

## *Divorce & Remarriage*

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And this you do as well: You cover the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favour at your hand. You ask, "Why does he not?" Because the Lord was a witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did not one God make her? Both flesh and spirit are his. And what does the one God desire? Godly offspring. So look to yourselves, and do not let anyone be faithless to the wife of his youth. For I hate divorce, says the Lord, the God of Israel, and covering one's garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. So take heed to yourselves and do not be faithless. (Malachi 2:13–16 New Revised Standard Version)

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### 1.

The Lord [*YHWH*] says that He hates divorce, that He had no regard for Israel's offerings because of the nation's marital faithlessness; yet the Lord, who married Israel (Ezek 16:8), put away or divorced Israel, both the northern house of Samaria and the southern house of Judah (Ezek 23:9, 18). So in the institution of marriage is seen the type or shadow of the Lord's relationship with His people, with Israel going from being a physically circumcised nation to being a nation circumcised of heart (Rom 2:28–29 — related Scriptures include Col 2:11; Deut 30:6; Jer 9:25–26) that the Messiah will marry upon His coming.

To understand divorce, which Moses allowed because of the hardness of Israel's heart (i.e., because of the lawlessness of Israel), two theological understandings must be grasped: (1) being born of spirit [πνεῦμα θεοῦ] represents a real second birth, or receipt of a second breath of life. And (2) the disciple must understand that in the beginning the Logos [ὁ λόγος] was God [θεὸς] and was with [πρὸς] the God [τὸν θεόν] (from John 1:1), that these two formed one deity [*YHWH*] that was named with a plural noun [*Elohim*—אלהים] that takes singular verbs. When *Elohim* [singular in usage] created man in *Elohim's* image, humankind is created male and female (Gen 1:26–27); that in creating humankind, the Woman was created from the Man to be the Helpmate to the Man as the Logos, who was God [θεὸς], was the Helpmate to the God [τὸν θεόν] in that the Logos created everything that has been made (John 1:3), including humankind. The Logos was *Yah*, whom King David knew was the knowable or visible representation of *YHWH*, the conjoined deity (see Ps 146:1; 148:1; 149:1). It was the Logos as God [θεὸς] who entered His creation as His Son, His only (John 3:16), to be born as the man Jesus of Nazareth (John 1:14) who then became the Son of the God [τὸν θεόν] when the breath the God

[πνεῦμα θεοῦ] descended upon Him in the form of a dove (Matt 3:16), thereby creating the visible representation for how disciples invisibly receive a second breath of life when the Father raises them from the dead (John 5:21) while they are still physically living.

The Apostle Paul was specifically called to know the will of God (Acts 22:14), and it is from Paul and from John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, that most of what endtime disciples know about spiritual birth and about God comes. Peter says that what Paul writes is hard to understand (2 Pet 3:16). Indeed, in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century Paul was not understood, and he hasn't been well understood since. Hellenists in the 1<sup>st</sup>-Century CE couldn't accept the idea that human beings are not born with immortal souls, and to this day, both Christendom and rabbinical Judaism openly professes that human beings are physically born with indwelling immortality when Paul specifically says that eternal life (indwelling immortality) is the gift of God in or through Jesus Christ (Rom 6:23), that the wages of sin is death, with death meaning the cessation of life. So when a disciple receives the spirit of God [πνεῦμα θεοῦ] and is thereby raised from the dead, about whom Jesus said, "Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead" (Matt 8:22), the disciple doesn't receive regeneration of an already possessed immortal soul, but the disciple receives a second breath of life that causes the biological software that animates the flesh to come alive in a manner foreshadowed by the corpse of mud coming alive when *Elohim* [again, singular in usage] breathed into the nostrils of the first Adam (Gen 2:7). Therefore, the person who is not raised from the dead while physically alive remains to be raised from the dead in the great White Throne Judgment. This person is not spiritually lost, is not frying away in hell, but rests in the dust of the earth to be called forth after the millennial reign of Christ Jesus.

It is this concept of being born of spirit [πνεῦμα θεοῦ] that Jesus introduced to Nicodemus when He said,

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and [πνεύματος], he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the [πνεύματος] is spirit [πνεύμα]. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind [πνεῦμα] blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the [πνεύματος]."

Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And *as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,*

*so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. (John 3:3–15)*

According to Jesus, it is the person who believes in Him that may have eternal life; for elsewhere Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life” (John 5:24).

Therefore, to understand what is at stake in marriage, the disciple needs to understand that when born of spirit, the disciple receives a second breath of life that gives life to a new self or new creature or new man dwelling within the tent of flesh of the old self. The disciple will change and will no longer be the person that was a son of disobedience (Eph 2:2–3). And because the disciple changes and will begin to live outwardly as a Judean, spouses will find that they are no longer married to the same person as before.

Before proceeding, God does not enter into the biological unions of livestock even though the Logos created all that has been made. God does enter into the unions (marriages) of Israel: Israel is not today a nation consisting of the biological descendants of the patriarch Jacob (Rom 9:6) but the nation that is circumcised of heart, a nation that was not before a nation (1 Pet 2:10). Thus, natural Israel is to God no different than is any other nation that is “dead,” or without that second breath of life. God does not today enter into the marriage of Hindus or into the marriages of Muslims or into the marriage of atheists; He does not bind every marriage made in this world. He has not yet chosen to give that second breath of life to every person; He will, but He will when the Holy Spirit (His divine breath) is poured out on all flesh (Joel 2:28) halfway through the seven endtime years of tribulation. Until then, His concern is for those who are His sons.

If God doesn’t enter into marriage between Buddhists to bind marriages made between people who do not know Him, He also doesn’t enter into marriages between any two people who do not know Him for He is not a respecter of persons, binding marriage between these two people who do not know Him but not binding the marriage between those two people who are equally ignorant about Him.

The practical application of this is that for those individuals who are not born of God, marriage is a civil union, subject to civil laws, and dissolvable by these same civil laws. Certainly the firstborn of these unions between non-Believers are unredeemed and are to the Father as the firstborn of Egyptians were when the death angel passed over Egypt on that first Passover night so long ago (three and a half millennia ago).

Concerning the marital state of the disciple when initially called by God and given a second breath of life: the Apostle Paul addresses this situation when he writes,

Now concerning the matters about which you [Corinthians] wrote: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.”

But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her

own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Now as a concession, not a command, I say this. I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.

To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.

To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches. (1 Cor 7:1–17)

The rule that Paul gives has not changed, but remains as it was. However, what has changed is that most “Christians” are not born of God.

The Apostle John wrote,

Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. (1 John 4–10)

Most “Christians” today make a practice of sinning and are, thus, the children of the devil, just as Jesus identified the Jews of His day as the children of the devil (John 8:44), which doesn’t mean that the devil sired them but that they believe the devil rather than believe God. Therefore, in applying the rule that Paul established, if an unmarried person truly born of spirit chooses to marry, the person is to only marry another person truly born of spirit. If a person does not bring forth fruit worthy of having been born of spirit, then the person probably hasn’t been born of spirit and is not an appropriate potential mate for the disciple.

If a married person is truly born of spirit, and if this person’s spouse chooses to continue in the relationship, God now enters into this marriage to bind it thereby placing the spouse in a sanctified relationship with the Lord; i.e., into a relationship analogous to the relationship ancient Israel had with the Lord. Ancient Israel was not born of spirit, but was “special” to the Lord in that He would attend to the nation’s needs as long as the nation sought to obey Him

If a married person is truly born of spirit, and if this person’s spouse chooses not to continue in the relationship, the disciple is free to marry again for the first marriage was never bound but was as the marriage between two unbelievers. This permits the unbelieving spouse who doesn’t like the fact that his or her spouse has changed and will continue to change the freedom to do what he or she would have otherwise done, that is leave the marriage.

But endtime disciples have to address a problem Paul did not anticipate: what happens when two apparently believing spouses suddenly find themselves separated by doctrinal differences as the splintered Church of God undergoes further slivering? Are these two free to remarry? They no longer share beliefs.

Unfortunately, the past practices of the splintered Churches of God has been to give a “free permission to divorce” decree to whomever will attach him or herself to the splinter. And in doing so, these splinters have made themselves like mocking Pharisees (see Luke 16:14–18).

If two believing spouses were both born of spirit, having each received a second breath of life, then the marriage between these two was bound by God when the second agreed to dwell with the first after being called, said with one substantial caveat: if unusual circumstances occur where one spouse is no longer the same person as before, grounds for reexamining whether a marriage exists are introduced. This does not mean that a bound marriage is annulled or ended for any reason short of death, but that “death” is not necessarily the termination of physical life but can include the termination of spiritual life, thereby returning the person to the status of an unbeliever, which also means that the believing spouse is not free to end the relationship. Only the unbelieving spouse is free to end the relationship. And the believing spouse, if freed, is only free to marry another believer.

Christians, *per se*, are not born of spirit but are mostly the children of the devil, marrying and giving in marriage as unbelievers do everywhere. Their marriages are not bound by God, for they do not know God regardless of their protestations otherwise. Therefore, their good behavior is admirable and their poor behavior is understandable. Whatever rules they as unbelievers establish, they are subject to these rules. So if by their rules they are free to marry or

remarry when one of them is called by God and given a second breath of life, the person is free to marry, but only in the Lord.

It is in the divorce of a couple where both were members of the former Worldwide Church of God that the problem of remarriage really exists, especially if one of these spouses chooses to follow Gerald Flurry, an idolater. Are one or both spouses now unbelievers? This is not a determination to be made lightly, and not a determination that can be made without knowing both individuals. Therefore, until such a determination is made, the couple is free to separate but not free to remarry ... no person should have to live with another person, or have to engage in sexual intercourse with another person unless there is unity and agreement. And let this be a ruling within *Philadelphia*.

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