



Spickard... on Divorce...

What Does the Bible say About It ? Are Popular Church Interpretations Historically Wrong and Unfair ?

"Suppose a man marries a woman but she does not please him. Having discovered something is wrong with her, he writes her a letter of **divorce** (Hebrew, **kerithuth**), hands it to her, and sends her away..."

- Deuteronomy 24:1, New Living Translation.

"Whosoever shall **put away** (Greek, **apoluo**) his wife, and marries another, commits adultery against her." -Mark 10:11; Luke 16:18, 1769 King James Version.

"... whosoever shall **put away** (**apoluo**) his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery: and whoso marries her which is **put away** (**apoluo**) commits adultery." - Matthew 19: 9, *ibid*.

"For the Lord, the God of Israel,...hates **putting away** (Hebrew, **shalach...not kerithuth**).."
- Malachi 2:16.

"Putting away" (**shalach** and **apoluo**) means "not lawfully divorced." - margin note, Geneva Bible, the Puritan Bible which ante-dates the KJV Bible.

Jesus addressed the Law of Divorce on the Mount and again later with His Disciples. Jesus said that He came to Fulfill the Law of Moses, and that "not one tittle of the Law is to fail." So, Jesus did not amend this Law, but only condemned as His Father did, the unlawful "putting away." Due to gross errors in translation, "putting away" does not mean the same as "**divorce**."



Divorce in Bible Times

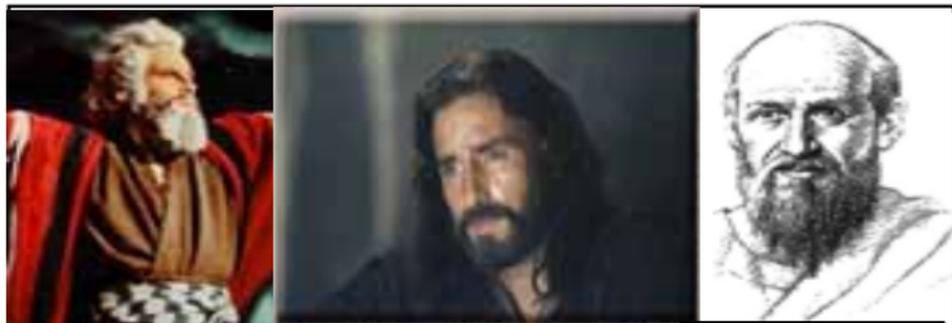
Divorce in Bible times was set down by Moses as recorded in Deuteronomy 24:1. It was fairly direct and utilitarian. It stated that if a man married a woman and that she lost favor with him over some issue of disobedience, dishonor, or fault, then he could write a *legal bill of divorce*, and *give it to her*, and send her away. This legal document severed the contract or covenant of marriage. Then the woman with this *legal divorce* could go and become married again to another man without sin, reproach, or condemnation. This was to guarantee the woman a basic right in a society where she had few due to the "hardness of the hearts of the men" in it. It was because of this hardness of hearts, that Moses enacted this law. Husbands were "putting away" their wives without due process of law...creating adulterers of their former spouses. Moses put this requirement of legal documentation upon Jewish men to avoid the issue and sin of adultery in such matters. The act of Divorce was not condemned. It is a legal right recognized by God. The lack of due process in this matter is what is condemned. Indeed, Malachi 2:16 declares that God *hated* not divorce, but the "*putting away*" of wives without the bill of divorcement. God recognises the facts between men and women : that they are two imperfect people...separated by differences of gender...trying to develop a perfect relationship! After all, this is how men and women were created by Him...and to be fair, God gave the institution of divorce through Moses to remedy such irreconcilable differences in a grossly imperfect or abusive union.

There are only a few instances of its practice in the Scriptures. We read in the Book of Esther how the King of Persia **divorced** Queen Vashti because of her defiance of the King before all the court of Persia. He then selected Esther to be Queen, and **married** her. The Bible does not call Esther an *adulteress* over this, but implies that divorce was necessary and just.

Indeed, this very instance of divorce was the means to save the Jewish race from extinction ! Mordecai, Esther's uncle, said the same, telling Esther, *"it was for a time like this that you were made the Queen"* (Esther 4:14, Good News Translation) ! Nor was the *right of divorce* by King Ataxerxes questioned.

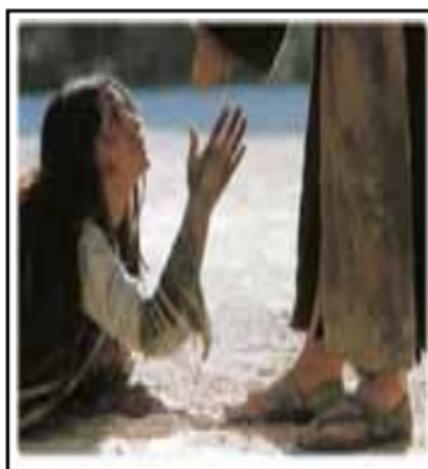
More on Divorce ...andPutting Away

The Hebrew word for divorce is *"kerithuth."* This is the word used in Deuteronomy 24. It is always used in connection with divorce. The Hebrew word for "putting away" is *"shalach."* It means literally, to "put away." It is used 878 times in the Old Testament. It is used 13 times in relation to marital separation or intimate relationship. *Shalach* never means divorce, but separation...much like legal separation today in the American legal system. In the New Testament, the Greek word for divorce is *"apostasion."* It is used three times and always means "divorce." The Greek word for "putting away" is distinct from divorce, and is *"apoluo."* It is used 94 times in the New Testament, and specifically used 18 times related to a separation in marriage or intimate relationship. It is never used to mean "divorce" or in connection with divorce. It means only as its Hebrew counterpart, *shalach*, to describe what can be today called "legal separation." Divorce and "putting away" are not the same...they are two distinct and separate actions, although by law they go together.



^ MOSES was the Lawgiver; CHRIST was, and is the Lifegiver ; and right, the Apostle Paul was the individual that reconciled the two in practical teaching called in the New Testament as "The Law of the Spirit and Life in Christ Jesus." This was the main feature of the Pauline Gospel in his letters.

In the aforementioned scripture of Malachi 2:16, God was angry, not about divorce, but that husbands were only "separating" from their wives and remarrying other women without getting a divorce. In olden Israel, the father of the bride often paid a "dowry" to the husband as a gift of marrying his daughter. The husbands, who wanted to avoid refunding this dowry, simply did not grant their wives a lawful divorce. This was a direct violation of the Mosaic Law as set forth in Deuteronomy. These "separated" or "put-away" wives could not marry again without they and their new spouse committing adultery. To remarry, these wives had to have the Bill or Writ of Divorce as decreed by Moses.



< THE WOMAN taken in adultery as told in the Gospel of John. Adultery was not a reason for divorce in Mosaic Law. Adultery was not punishable by divorce, but death...by stoning. Jesus, in this account, superceded the moral law of Moses.

Divorce in the Gospels

The account of Matthew 19:3-12, along with Matthew 5:31-32, Luke 16:18, and Mark 10:2-12, all deal with the same issue...of being separated and then marrying someone else without first getting a divorce. It is apparent that God's rebuke in Malachi was still being disregarded. Christ, being zealous of God's righteousness, reiterated this Law and sought to show the disobedience of the Jews and Pharisees. It should not be necessary to go over this teaching as the *Greek* words for *divorce* and *put away* are the same in these passages as what has already been discussed except for clarifying Christ's words in the account of Matthew 19. Jesus said,

The Pharisees had come to tempt Christ and posed the question whether a man could *put away* his wife for any reason. Jesus replied by giving some background information on the nature of marriage of *"two being made one flesh."* Jesus is saying here unless a married couple actually divorces, then they are still "joined" as *"one flesh."* The Bill of Divorce negates the physical contract and spiritual union of a marriage. *"Putting away"* does not. And if they should marry without the bill of divorce, as according to the Law, then they are guilty of adultery. *"In the beginning"* said Jesus, in commencing his rebuttal, God never wanted the husband and wife to separate without a divorce. If not for that, they could not become remarried as specified by Deuteronomy 24:1-2. Jesus tried to conclude his remarks by saying, *"...what God has joined together, let no man put asunder, or separate,"* as Jesus was talking about being "separated," and marrying another while still being lawfully married, not divorced. The Pharisees still didn't want to grasp this logic because their hearts were so hardened, and asked Jesus why that Moses commanded to give a bill of divorcement and to put the wife away. Jesus finished this discourse by saying... *"And I say unto you, whoever shall **put away** (separates from) his wife (without a bill of divorce), except for the cause of fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery: and whoso marries her which is **put away** (separated from her husband without a bill of divorce) commits adultery."*

Divorce and the Teaching of Paul

In the Roman letter (7:1-4), Paul stated, *"that the Law has dominion over a man as long as he lives."* And he continued saying, *"For the woman which has a husband is bound by the Law to her husband as long he lives."* As noted, this is talking about a woman who has a husband. As married, she is to be with her husband in a life-long marital commitment. However, if they are no

longer husband and wife, this commitment is abrogated! Thus, if the woman is single, widowed, or divorced, she would not be married, and hence, not bound to a husband. This example cited by Paul is only applied to a husband and wife relationship. Under the Law of Divorce (Deut. 24:1-4), it states that when someone is divorced they have a former or ex-spouse...which means they are no longer lawfully married. Paul was not amending the Law of Divorce. In this context, he was only using marriage as an **analogy** to describe the dominion of the Law which the individual, under the Law, was "married" to the Law. Yet, the individual could now, "*become **dead** to the Law, by... Christ...and even married to Christ instead*" (see verse 4). Thus, Paul is not teaching, as is popularly thought, about marriage, divorce, or re-marriage. In the Corinthian letter, Paul speaks by permission and says nothing that contradicts the Law of Divorce, but only regarding separation.

A Summary

Thus, according to the Scriptures (Matthew 19:7), there are two requirements for divorce. One, legally ...by giving the wife a bill, or certificate of divorce, and two, the "putting away," or physical separation of the spouse. This procedure can be reversed, as it is in modern-day application, but the result is still the same. In Isaiah 50:1, God "puts away" Israel, but does not divorce her. Later, God divorces Israel as recorded in Jeremiah 3:8, because of her spiritual whoredoms. Though now divorced, God will take Israel, one day in the future, as His wife again.

In writing this, I used sources from Stephen Gola's website (www.divorcehope.com). The Gentile Church, through apostasy, error, and outright fanaticism, has held back the truth of Biblical divorce

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throughout the Church Age. It is hoped that the truth herein, "*will make you free,*" of further needless hurt, suffering, and pain.

-JS