

Are We (As Some Claim) Making Divorce an Unforgivable Sin?

Jesus said, "Whoever divorces his wife, except for fornication, and marries another woman, commits adultery" (Mt. 19:9).

What if a man does what Jesus prohibited? He divorces his wife simply because he no longer loves her, then later he marries another woman. Clearly, he is guilty of adultery. Now, what if this man wants to be forgiven? Let's assume he is not a Christian. He learns about Jesus' atonement, believes, and wants to be baptized into Christ. Can he continue in his marriage to his second wife? Many say yes, since baptism is for forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). If someone objects that this unauthorized remarriage is still adultery, the objector may be accused of making divorce/adultery an unforgivable sin.

What if a man is married to multiple women? (It is illegal in this country, but not in all.) He ignores God's law of one man, one woman (Mt. 19:5-6). He is guilty of polygamy. Now, what if this man wants to be forgiven? He, too, wants to be baptized into Christ. Can he continue to live with all these women? If not, why not? Why does forgiveness not cleanse his wrong relationships? Is polygamy an unforgivable sin?

What if a man is living with a woman? They don't bother with marriage, they just live together. Their cohabitation makes them guilty of fornication (Heb. 13:4). Now, what if this man wants to be forgiven? He, too, wants to be baptized into Christ. Can he continue to live with the woman? If not, why not? Why does forgiveness not cleanse his wrong relationship? Is fornication an unforgivable sin?

What if a man is living with another man? They are not merely roommates, they are lovers: "men with men committing indecent acts" (Rom. 1:27). They are guilty of homosexuality. Now, what if this man wants to be forgiven? He, too, wants to be baptized into Christ. Can he continue to live with the man? If not, why not? Why does forgiveness not cleanse his wrong relationship? Is homosexuality an unforgivable sin?

Four relationships. Each one is wrong. Why, then, do so many say that the last three must end if one wants to be right with God, but the first may continue? What's the difference? The only difference I see is that the first is more socially acceptable. (It will be interesting to see how the fourth is viewed as homosexuality becomes increasingly acceptable.)

The question is not, What sin(s) can be forgiven? The question is, What does God require in order to be forgiven? God requires repentance, as well as belief and baptism (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30). Repentance is a change of heart and a corresponding change of life (Lk. 3:8-14; Acts 26:20). One has not repented when he determines to continue right on in his sin, whatever it is. And one who will not repent cannot expect to be forgiven.

- by Frank Himmel

Stop Taking God's Name in Vain

You have been a Christian for years and it is a surprise to hear some of the things you say in conversation, things like, "Oh, my God, I can't believe it" or "My God, what happened" or "God, I'm so tired" or "Dear Lord, what a shame" or "Lordy, what a mess." Your friends are fairly confident these are not prayers and you're not talking to God at all.

You may not even realize what you are saying. It may just be a habit, your long time way of intensifying something you want to say. Whether or not you realize what you are saying, we know what it sounds like. It sounds horrible and completely out of place in your life as a Christian. It sounds like a cheapened worldly use of God's name.

You know that one of Israel's Ten Commandments is "You shall not take the name of the Lord our God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain" (Exodus 20:7). You know that "vain" here has the idea of "empty" or "worthless." That's what your "Oh my God" is: using His name in an empty and worthless way, a throwaway word rather than the sacred respect the God of heaven deserves and requires.

This worldly use of God's name is condemned in Leviticus 19:12. "And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the Lord." The idea in "profane" is of treating something sacred in a common way, and treating something holy in an unholy way, a way that gives it no importance.

Such vain, empty, worthless, profane words are surely a part of what the Lord calls "idle" words in Matthew 12:35-36, words that do no work and accomplish nothing good. "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment, For by your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned."

It is time for you to repent of such talk, and ask the God whose name you have profaned to forgive you and help you change the way you speak to the simplicity He requires. "Let your 'Yes,' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one" (Matthew 5:37).

You would think that as long as you have been a Christian you would have let the Lord get this out of you by now. But you haven't. And so someone who loves you needs to be blunt with you and tell you it's time to stop. You don't sound like a Christian. It offsets any good you have to say. Those who love you want you to stop.

- by Robert Hines

No Unfulfilled Land Promises

A basic tenet of premillennial theory is that certain land promises that God made to Abraham have not been fulfilled. Since God made these promises, and He cannot lie, then there must be some future time when Abraham's descendants - as a physical nation - will receive all of the, land that was originally intended. What does the Bible say?

"The Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates" (Gen. 15:18). A study of the conquest of the promised land in Joshua's day causes some to say that not all of this land was occupied by the Israelites.

However, in Joshua 21:43-45 we read: "So the Lord gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it ... Not a word failed of any good thing which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass." Joshua repeated the same thing in his final address to the people: "Not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you, and not one word of them has failed" (Josh. 23:14).

Note two things:

- 1 - Joshua, who was most qualified to speak on this matter, felt that God's promises had been kept.
- 2 - We should observe that the Israelites themselves failed to fully conquer all the native people (see Judges 1 & 2). This brought a curse upon them (2:3) and may have contributed to the notion that the land was not completely occupied.

The conclusion is NO, there are no unfulfilled land promises. Therefore, the argument that a still future, physical kingdom of the Lord is required for the fulfillment of these promises is not valid.

- by Greg Gwin