettled cases has convinced many individuals and organizations to come forward. There are solutions and vehicles for action. Social awareness and education are the first steps. In the necessarily incomplete list that follows, there are numerous groups and resources available. Some organizations have taken on the task of working with individual cases, others have promoted educational formats. Working within both the secular and Jewish systems, activists have initiated both civil and halakhic remedies.”

PHILLIP – That is some mighty powerful evidence! The only thing that troubles me now is how is it that so many have missed seeing that put away does not mean divorce?

GEORGE – First, the fact that many people have missed it is no reason to doubt the truth that we have found. After all, look how many people over the years have failed to understand the authority of Jesus, as revealed in the New Testament, and have followed Popes who rule from Rome.

I looked at an Interlinear and found that the word that is translated put away, and sometimes divorce in some versions, is from APOLUO. I also found that the word for divorce is APOSTASION.

Mt 19:7 They say [lego] unto him [autos], Why [tis] did Moses [Moseus] then [oun] command [entellomai] to give [didomi] a writing [biblion] of divorcement [apostasion], and [kai] to put [apoluo] her [autos] away [apoluo]

PHILLIP – What do you think about lexicons? Can we get some reliable help from them?

GEORGE – Of course we can, but we must realize that Thayer, Strong, and Kittel were mere men and we are "taught not to think of men above that which is written.”

PHILLIP – From my observation, it appears that some preachers are a bit too quick to allow a lexicon to settle a matter.

GEORGE – Yes, I expect you are correct. Considering the religious and political background of the writers of the lexicons that I have noted, we certainly need to keep their comments in their place.

PHILLIP – What do they say about the word APOLUO?

GEORGE – Most lexicons say APOLUO means, to put away; dismiss from the house; repudiate; to let go; to let loose; to send away; to divorce.

PHILLIP – How can it mean “send away” or “dismiss from the house” and also mean divorce? Why do they include divorce in the definition?

GEORGE – Good questions. First, I do not see how APOLUO can mean both put away and divorce, because the meanings are completely different. One can put away but not divorce, as we have seen from the Mosaic text and from the article, “Women in Chains.” Some speak of APOLUO being “used of divorce” in Matt 1:19. “Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.” They evidently have concluded that Joseph and Mary were actually married, when they were only betrothed, and therefore where the passage states Joseph had thought to put her away he had to have been thinking of divorcing her. This is supposed to prove that put away means divorce.

PHILLIP – But does it not say they were married?

GEORGE – First, if they were married at the point that Joseph considered repudiating her then Mary would have been seen as having been guilty of adultery, which would have required the death penalty. The couple were actually only betrothed, which is equivalent to our engagement, although it was viewed as more binding, according to their custom, than our engagement. Joseph and Mary did marry later, and obviously they were not married before they married.

PHILLIP – But the passage you just read says Joseph was her “HUSBAND.”

GEORGE – Yes, and the scripture also speaks of Mary as his wife before they were married, but we must understand that the word for wife is the same one that is translated woman and the word for husband is the same one that is translated man. Thus, a more proper translation would be that he was her “man,” and she was his “woman.”

Let us get back to your question regarding the meaning of APOLUO.

A margin note in The Geneva Bible translated from the Textus Receptus in 1560 (about 50 years before the KJV) concerning the term put away said, “that is, was not lawfully divorced.”

PHILLIP – Why is this worthy of note?

GEORGE – It gives support to the idea that Jesus was talking about men merely putting away or repudiating their wives and not actually divorcing them completely and lawfully.

Take a look at the versions that I have found that are consistent in NOT translating APOLUO as divorce in Mat 5:32:

(ASV) But I say unto you, that every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is PUT AWAY committeth adultery.

(Bible in Basic English) But I say to you that everyone who puts away his wife for any other cause but the loss of her virtue, makes her false to her husband; and whoever takes her as his wife after she is PUT AWAY, is no true husband to her.

(Darby) But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, except for cause of fornication, makes her commit adultery, and whosoever marries one that is PUT AWAY commits adultery.

(DRB) But I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, excepting the cause of fornication, maketh her to commit adultery: and he that shall marry her that is PUT AWAY, committeth adultery.

(LITV) But I say to you, Whoever puts away his wife, apart from a matter of fornication, causes her to commit adultery. And whoever shall marry the one PUT AWAY commits adultery.

(MKJV) But I say to you that whoever shall put away his wife, except for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery. And whoever shall marry her who is PUT AWAY commits adultery.

(Worldwide English) But I tell you, no man may send away his wife unless she has committed adultery. If he does send her away, he is making her commit adultery. And if a man marries a woman who has been sent away from her husband, he commits adultery.

(World English Bible) But I tell you that whoever puts away his wife, except for the cause of sexual immorality, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries her when she is put away commits adultery.

(WYC) But I say to you, that every man that leaveth his wife [that every man that shall leave his wife], except (for) [the] cause of fornication, maketh her to do lechery, and he that weddeth the forsaken wife, doeth adultery.

(Young's Literal Translation) But I—I say to you, that whoever may PUT AWAY his wife, save for the matter of whoredom, doth make her to commit adultery; and whoever may marry her who hath been PUT AWAY doth commit adultery.

There is no better way to get the proper definition of a word than to see how it is translated by respected scholarly translators.

PHILLIP – I agree, and I checked out the ASV and found that not one time did they translate APOLUO as divorce.

GEORGE – It is primarily the new versions, which are known for unfaithfulness to the original language, that render APOLUO as divorce in at least some passages.

PHILLIP – I think we have discovered the root of the problem that has made MDR such a difficult subject to understand. Let us now get back to studying Paul's teachings.

GEORGE – Yes, I want us to study Paul's teachings and then to study the context of Jesus' teachings. I am very confident that what we will find is that Jesus never taught contrary to the Law (which allowed divorced persons to marry) and that Paul's command to let the unmarried marry was as simple as it appears and applies to divorced persons.

PHILLIP – I have always heard brethren argue that the "unmarried" Paul speaks of means "people who have never been married," but now I see no basis for that at all.

GEORGE – Neither do I. In fact, I looked up the word unmarried and based upon what I found, divorced persons are included in the meaning. Let us first look at the text and then I will show you the definitions I found.

1 Cor. 7:8-9:

7. For I would that all men were even as I myself.

(Comment) Paul expressed his opinion that being single would be beneficial for one in his service to God. In verse 26, he indicates that because of the present distress it would be best not to marry.

8. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

(Comment) Some men have greater sexual needs than others and therefore have more of a need for marriage.

9. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

Comment: In this passage Paul speaks to the unmarried and to anyone who might think the unmarried might need to remain in that state. If a man can justify his practice of forbidding a divorced person the right to have a marriage he must take the position that a divorced person is not unmarried. Well, that is evidently

not the position of God, if language means anything. The unmarried must at least include those who are divorced, and may well refer particularly to the divorced, because both the widows and the virgins are mentioned separately (see verse 25). The Greek word for unmarried is agamos, the negative rendering of gamos, meaning married.

PHILLIP – The issue with many is not that a divorced person cannot marry, but that a put away person cannot marry. They reason that the put away cannot marry because of still being bound.

GEORGE – We have already discussed and settled the still married “in God’s eyes” argument. People cannot prove a doctrine by what they assert God’s thinking is on it – they must provide evidence. There is no evidence that one who has been divorced is still married “in God’s eyes” or still bound – however they choose to say it. Also, if put away means divorce then anyone who argues that the one who is put away is still married, bound, or otherwise not loosed is being inconsistent.

PHILLIP – What do you think about the idea that one can be married to someone but not bound to that person? I have also heard it said that you can be divorced from someone but still bound to that person.

GEORGE – Herod was married, but not bound (Mk 6:17), so I have no problem with your first question. However, the idea of being divorced from someone yet still bound is an oxymoron. It sounds to me like a quibble from one not wanting to accept what the apostle Paul said.

PHILLIP – Yes, that is what it sounds like to me also. Nevertheless, the argument is that one can go through the legal divorce procedure but because the divorce was not for the right reason God did not loose them.

GEORGE – If you are tied to someone by marriage and you get a divorce you are “loosed,” and divorce is the only way to get loosed, except in the case of death.

I think I understand where they are coming from. They think Jesus taught that a divorce (or loosing) does not take place in the sight of God unless it is initiated because of fornication. Nevertheless, I think they misunderstand what Jesus taught and either ignore Paul’s teachings or seek to twist them to conform with their preconceived idea of what Jesus taught. The Law of Moses allowed persons who were divorced for reasons other than adultery to marry again, and Jesus could not and did not teach contrary to that Law.

PHILLIP – You are making sense, George. I cannot believe I allowed myself to believe something that now seems clearly to be false. What else do you have on the word unmarried?

GEORGE – Here are complete quotes from three dictionaries:

Dictionary.com

un•mar•ried adj.

Not married; having no spouse. One who is not married.

WordNet (r) 1.7

"unmarried" adj :

not married or related to the unmarried state"

"unmarried men and women"; "unmarried life";

"sex and the single girl"; "single parenthood";

"are you married or single?" [syn: single] [ant: married]

Encarta Dictionary:

"unmarried"

Not married

Not joined to another person by marriage

PHILLIP – What is your thinking about verses 10 and 11?

GEORGE – I have studied it only enough to know that it is a misuse of the passage to assert that it requires celibacy for one that has been divorced. We should both spend personal time studying it before our study next week and we can then compare notes. One reason why I think the text does not forbid one marrying is because of what is said in verses 27 and 28. Let us look at this passage now.

PHILLIP – If you do not mind, I would like to expound on this passage.

"Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed."

Comment: If you are married, do not seek to become unmarried or divorced.

GEORGE – I think what you have said is the obvious meaning, but we must remember that Paul's statement not to seek to be loosed was given in view of the present distress, as stated in the previous verse.

PHILLIP – Good observation. Otherwise, we would have to conclude that Paul was against divorce for any reason at all. Evidently, loosed means the same as divorced?

GEORGE – Allow me to continue...

"Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife."

Comment: If you are divorced do not seek a wife. Obviously, this statement is qualified by the present distress as is the statement not to seek to be loosed.

"But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you."

Comment: Paul stated that one that has been divorced does not sin if he/she marries.

PHILLIP – George, I am feeling sick at my stomach. I was about to insist that you and Angela divorce because Angela was not eligible for marriage.

GEORGE – Well, Phillip, I suppose if we blindly accepted everything that people are teaching we would be going in all directions. Truth is found by those who seek it (Matt. 7:7; John 8:32) and if the “blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.”

PHILLIP – Ouch! That is hard preaching and it hit home.

GEORGE – My friend, you are neither blind nor in the ditch now. Let us take a look now at 1 Cor. 7:39. "A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord."

I have observed that this text is sometimes used in an attempt to prove that a divorced person cannot marry again. First, it is important that we understand what the text teaches. The text teaches that a wife is bound to her husband, but when he dies she is no longer bound to him and is therefore free to marry another. Evidently, there were some who questioned whether one would have a right to marry again, under the present distress, if his or her spouse had died. In this text, Paul dealt with that matter and put it to rest. That God's word allows one who has been through a divorce to marry is a fact that is admitted by virtually everyone - it is just that many put stipulations on it.

PHILLIP – What is your thinking on 1 Tim. 4:1-3?

GEORGE – Let us go there and read it first. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, [and commanding] to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth."

I don't propose to know who Paul was speaking of but that does not seem to be a matter of great importance. The important thing to note is that Paul placed the practice of forbidding to marry into the category of doctrines of devils. What we should evidently get from Paul's prophecy is that it is wrong to tell people they cannot marry.

I really think we are profiting from our study together, but it is time to end it for now. Let us study 1 Cor. 7:10,11 and discuss it when we meet next week.

[Phillip and George part company with plans to meet to study again the next week. When they meet Phillip leads a prayer and then George speaks first.]

GEORGE – The question that we need to answer is, did the apostle Paul teach celibacy in 1 Cor. 7:10,11?

PHILLIP – Some are saying that where Paul said let her remain unmarried he was telling Christians who get divorced that they must remain celibate. Nevertheless, from my study this week I have run into some problems with that theory. First, I'm not sure he was even talking about persons who were divorced.

GEORGE – Actually, I am confident that Paul was not addressing the divorced. Let us begin by looking at the passage from the KJV and then from the Weymouth version:

“And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: 11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife” (KJV).
“Or if she has already left him, let her either remain as she is or be reconciled to him; and that a husband is not to send away his wife” (Weymouth N.T.).

Sometimes a passage appears to the reader to support a certain thinking or doctrine, but upon closer examination it is clearly seen that such is not the case. For example, the apostle Paul wrote: [Ro 10:10] "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

I know of no religious group that believes that one may be saved by merely making a confession. Thus, most understand this passage not to be teaching that salvation is based upon confession alone.

Here is another example:

[Ac 10:43] "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."

Though some take what to them appears to be a clear passage and argue that all one must do is accept Jesus as Lord, virtually no one understands this passage to teach that merely believing in the historical Jesus will result in salvation (John 12:48). The word believeth is comprehensive and includes obedience in other matters. Likewise, there are problems with the claim that the phrase let her remain unmarried means a person who is divorced is to remain celibate. I want to note some of those problems and suggest the true meaning. First, I have found that there are three main views as to the teaching of 1Cor 7:10, 11: #1. The passage teaches that a Christian who gets divorced must be reconciled to his/her spouse or remain celibate.

#2. The passage teaches that a divorced person, during the time of “the present distress,” is commanded to remain celibate.

#3. The discussion pertaining to the unmarried (divorced) ends at verse 9, but with verse 10 he begins discussion that pertains to the married.

Thus, the context of the passage indicates that those divorced are not under consideration. Rather, the inspired instruction is applicable to a couple that is separated. The apostle speaks of the possibility of one in a marriage becoming unhappy to the point that he/she departs, which is from chorizo, meaning "to place room between, i.e. part; reflexively, to go away:--depart, put asunder, separate." In such case, they are instructed to remain in that state while trying to work things out.

PHILLIP – George, I take it that your position is # 3?

GEORGE – Yes, and there is plenty of evidence to support it. Let us look first at some problems associated with #1 and #2.

View #1 – This view is not consistent with “traditional” MDR teachings as purportedly supported by certain passages. For example: First, it is commonly argued that in Matt. 19:9 Jesus taught that the cause for divorce must be “for fornication.” However, allowing the “innocent” person in the divorce, where fornication took place, to remarry, is not consistent with the idea that Paul demanded celibacy in the case of divorce. The apostle did not give any indication (in verses 10,11) that the cause of any departure was an issue. Thus, he evidently did not have in mind a couple that had divorced. Rather, he dealt with the issue of one departing or leaving, resulting in a separation, and the evident purpose of his words are that reconciliation (not remarriage) might take place. Second, virtually all agree that the death of a spouse frees one to marry. Well, Paul makes no mention of death in the context. Therefore, the idea that this passage teaches that one who is divorced must remain celibate proves too much, which should cause the argument to be rejected.

The third problem with view #1 is that while many contend that a divorced person must reconcile or remain celibate until the death of the other spouse, they unwittingly force the conclusion that God has made a law that one could avoid by committing a sin - the sin of murder. Thus, the theory that God requires celibacy of those who have become unmarried through divorce is based upon a faulty foundation, to say the least.

View #2 – While the phrase the present distress should certainly be considered while studying the entire letter, this position, alone, does not allow for full explanation of the apostle’s intent, which was evidently to encourage those who were separated not to divorce and marry another.

PHILLIP – I do not object to a thing you have said so far. It makes perfect sense. I am ready to hear you deal with the objections to view # 3. Not a few have used the phrase let her remain unmarried to support the idea that Paul is talking about a couple that has divorced.

GEORGE – Although part of the wording, as usually translated, seems to support the idea that a divorced couple is under consideration, that idea is contrary to the context. In verse 10, we see the command that the wife not depart from her husband. First, it is conjecture to conclude that depart, in the passage under study, means divorce. Regarding the word depart, let us note comments by a couple of highly respected scholars:

STRONG:

"[Grk. 5563] chorizo (kho-rid'-zo) from 5561; to place room between, i.e. part; reflexively, to go away:--depart, put asunder, separate."

Robertson's Word Pictures:

"But and if she depart (ean de kai chôristhêi). Third class condition, undetermined. If, in spite of Christ's clear prohibition, she get separated (ingressive passive subjunctive)."

Thus, we must keep in mind from the beginning that what is being contemplated is a case where a woman merely leaves, or is separated, from her husband. If one says the word unmarried, in verse 11, means they are divorced then to be consistent he must apply the same meaning to the same word where it is found in verses 8 and 9, which would defeat the theory advanced to support the idea that Paul is forbidding marriage for one who is divorced. Here the apostle says: "I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn."

Why would the apostle Paul command to let the unmarried marry in one passage and condemn it in another?

PHILLIP – He did not. In verses 8 and 9, the teaching is that those who do not have a marriage are to be allowed to marry, whereas verses 10 and 11 teach that the married are to remain in that state.

GEORGE – Exactly. And it is strange that one would argue that unmarried in this passage (verse 11) means divorced but change his tune when the same word, unmarried (agamos), as found in verses 8-9, is used to show that unmarried people (to include those that have been divorced) are to be allowed to marry. He would then argue that unmarried (see passage below) did not refer to the divorced or would offer the quibble that it applied only to certain divorced persons.

(vs. 8,9) I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

PHILLIP – Don't you think we are going to have to admit that there is no clear teaching or authorization for a Christian to divorce in any of the apostle's teachings?

GEORGE – You are correct. Paul consistently encouraged faithfulness: ". . . the wife should not separate from her husband . . . and the husband should not put away his wife." This is not to say a divorce does not end the marriage or that one who is divorced cannot marry again.

Here is another version that supports the idea that "let her remain unmarried" does not mean they were actually divorced:

Montgomery - "(or if she has already left him let her either remain as she is, or be reconciled to him), and also that a husband is not to put away his wife."
If the wife has departed or already left, i.e., gone out of the home back to the parents, or wherever, she is exhorted to remain as she is, at least during the present distress, or go back to her husband (not ex-husband). Divorce is NOT under consideration. If one or the other actually ends the marriage by divorce this text no longer applies.

PHILLIP – George, the arguments you have made have convinced me that to use 1Cor 7:10-11 to teach that divorced persons have no right to marry is error. That idea is contrary to Paul's teachings found in 1 Tim. 4:1-3, and it is contrary to the emphasis of the entire 7th chapter, which is the idea of allowing marriage (in which sexual relations may properly take place) to avoid fornication.

GEORGE – The primary teaching of the passage under study is that those who are married should remain that way, and not only that but also to be faithful, which includes conjugal rights (verses 4-5). If a couple should have problems and become separated, they should not make unwise and hasty decisions, especially during times of distress (the present distress) but be patient and endeavor to work things out.

PHILLIP – That was interesting, George, and quite informative. You are a quick learner and a good teacher. If I ever get into trouble and need a lawyer I'm coming to you. Now, let's get back to the matter of what Jesus taught the Jews. I think we need to understand Matt. 19:3-12, and particularly the "exception clause" (except it be for fornication). I want to present to you what I have found regarding the "exception clause," which is in Matt. 5:32, that seems to be the nucleus of the position that Don preached and which we have come to question seriously. Unless you have an objection I will start by reading the first verse.

Mt 19:3 - The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

There was a dispute that had been raging for about a century between the schools of Shammai and Hillel over the interpretation of something indecent (Deut. 24:1). The Shammai school held that something indecent meant marital unfaithfulness. The Hillel school held that it included anything that becomes displeasing to the man.

This was but one of numerous attempts by the Pharisees to entrap Jesus. They evidently had two motives: 1) To pit Jesus against Moses and thus charge Him with sin; and 2) To cause Jesus to take sides on the controversial divorce issue. What was the answer the Pharisees were seeking in response to their question? Would they not have been satisfied if Jesus had answered "yes" or "no"?

GEORGE – Indeed, they would have, but Jesus perceived their intentions and did not respond as they had hoped. Thus, they failed in their effort to cause Jesus to take sides on the issue that so divided the Jews.

PHILLIP – Many have concluded (and therefore teach) that Jesus not only took the "Shammai" position but also contradicted Moses in teaching new law, which meant that persons divorced but remarried were now living in adultery and that divorced persons could no longer marry. I have found no evidence that the Pharisees understood Jesus to have contradicted Moses, but see evidence to the contrary. Since that was apparently one of the main things they were hoping Jesus would do it is prudent to conclude that their failure to note, even at His trial, that Jesus contradicted Moses on MDR means they DID NOT understand Jesus to have done so, which He certainly would have done if He had taught what men today say He did.

GEORGE – Great observation. Is it not amazing that the Jews who were present and spoke the language did not understand Jesus to have contradicted the Law, but men 2000 years later declare that He did?

PHILLIP – What is amazing to me is that anyone who claims to be a Bible believer could seriously study Matt. 5:17-19 and still contend that Jesus contradicted Moses.

Jesus said, "Let there be no thought that I have come to put an end to the law or the prophets. I have not come for destruction, but to make complete. Truly I say to you, Till heaven and earth come to an end, not the smallest letter or part of a letter will in any way be taken from the law, till all things are done. Whoever then goes against the smallest of these laws, teaching men to do the same, will be named least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who keeps the laws, teaching others to keep them, will be named great in the kingdom of heaven."

I recall that some preachers are now saying Jesus' words were not immediately applicable to the Jews, but were just teachings that would go into effect when His law went into effect after His death.

GEORGE – In other words, they were commanded something but not expected to do anything. How does that theory harmonize with Deut. 12:32? “What thing soever I command you, that shall ye observe to do: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.”

Asserting that what Jesus said to sinners under the Law was not applicable to them, that it did not apply to them, and that they could practice what he condemned is not only a dodge or quibble, it implies that Jesus spoke without authority and that He did not tell the truth.

PHILLIP – On the other hand, if Jesus did make new law regarding marriage, the Jews, who had divorced, would have had to violate the old Law by stopping being faithful to their wives IMMEDIATELY. (Mal 2:15b - Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.) In addition, even if the Jews (before the cross) did not have to obey the words of Jesus, there is no evidence that any of the people taught on the day of Pentecost, or thereafter, were told their legal marriages were adulterous. The only examples in the New Testament are where the marriage was not legal (Mark 6:18; Lev. 20:2; 1 Cor. 5:1) and that is in perfect harmony with what Jesus actually taught.

GEORGE – Phillip, God divorced Israel because of unfaithfulness (Jer. 3:8); therefore, He sees it as necessary in some situations. It is not divorce that God hates, but dealing treacherously, which we have seen was done by men in putting away their wives. Take a look at this passage:
Mal 2:16 - "For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously."

I found a quote from a highly respected source that supports this thinking:

“Moses' aim was ‘to regulate and thus to mitigate an evil which he could not extirpate.’ The evident purpose was, as far as possible, to favor the wife, and to protect her against an unceremonious expulsion from her home and children.”
(International Standard Encyclopedia)

Those who were not hardened in heart would be obedient to the command of God and deal not treacherously with their faithful wife, which forbade putting them out of the house. The question of whether adultery was the reason for the command to give the bill of divorce is easily settled by noting a passage in the Law:

(Lev 20:10) "And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death."

PHILLIP – Since adultery (sexual relations with the spouse of another, according to the context) was punishable by death, we must rule out the possibility that physical or sexual adultery was given as a reason for one to divorce.

GEORGE – Let us now move on to verse four...

4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, 5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? 6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

What the Law of Moses said was in contrast with what was from the beginning, because there was no provision for divorce in the beginning. What Jesus said was also in contrast with what was from the beginning because it agreed with the Law of Moses.

7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

First, we see that the writ of divorce was a command. Second, the reason for the command was that men were dealing treacherously with their wives. This was evidently God's way to get them relief.

8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

Moses "suffered"...that is, there was no punishment for what they were doing. God gave the command to give the bill of divorcement, but men continued to disobey. Some have suggested that one of the reasons men would put away and not give the bill of divorcement was the fact that they would have had to return the dowry they received from the woman's parents.

9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

First, what Jesus said was not in contrast with the Law of Moses because it was identical to the Law of Moses. Certainly Jesus was not saying, "Moses said this, but I'm changing it to this...." That would have resulted in an immediate uproar and probably stoning.

Let me see if I can paraphrase this passage:

Whoever shall send his wife out of the house and marry another, commits adultery, unless he sent her away because of “fornication,” which is being committed because of an illicit relationship.

PHILLIP – The way you explain the passage must be the true meaning because the Mosaic text (which was the basis for the discussion) was needed (and therefore written) because of the treacherous practice of Jewish men who were sending their wives away without completely freeing them from the marriage, so they could marry another.

GEORGE – It appears that the Pharisees' first question was about putting away, with no implication of thoughts of ending a dead marriage in a legal and scriptural way. But, when Moses is mentioned they answer with both put away and bill of divorcement. It seems plausible that Jesus went back to their original question about putting away without the bill of divorcement and that He made His succeeding comments with such in mind.

PHILLIP – George, in my study this week I have found evidence that in the Old Testament one may put away his spouse, which amounts to separation, if the case of the marriage is that it was not legal or scriptural. Take a look...
Ezr 10:11 - Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives.

There was no command to divorce those women, evidently because they were not legal/scriptural marriages. The relationships were not pleasing to God and simply needed to end. The translators of the New Jerusalem Bible were on the right track (except in rendering APOLUO as divorce). They translated Matt. 5:32 as follows:

“But I say this to you, everyone who divorces his wife, except for the case of an illicit marriage, makes her an adulteress; and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery” (Mt 5:32).

GEORGE – WOW! That is some mighty powerful evidence that we are on the right track.

PHILLIP – Yeah, but I came up with nothing helpful in explaining the last three passages. What did you come up with?

GEORGE – I have an explanation that is consistent with what we have been thinking is the truth.

10. His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.

First, it was not the Pharisees but the disciples who asked the question, and certainly, they were not intending to place doubt upon the wisdom of God in instituting marriage (Gen. 2:18). They understood Jesus to be saying that if the marriage is not going to be legitimate, such as the case where the woman is a forbidden foreign wife, brother's ex-wife, or other forbidden relatives, it is best not to marry that particular woman (Gen. 24:37; Lev 20:17; 20:21).

11. But he said unto them, Not all men can receive this saying, but they to whom it is given.

Those who could receive the saying would simply be the ones to whom it applied – those whose marriage was illegal/unscriptural and resulted in fornication.

12. For there are eunuchs, that were so born from their mother's womb: and there are eunuchs, that were made eunuchs by men: and there are eunuchs, that made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

To understand this passage it will help if we back go to verse 10. The disciples brought up the matter of its not being good to marry if the case of the man be so with his wife. What case? An illegal/unscriptural marriage. In verse 12, Jesus states that men who cannot find a woman except one that is not lawful to marry, had best remain celibate. Those who are eunuchs, having not the capability to have sex, certainly would have no problem with not marrying. They would have no problem accepting the saying.

PHILLIP – Your exegesis is logical, scriptural, hermeneutically sound, and allows for God, Jesus, His apostles, and His disciples, to be seen as fair and just. All should be able to accept what you are saying because the original teaching of God on marriage is respected, there is no need for families to be busted up (if their marriage is legal), and “DIVORCED” persons, innocent of sin or not, need not remain celibate.

GEORGE – Divorce is discouraged in the scriptures, but because marriage is dissolvable (contrary to Catholic decree), if done legally, those who have been through an unfortunate marriage and divorce are not still bound to a previous relationship.

When a divorce takes place one or both parties may have been guilty of sin, but the sin(s) is forgivable. The last thing in the world that should happen to one disheartened because of a divorce is that he/she be required to maintain a permanent position that makes his/her endeavor to live the Christian life even more difficult.

PHILLIP – What you just said is evidently true because of the lack of biblical or historical evidence to support the practice of breaking up legal marriages and imposing celibacy. When I hear another preacher say, “Where is the authority for a divorced person to marry?” I will tell him he is obligated to prove that a divorced person cannot marry.

GEORGE – My friend, if the apostle Paul’s words, “let them marry,” have no effect on them we should not expect that we are going to change them with our arguments. People have to want the truth before they will receive it. Some have taught error so long they are blind to the truth and many will not be willing to pay the price if they do see it (Pr. 23:23).

[It is very late in the evening and Phillip and George end the discussion. They plan to discuss in the next meeting what Jesus meant when He said, "But I say unto you," and what He meant when he said, “Maketh her an adulteress” (Matt. 5:32). The next meeting begins with prayer and Phillip begins the study.]

PHILLIP – Let us carefully study Jesus’ statement, from which some have concluded that He changed the Law from the idea that a person who has been divorced MAY marry another, to the idea that a divorced person MAY NOT marry another. The issue involves the question, DID JESUS CONTRADICT MOSES? I think we agree that He did not. Nevertheless, we need to understand what He meant when He said, But I say unto you. This will surely help us understand what Jesus meant when He said, maketh her an adulteress. Let us begin reading at the beginning of the chapter:

Mt 5:1 – And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: 2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, 3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven....

Note that in Matthew 19 the setting is the Pharisees looking to entrap Jesus, but in this setting it is His disciples who came to the mountain to hear Him.

What is the FIRST thing Jesus said (in this setting) that is relative to our study, besides to whom He is talking?

GEORGE – The answer to your question is in verse 17:

Mt 5:17 - Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. 18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Before Jesus says ANYTHING about the treatment of wives (putting them away) He makes it clear that He is not going to SAY ANYTHING that should be interpreted to mean that He is CHANGING what was in the Law of Moses.

PHILLIP – The next passage that is relative to our study is verse 20.

Mt 5:20 – For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

GEORGE – I see why this passage is relevant. It is because it was the scribes and Pharisees, interpreters of the Law, with whom he was ABOUT to take issue – NOT Moses.

PHILLIP – That is correct. Now to the next passage:

Mt 5:21 – Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: 22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Jesus said, “Ye have HEARD.” From whom had they heard?

GEORGE – It sounds like Jesus is taking issue with someone who had been saying something that is not exactly right. Moses' writings were inspired of God and therefore not something contrary to God's will.

PHILLIP – Note what a respected commentator says:

(Barnes) "By them of old time. This might be translated, to the ancients, referring to Moses and the prophets. But it is more probable that he here refers to the interpreters of the law and the prophets. Jesus did not set himself against the Law of Moses, but against the false and pernicious interpretations of the law prevalent in his time."

Matt. 5:27, 28. Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery: 28. but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Barnes: “Ye have heard. Or, this is the common interpretation among the Jews. Jesus proceeds here to comment on some prevailing opinions among the Jews; to show that the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was defective; and that men needed a better righteousness, or they could not be saved. He shows what he meant by that better righteousness, by showing that the common opinions of the scribes were erroneous.”

Verses 27, 28. “Ye have heard --Thou shalt not commit adultery. Our Saviour in these verses explains the seventh commandment. It is probable that the Pharisees had explained this commandment as they had the sixth, as extending only to the external act; and that they regarded evil thoughts and a wanton imagination as of little consequence, or as not forbidden by the law. Our Saviour assures them that the commandment did not regard the external act merely, but the secrets of the heart, and the movements of the eye. That they who indulged a

wanton desire; that they who looked on a woman to increase their lust, have already, in the sight of God, violated the commandment, and committed adultery in the heart” (Barnes).

GEORGE – Albert Barnes made it very clear that Jesus was expounding on the Law, rather than making NEW law.

PHILLIP – Let us continue looking at a couple more passages, then we will go back to verses 31 and 32.

33. Again, ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: 34. but I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God;

(Barnes) Verse 33. “Thou shalt not forswear thyself. Christ here proceeds to correct another false interpretation of the law. The law respecting oaths is found in Le 19:12 and De 23:23. By those laws, men were forbidden to perjure themselves, or to forswear, that is, swear falsely.”

“Perform unto the Lord. Perform literally, really, and religiously, what is promised in an oath.”

“Thine oaths. An oath is a solemn affirmation, or declaration, made with an appeal to God for the truth of what is affirmed, and imprecating his vengeance, and renouncing his favour, if what is affirmed is false. A false oath is called perjury; or, as in this place, forswearing.”

"It appears, however, from this passage, as well as from the ancient writings of the Jewish Rabbins, that while they professedly adhered to the law, they had introduced a number of oaths in common conversation, and oaths which they by no means considered as binding. For example, they would swear by the temple, by the head, by heaven, by the earth. So long as they kept from swearing by the name Jehovah, and so long as they observed the oaths publicly taken, they seemed to consider all others as allowable, and allowedly broken. This is the abuse which Christ wished to correct. It was the practice of swearing in common conversation, and especially swearing by created things. To do this, he said that they were mistaken in their views of the sacredness of such oaths. They were very closely connected with God; and to trifle with them was a species of trifling with God. Heaven is his throne; the earth his footstool; Jerusalem his peculiar abode; the head was made by him, and was so much under his control, that we could not make one hair white or black. To swear by these things, therefore, was to treat irreverently objects created by God; and could not be without guilt" (Barnes).

(Barnes) Verses 34, 35. "Swear not at all. That is, in the manner which he proceeds to specify. Swear not in any of the common and profane ways customary at that time."

GEORGE – After hearing that explanation I see clearly now that Jesus was NOT saying Moses said THIS, but I AM CHANGING it to THIS. He was saying, MEN have been saying this...but I am explaining what the Law says and showing how you men are out of harmony with it.

PHILLIP – That is how I see it. Now back to verse 31...

31. It was said also, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: (ASV)

Who was going about saying "Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement"?

GEORGE – The Jews who were following their own traditions (Talmud). Because of their unfaithfulness to their wives in putting them out of the house and acting as if the marriage was nonexistent, they were required (commanded) to give the bill of divorcement. This command is falsely viewed by many as "PERMISSION" by God through Moses to divorce. Admittedly, the Jews had looked upon the command of Moses as "permission" to divorce – just give her a bill of divorcement, but this was something Jesus sought to correct, rather than to change the Law of Moses.

PHILLIP – Again, Barnes' comments are helpful:

"The husband was directed, if he put his wife away, to give her a bill of divorce, that is, a certificate of the fact that she had been his wife, and that he had dissolved the marriage. There was considerable difference of opinion among the Jews for what causes the husband was permitted to do this."

Again, and as we learned from studying Deut. 24:1-4 and Mal. 2:15, the husband was not "permitted" to act treacherously against his wife at all, but was rather FORBIDDEN to do so. The command was to unfaithful men but was for the wife – to release her...to marry another.

Did Jesus take sides with one of the Jewish schools?

GEORGE – It is more likely that BOTH schools were in error, and that Jesus did not take sides, but merely explained the passage in light of what it was intended to accomplish.

PHILLIP – Precisely. Now to verse 32...

But I say unto you, that every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery.

First, if Jesus is saying everyone that divorces his wife...maketh her an adulteress, he is definitely contradicting Moses. If we can see and admit that Jesus did not...and could not possibly have done that, then we must try to understand this passage in a way that harmonizes with the idea that MOSES allowed divorced persons to marry. This concept is certainly in harmony with proper hermeneutics.

George, it is my understanding that putteth away describes part of the divorce process, but does not mean or imply that there is an actual divorce, where the whole legal process is understood. The putting away, without giving the bill or divorcement, is what Jesus here had in mind. Everyone that does it, except in the case where there is fornication, makes his spouse an adulteress.

The exception to causing a wife to be an adulteress, if she is put away, is if it is done because of fornication. I am not talking about unfaithfulness or adultery specifically, as is often errantly affirmed, but because fornication is being committed in the relationship due to its not being a legal/scriptural marriage. For example: being married to your "brother's wife" (which was forbidden by the Law, Lev. 20:21; Mt 14:3,4), or father's wife (1Cor 5:1), and forbidden foreign wives such as the Canaanites (Gen. 28:6).

The "exception clause" explains that if a man puts away his wife in a case where the marriage is not legal/scriptural, which is to end the relationship by permanent separation, it DOES NOT cause the woman to be an adulteress. Naturally, she could marry and the one she married would not be guilty of adultery, as would be the case in a legitimate marriage where one is merely put away and not given the bill of divorcement.

GEORGE – Phillip, I cannot wait to hear you explain the meaning of maketh her an adulteress. This phrase has troubled me for a long time.

PHILLIP – I will present four theories and in view of what we have learned it should be obvious which is correct:

- 1) The woman that is put away is in fact an adulteress because Jesus said it. She does not have to do anything – she will be caused to be an adulteress if she is put away (divorced is the thinking).
- 2) She is viewed as an adulteress, but is not in fact an adulteress.
- 3) She will likely go and be with another man and in FACT be an adulteress.
- 4) If one merely put his wife out of the house, he makes it impossible for her to carry out her duties as a wife. She commits adultery – adultery meaning, "failing

to live up to the covenant” or “breaking covenant,” “covenant breaking,” etc. (See Jer. 3:9; Ezekiel 16:38, KJV, ASV, BBE, and CEV.)

GEORGE – It appears that we have been able to come to an agreement as to what God tells us regarding the question, "Who has a right to marry?"

PHILLIP – Yes, George, we have, and this is a great accomplishment. We have been able to open our minds, reject that which is mere tradition, and understand the truth, which is an even greater accomplishment. I shudder to think that my teachings could have resulted in you and Angela being forced to ignore your bond to each other; and even worse, that one or both of you could have been driven away from the Lord and His cleansing blood (1John 1:7). I cannot seem to find the words to express my appreciation to you for helping me to understand the truth. Now, we have our work cut out for us. We have to teach the rest of the congregation.

GEORGE – Yes, and I am afraid it will not be easy, especially since Don told the congregation that people who teach what we now know to be the truth are false teachers and must be marked and avoided.

PHILLIP – Don is a good and honest man, and I think we should do our best to teach him the truth. The other lessons he presented to the congregation were very edifying, and we certainly would like to have him back.

GEORGE – Phillip, we must be realistic. Few are going to be open to the truth on this subject. There are many who will treat us like false teachers and will not even listen to what we have to say. Some will try to destroy any influence we might have, or hope to obtain, in teaching others. Nevertheless, they can stop the truth from being taught only within their circle of influence. We can only pray for them, be diligent to help them to see, and be patient.

[Phillip and George met with the elders of the church and discussed with them the things the two had studied for the past few weeks. Phillip was relieved that the elders were not ready to take any action against them and that they all found the study interesting. They wanted to hear more. Thus, Phillip's dilemma was over and he could look forward to going about his evangelistic efforts. He would know that all those he would teach, who wanted the blood of Christ, would be forgiven by the Lord and would be received by the church. Furthermore, the new converts would not be required to break a covenant (marriage) or be denied the right to a marriage.]

Addendum:

Is Divorce Sinful?

By Robert Waters

When I began seriously studying the subject of divorce and remarriage (about 12 years ago) I gradually moved away from the "traditional" position that, "divorce is not sinful, but that remarriage is." Olan Hicks and others had been putting forward some strong arguments defending the teaching that "divorce is wrong, marriage is right." However, after much study and debate, I admit that I was wrong on that point, and it is a very significant matter.

There are a couple of passages that must be harmonized: 1) "God hates divorce" (Mal. 2:16 Living Bible) and 2) Jeremiah 3:8, where we see that God indeed divorced Israel. "And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also."

Some, in an effort to harmonize these passages, have offered quite pitiful explanations. The most common argument is that, the marriage was not literal and therefore does not apply. Nevertheless, it was called a marriage and no logical or reasonable argument against that fact has been offered. Thus, the case in point stands as an example indeed (1Cor 10:11).

Others have argued that it was okay for God to divorce but not okay for us to do it. Thus, they have God setting an example for us but then later, supposedly, telling us that we must not follow that example. (In a similar manner some seek to justify their contention that Jesus taught contrary to the Law, under which he lived, in teaching "new doctrine" on divorce and remarriage.) Is God inconsistent? Absolutely not! On occasions, God has been angry with men (Deut. 29:23). This demonstrates that anger is not sinful. Paul teaches us to, "Be angry but do not sin" (Ephesians 4:26). This is easy to understand, and if you can understand this you can understand that divorce is not sinful for the same reasons.

But what about the passage that says God hates divorce? First, let us take a look at the passage from some of the most trusted versions:

--King James

Malachi 2:16 For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

-- American Standard

Malachi 2:16 For I hate putting away, saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, and him that covereth his garment with violence, saith Jehovah of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

-- Young's Bible

Malachi 2:16 For [I] hate sending away, said Jehovah, God of Israel, And He

[who] hath covered violence with his clothing, said Jehovah of Hosts, And ye have been watchful over your spirit, And ye do not deal treacherously.

-- Darby's Bible

Malachi 2:16 (for I hate putting away, saith Jehovah the God of Israel;) and he covereth with violence his garment, saith Jehovah of hosts: take heed then to your spirit, that ye deal not unfaithfully.

-- Webster's Bible

Malachi 2:16 For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith, that he hateth putting away: for [one] covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

After observing that there is an obvious difference in opinion as to how the word shalach should be translated, one has to wonder if our ability to understand the whole divorce and remarriage issue doesn't hinge on the difference between "put away" and "divorce."

Vines says shalach means: "to send, stretch forth, get rid of."

Consider also Strong's definition of shalach:

[Heb. 7971] shalach (shaw-lakh')

"a primitive root; to send away, for, or out (in a great variety of applications):--X any wise, appoint, bring (on the way), cast (away, out), conduct, X earnestly, forsake, give (up), grow long, lay, leave, let depart (down, go, loose), push away, put (away, forth, in, out), reach forth, send (away, forth, out), set, shoot (forth, out), sow, spread, stretch forth (out)."

It is apparent that Mr. Strong understood the language to refer to something less than divorce, which according to God requires a legal document (Deut. 24:1). Not only is there no mention of divorce in Mal 2:16, it is apparent that the sinful thing alluded to in the text was "treachery," which is defined as "betrayal." Such treachery was, and is today, being practiced by Jewish men who put away their wives but not freeing them with a "writ of divorce" according to the command of Moses. Of what did Jesus say these men were guilty when they "put away" their wives and married another (Matt. 19:9)? He said they were guilty of adultery (Moichao), not fornication (porneia) used in the "exception clause". Although some have concluded from the Pharisees' comment that divorce was merely something Moses suffered (permitted), Jesus, in the next verse, told them that it was something that Moses actually "commanded" them to do under the circumstances and in the context of the discussion (Mark 10:3,5). Certainly Moses was not commanding a man to divorce his faithful wife, for such could not be done without committing "treachery," which is what God hates. He simply commanded those who were determined to get rid of a wife to give them legal papers whereby they could show that they were free from the marriage, and thus be able to marry another without being charged with adultery. In doing so, Moses

clearly defined “divorce” as having three clear and distinct parts, not just one – the sending away, the bill of divorcement and putting it into her hand (Deut. 24:1-3).

Incidentally, no exception was mentioned in Mark’s account. Thus, evidently the “exception clause” was not applicable to those in the audience because they were indeed unscripturally putting away their wives to whom they were scripturally/legally married. Jesus did, however, for the record give an “exception,” as found in Matt. 5:32 and 19:9. If “porneia” was being committed, as would be the case if the marriage was not scriptural or legal, one could and should simply “put away”, or “send away” the illicit sexual partner. No papers for divorce would be needed because there was no legal marriage to dissolve. They simply would need to separate, as was the case in the command found in Ezra 10:11: “Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives.”

The word translated “separate” is: [Heb. 914] badal(baw-dal') a primitive root; to divide (in variation senses literally or figuratively, separate, distinguish, differ, select, etc.):-- (make, put) difference, divide (asunder), (make) separate (self, -ation), sever (out), X utterly. (Strong's)

There was no command to divorce those women, why? They were not legal marriages. The relationships were not pleasing to God and simply needed to be ended by permanent separation. (See 1 Cor. 5; Mt. 14:3, 4; Lev. 20:21 and Gen 28:6).

I recently heard on a radio talk show a man talking about the overturn of homosexual marriages that were illegally allowed in a certain state. He stated that there would be no need for a divorce because there was no legal marriage. He was exactly right and this is the type of thing involved in the “exception clause” that many misunderstand, misapply and use to justify the practice of “forbidding to marry”, which God put into the catalog of “doctrines of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

Conclusion:

God divorced Israel after it became apparent that there was not going to be repentance and a renewed relationship. Under the same circumstances divorce is the right thing to do, whether it is initiated by the guilty one that “put away” or the one that had diligently tried to save the relationship. After we understand that there is a difference in one being put away and one being divorced we can easily see that the traditional teaching that one who has been divorced is forbidden to marry (or will commit adultery if he does), is without scriptural support.