

FOR THIS CAUSE

Matthew 19:5

DIVINE LEGISLATION.

Sometimes God, the supreme authority of all, has restated self evident moral rules, for example "*Thou shalt not kill*". The right to take life is obviously the prerogative of the giver of life.

Sometimes God has bound on man rules that would seem arbitrary, for example "*Thou shalt not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*", "*This do in remembrance of me*".

Some regulations were for particular people. For example: to remind the children of Israel that they were servants in Egypt and that the LORD God had brought them out, He required them to "*Remember the Sabbath day ...*" (Deut. 5:15).

However, the underlying principles of moral laws are not confined to the covenant under which the enactments were made. Consider for example "*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife*". Even though this legislation was part of God's covenant with Israel, the underlying moral principle, that coveting is sinful, is universal. Because of the universality of moral and Divinely established principles, Paul could say to Timothy:

II Timothy 3:16-17 *ALL SCRIPTURE is given by inspiration of God, and IS PROFITABLE for DOCTRINE, for REPROOF, for CORRECTION, for INSTRUCTION in RIGHTEOUSNESS: That the man of God may be perfect, THOROUGHLY FURNISHED to all good works.*

DIVINE PRINCIPLES.

Sometimes the very fact that God did a particular thing in a particular way shows without question that God requires it to be that way, and anyone who dares interfere with the arrangement is guilty of sinning against the Creator. For example, in Genesis 2:18-24, God makes one woman from one man to be his "*help suitable for him*" thus establishing for all time the principle of one man/one woman for life. It was this principle that Jesus appealed to when he made his pronouncement on marriage and divorce.

Matthew 19:3-6. *The Pharisees also came to him, tempting him, and saying to him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said to them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, 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? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.*

This had nothing to do with any restricted covenant relationship between God and a selected company of people, whether Patriarchal, Jewish or Christian. Neither was the Lord Jesus making a choice between two current Jewish schools of thought on the subject. Jesus was making it clear that the whole principle of one man/one woman for life is based on the historical fact that: "*He which made them at the beginning made them male and female and said FOR THIS CAUSE shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his woman* (Gk. γυναικι from γυνη, woman): and they twain shall be one flesh. Wherefore they are no more twain, but ONE FLESH. What therefore God has joined together, LET NO MAN PUT ASUNDER." This principle was bound on **ALL** mankind **right at the beginning**. This accounts for Jesus statement with regard to deviation from this principle; "but from the beginning it was not so." Matt. 19:8. ^{SEE NOTE 1}

HARDNESS OF HEART.

Some think they see a loophole in Jesus' statement "Moses for the hardness of your heart suffered you to put away your wives" Matt.19:8. To understand this we need to see exactly what the Old Covenant legislation was regarding illicit intercourse. 1) If a married woman was convicted of adultery, both she and the co-respondent were to be executed Lev.20:10. Deut.22:22. 2) If she was suspected but not convicted the husband had to take her to the priest with a "jealousy" offering. Num.5:11-31. 3) If an espoused virgin was convicted of fornication both she and the co-respondent were to be executed Deut.22:23. Note: there is no provision for divorce in

any of the above situations. 4) If an non-betrothed virgin and a man copulated, they had to marry. Deut.22:28. 5) One remaining possibility is that of a betrothed girl who is the innocent victim of fornication. She was not to be executed. Deut.22:25-27. But her fiancé might not want to go through with the marriage. He was allowed to divorce her (i.e. break off the espousal contract) even though she was innocent. Deut.24:1-2 ["some unseemly thing" Heb. ERVAH = "matter of nakedness" Ellicot]. This then was allowed because of their "hardness of heart".

THE EXCEPTION CLAUSE.

What about the exception clause? In Matthew 19:9 "*fornication*"(Gk. πορνεία) is given as an exception to marrying another being the sin of committing "*adultery*" (Gk. μοιχαλω). The exception clause is recorded by Matthew **only**, (Matt. 5:32. and 19:9). These passages must not be interpreted to teach something different from the parallel passage in Mark 10:2-12 where, permitting no exception, it states; "*Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, commits adultery* (Gk. μοιχαται from μοιχαλω) *against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she commits adultery* (Gk. μοιχαται) (vv11-12)".

Why then is the exception clause in Matthew but not in Mark or in Luke (Luke 16:18)? Did the Greek, whom Luke addressed and the Romans, whom Mark addressed, not need to know of the exception clause? Were only Jews, whom Matthew addressed, granted such liberty?

In Matthew 19 the Lord Jesus, clarifies for the Jews an issue about a rule in the Law of Moses, which had to do with the way that Jews contracted marriage. [Matthew 19:7 Deuteronomy 24:1-4]., not being under the "the handwriting of ordinances" it did not concern gentiles. [Colossians 2:14]. **SEE ALSO NOTE 2**

Two erroneous liberal views prevailed, both of which contradicted the Divine principle which, from the creation, God bound on all mankind:- "**What God Has joined together, let not man put asunder**". The Lord Jesus did not interpret the Law of Moses so

as to, in any way, negate this Divine principle. ^{NOTE 2}

JEWISH BETROTHAL

How did the Jews contract marriage? Has it never struck you as odd that Joseph was considering divorcing Mary BEFORE the marriage? Matthew 1:18-20 *Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was ESPOUSED to Joseph, BEFORE THEY CAME TOGETHER, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded TO PUT her AWAY privily. ("to put away" Gk απολυω divorce). But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, FEAR NOT TO TAKE to THEE Mary thy wife → Gk. γυναικα σου lit. thy woman: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.*

Jewish custom differed significantly from that of the gentiles with regard to marriage. Before a Jewish marriage took place, an espousal contract was entered into. Then a period of several months betrothal preceded the marriage ceremony. During this period the couple were not allowed to come together as man and wife. Even so this espousal contract could only be broken by a writing of divorce. That is how Joseph, finding his betrothed was having a baby, came to be thinking of divorce, even though they were not yet married.

It is evident from Matthew's account of Jesus' words on divorce, that a man having undertaken an espousal contract to marry a woman, at the end of a betrothal period the only legitimate ground he could have for breaking that contract would be that of FORNICATION, i.e. premarital sex.

In Matthew 19:9 the NIV pointlessly mis-translates "fornication" (Gk. πορνεια) by the words "marital unfaithfulness". It is true that in some contexts πορνεια can include adultery but in this passage two different Greek words are used; πορνεια for fornication and μοιχος for adultery. This signifies that two different types of action are referred to. In passages where both words appear, "fornication"

(Gk. πορνεια) is not used as an alternative word for "adultery" (Gk. μοιχος). It is used for a sin distinctively different from adultery, that of premarital sex. See for example Matthew 15:19, Mark 7:21 and 1 Corinthians. 6:9. The exception clause is not relevant to the gentile situation. It cannot be used as justification for the divorce of one who has been joined by God's design and purpose being married to another person. The new couple would be committing adultery.

FORGIVENESS

Adultery has to be regretted, and repented of, to be forgiven. Repentance is a change of mind which produces a change of action. In this case from committing adultery to ceasing to commit adultery. God is gracious and he will forgive the contrite heart and cleanse us from all unrighteousness through Jesus Christ our Lord (Acts 2.38, 1 John 1:7-2:2).

NOTES:

- 1) "Have you not read ?" Matthew 19:4-6. We believe things because of what Jesus says, but here is an amazing example of scripture interpretation: Jesus expected them "from the beginning" to have been drawing the same conclusion. What do we learn from that?
- 2) 1 Corinthians 7:10 But I command to those who have married, (**not I, but the Lord**): the wife is **not to be separated*** from her husband, **11 (but even if she is separated,* let her remain unmarried, or let her be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband is not to leave his wife. MLV.**
*The AV is wrong here. The Greek for "separated" (χωριζω) is passive, so she must not be separated.
- 3) Some say this was only for the "present distress" (v.26). Three things are being overlooked:-
 - i) In verse 1 the phrase "Now concerning" NKJV (περι δε). introduces several topics.
 - ii) In some are his advice but, that in **vv.10 & 11, is commanded by the Lord.**
 - iii) Not until **v.25** does he introduce the "present distress". So verses 10 and 11 have nothing to do with the "present distress".

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SELF EVIDENT MORALS.

Some moral principals are self evident and require no legislation to be seen to be correct. Unselfish love, honesty and trustworthiness are obviously correct. Coveting what belongs to another, lying and deceit are clearly wrong. The honest mind confronted with these principles, does not need an authoritative statement from a higher power to satisfy it about such things. (Rom.2:11-16. In vv.11,12,15: Gk., "law" has no article)

LEGISLATION.

The validity of civil legislation depends on the authority's rank. For example, our governments arbitrarily decide on which side of the road we should drive. In America it is the right. In Britain it is the left. We have to obey the laws of the country we are in. If however any conflict with God's, His authority has precedence.

Acts 5:29 ...Peter and the other apostles ... said,
"We ought to obey God rather than men."