

THE INSTRUCTOR

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Editorial...

DOES GOD RECOGNIZE UNLAWFUL MARRIAGES AND UNLAWFUL DIVORCES?

Recently while discussing the subject of marriage and divorce, a preacher took the position that God does not recognize *unlawful* divorces or *unlawful* marriages. He took that position in an effort to justify a "divorced" (or "put away") person if that person marries another. He contended that God did not *recognize* a divorce or a marriage of which he did not approve.

In the discussion mentioned above, the situation was this. A wife had "divorced" (or "put away") her husband. At the time of the divorce, neither she nor her husband had accused the other of committing fornication. Later (after he was "put away" (i.e., "divorced"), he claimed that he learned that his wife was guilty of fornication before she "divorced" (i.e., "put away") him. Later the wife married another. Referring to the "divorced" (i.e., "put away") husband, the preacher said: " divorced his wife because of adultery and he has the right to marry another." In the discussion that followed the preacher took the

position that God did not *recognize* the fact that the wife had "divorced" (i.e., "put away") her husband since she had no Scriptural right to divorce him.

Of course, the wife had no *Scriptural reason* (and thus no Scriptural right) to divorce him in view of the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 19:9. Therefore *she sinned in so doing!*

Now the question that we are considering is *not*: *Does God approve of a wife divorcing or putting away her husband without a Scriptural cause* (his committing fornication and her divorcing him for that reason)? We know that *God does not approve of it* because of the teaching of Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Romans 7:2-3; I Corinthians 7:10-15; Luke 6:31, etc.

The question we are considering is *this*: *Does God recognize an unlawful (or unscriptural or an unapproved of) divorce or marriage?* Does God *recognize* the fact that a marriage or a divorce has occurred?

By "unlawful" I mean *not permitted or authorized by God; not according to the law of God*. By "recognize" I mean *know, acknowledge or admit*.

There are marriages that are in accordance with civil law but are *contrary to the law of God*. There are divorces that are in accordance with civil law but are *contrary to the law of God*. Does God *recognize* that these marriages and divorces exist? Without doubt, God *recognizes* that these marriages and divorces exist but *He certainly does not authorize, sanction or approve of them*.

Mark 6:17-18 says: "For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother's Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." (Also read Mark 6:14-16, 19-29 and Matthew 14:1-12.) From these

Scriptures please note the following facts.

1. Herod has John put in prison.

2. Herodias has a quarrel against John because he condemned Herod for having her (Herodias). Herod imprisoned John because of Herodias.

3. Herodias was Philip's wife. Philip was Herod's brother.

4. Herod **"had married her"** (Herodias)". (Verse 17). NOTE: It is obvious that a *marriage* (according to civil law) existed between Herod and Herodias **"FOR he had married her."** FURTHER NOTE: It is obvious that a *divorce* (according to civil law) had taken place between Philip and Herodias or at this time Herodias was in a polygamous *marriage* with Herod. QUESTION: Would civil law have allowed Herod to have married Herodias without a divorce from Philip?

5. John had said unto Herod: **"It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."** (Verse 18). NOTE: Since **"he had married her"** he now *had her*! It is obvious that Herod had Herodias in a *marriage* relationship. *God's Word so teaches!*

6. It was **"not lawful"** for Herod to **"have"** Herodias although **"he had married her."**

7. John said that Herod was *married* to Herodias and that he *had* her but it was **"not lawful"**. It was not according to the law of God. NOTE: Without doubt, here is a *marriage* (of Herod and Herodias) that God *recognized* but did not *approve of*!

8. Herodias was still *Philip's wife* although she was now *married* to Herod!

For further clarification please note the following. (a) *Legally* (i.e., according to civil law but not according to the law of God and thus *without God's approval*) Herodias was now the wife of Herod **"for he had married her."** (b) *Lawfully* (i.e., according to the law of God and thus

with God's approval) Herodias was still Philip's wife!

Although Herod married Herodias *legally* (i.e., according to civil law), it was **"not lawful"** (according to the law of God since God did not approve of it) for Herod to **"have her."** Therefore *John reproved Herod for having her!*

God *recognized* the *marriage* between Herod and Herodias but *God did not approve of it!* It was an *unlawful marriage*! Herodias was still Philip's wife as far as the law of God was concerned.

In Luke 16:18 Jesus said: **"Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her which is put away from her husband committeth adultery."** NOTE: The NKJV and the NASV uses the words *"divorces"* and *"is divorced"* instead of *"putteth away"* and *"is put away"*. FURTHER NOTE: Jesus *recognized* the fact that a person *can divorce* (put away) his or her spouse without *God's approval*. Thus it would be *unlawful*!

Mark 10:12 says: **"... Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery."** NOTE: The NKJV and the NASV uses the word *"divorces"* instead of *"shall put away."* NOTE: This also shows that a person may *divorce* a spouse without God's approval! Such a divorce would be *unlawful* according to the law of God although God *recognized* it as a divorce.

In Mt. 19:9 we read: **"...whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and who marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."**

NOTE: The NKJV and the NASV uses the words *"divorces"* and *"is divorced"* instead of *"shall put away"* and *"is put away."* We learn from this verse that a

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divorce for the cause of fornication is lawful (i.e., it is *authorized* by the law of God and God *approves* of it and a divorce for any other reason is “*not lawful*” and God does not approve of it although He *recognizes* the fact of the divorce.

In Mt. 5: 32 Jesus said: “That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.” NOTE: We see from this verse that *put-ting away* is the same of *divorcing*. If a man divorces his wife for any other reason than fornication *he causeth her to commit adultery* when she has sexual re-lations with another. It is obvious that God *recognizes* a divorce for other rea-sons than fornication but *He does not ap-prove of it*.

When a divorce is granted because of fornication *God both recognizes and approves of it* because it is according to civil law and it is in keeping with the law of God.

There are many things that God *recognized* (or *recognizes*) but He did *not* (or *does not*) *approve* of them. Here are some of them.

1. *Cain killed Abel.* (See Genesis 4:1-15; Heb. 11:4; 1 John 3:12).

2. *Lamech “took unto him two wives.”* (Gen. 2:19; 2:4; Mk. 10:6-9).

3. *Homosexuality.* (See Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-32; etc.).

4. *The burnt offerings and meat offerings* in Amos 5:21-27.

5. *Judas betrayed Him!* (See Mt. 26:47-50; Mk. 14:43-46; Luke 22:48)

6. *Peter denied Jesus!* (See Luke 22:54-62; Mark 14:66-72).

7. *Jezebel committed fornication.* (See Revelation 2:20-23).

8. *The church at Ephesus had left her first love.* (See Rev. 2:1-7).

9. *The church at Sardis was dead.* (See Rev. 3:1-6).

10. *The church of the Laodiceans was luke-warm.* (See Rev. 14:14-22).

When a person commits the works of the flesh God *recognizes* the fact that he does but God does not *approve* of his actions!

Yes, God recognizes unscriptural marriages and divorces but He certainly does not approve of them!

GOSPEL MEETINGS

East Albertville—April 1-6, 2001 @ 7:00pm
except on the Lord's Day. Different speakers.

SENTENCE SERMONS

True religion is to be believed and practiced every day.

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Love is a beautiful flower that blooms in the garden of God.

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Keep your heart open to receive the Words of life contained in the Scriptures.

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To be truly happy in this life we must be godly and learn to be content with what we have.

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Legalizing evil never justifies the evil doer—nor satisfies him.

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