

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

Dispensational Considerations

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	4
USING THE WORD OF GOD PROPERLY.....	5
Are there Dispensational Distinctions?	6
GOD’S ORIGINAL PURPOSE.....	8

PART ONE

FOUR AGES OR TIME PERIODS.....	9
THE PATRIARCHAL AGE.....	9
Christ’s Declaration of No Divorce	9
Hagar “Cast Out”	10
Comparison with the Age of Grace	11
Comparison of the two Ages on Marriage and Divorce.....	12
THE AGE OF THE LAW OF MOSES	14
Divorce Laws formally enacted	14
One Important Key Feature.....	15
The Law Not Changed in Time of Crises	16
The History of Israel on the Backdrop of Marriage and Divorce.....	18
The Kingdom Offer Rejected	20
THE PRESENT CHURCH AGE—THE AGE OF GRACE	22
A Unique Organization with Unique Instructions	22
The History of the Church of Jesus Christ	
on the Backdrop of an Unbreakable Marriage.....	24
Marriage and Divorce as Illustrated by Israel and the Church	27
The Spiritual Dimension.....	28
What is Marriage “in the Lord”?	29
An Illustration of marriage “in the Lord”	31
In Summary, so far.....	33
THE KINGDOM AGE	34
The Contrast Between the Church and the Kingdom	
on Marriage and Divorce	34
CHART of the Four Ages.....	39

PART TWO

MAJOR ERROR IN THE INTERPRETATION OF 1 CORINTHIANS 7:10 and 11.....	40
INTRODUCTION.....	40
“Looking elsewhere in the Scriptures”.....	41
“Now to the married I command”.....	43
The “command” is issued in the PRESENT Tense.....	45
Christ still spoke after His Ascension.....	46
Other “commands” as Examples.....	48
In Summary, so far	50
Quoting or Synopsis	50
Indicators of a Quote	51
Summary on the issue of a quote	52
“But to the rest, I, not the Lord, say;”	53

PREFACE

The basic observations in this study were first made back in 1996. They were presented to a certain group of Christian men in leadership among my own fellowship at that time. Those leaders had come to the place where they were reevaluating the subject of marriage and divorce for this Church Age or dispensation. Originally, the stated purpose for their study was that they were merely seeking to find relief, if possible, for certain Christian spouses who had been somehow defrauded by their mates. They ended up their study, however, in making allowance for divorce between two Christians in cases of immorality or defrauding. Though this type of divorce is generally permissible in most of today's "evangelical fundamentalism," yet it had not been so practiced in our own Christian assemblies. Historically, we have believed that divorce between two believers was not in accord with Christ's special instructions through the apostle Paul for this Church Dispensation (see 1 Cor. 7:1-40 and Eph. 5:22-33). Since I believed our original position on this subject was based upon solid Scriptural principles, I was very skeptical of the direction they were initially moving, and I let them know it.

Their original objections to our historic position and understanding were not primarily based upon a discovery of what the Scriptures actually state, but rather upon what appeared to be practical situations which made the application of firm principles seem unreasonable to the reality of human needs. This, of course, could be a very dangerous approach. Leadership, if misguided by feelings, could always find or propose situations or cases which make any absolute Scriptural commands and directives appear unreasonable. In an effort to caution them to not move too hastily, I laid before them some of the fundamental dispensational foundations for the position we had historically held.

At that time I received very severe criticism in response. Many disparaging remarks were made from these particular leaders who read my original paper. They had asked for my input and/or criticism of their written presentation. When I gave it, I was quite shocked by the strength and magnitude of disparaging remarks which were made toward me in return. I didn't expect it from men who supposedly knew basic dispensational realities. They later polished up their study and published their conclusions in a paper which was literally filled with Scriptural errors. Then, without ever discussing the subject openly with all the assembly participating, they declared their conclusions as if it was what these assemblies now believed. I knew I didn't believe it, and I knew most people did not at all comprehend the twisting of Scripture that was done. However, out of respect for the leadership, most simply went along with their conclusions. I responded to that published paper as well and I was consequently disciplined as one "causing division." In reality, I was one attempting to prevent their departure into error. They had also purposely chosen to not allow for any open discussion of the subject before all the men in any assembly.

However, in the process of time, these very same leaders have virtually disintegrated into sickening division among themselves. In addition, they have left various assemblies in shambles where they had ministered. I might characterize them as having literally "*divorced*" themselves from being able to walk in the basics of Christian unity.

Having the time to refresh my own mind on that subject, I have added more concrete biblical evidences to my original observations. Now I believe it would be helpful to present this material openly for all to consider. Seeing its importance and also that the confusion in Christendom is so great, I believe this can be of real help to honest individuals.

Many Christians, myself included, have long thought that this subject was very complicated in the Scriptures. After reading too many of the various arguments and dissertations by those in sectarian Christendom, it is no wonder many Christians feel that all these various positions on the subject are just too confusing to comprehend. In reality, however, the subject can be made very simple, if viewed from the perspective of the distinct dispensations in which God has dealt with mankind, especially on this subject. This is what I am endeavoring to do in this particular study.

USING THE WORD OF GOD PROPERLY

One of the foremost warnings in the Bible is the danger from those who would mishandle the use of the Scriptures. The apostle Paul states emphatically in 2 Corinthians 4:2, “But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor *handling* the Word of God *deceitfully*, . . .” (NKJV). The New King James Version has the footnote, “*adulterating the Word of God.*” In some translations it is first rendered as “*adulterating the Word of God*” (NASB). Kenneth Wuest, in his *Expanded Translation of the New Testament* renders it, “adulterating the Word of God [by an admixture of error].” This is exactly as Wuest wrote it. Adultery is basically an illegitimate mixture. To “adulterate the Word of God” is to wrongfully mix things together from different ideas or portions of the Scriptures which were never intended to be mixed. The effect is deception or “*falsification*” (see the NIV on this verse) of the truth.

False cults and their teachers literally thrive on an indiscriminate application of different portions of the Scriptures. To be sure, in the use of Scriptures we are to carefully “compare spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Cor. 2:13). This comparison by no means gives license to a misapplication of things that were never intended to be mixed. We shall see in this study which you are reading that the largest part of all misunderstanding today on the subject of marriage and divorce is due to the misapplication of different instructions, in different ages, for different people, in differing situations. Such action or mixture constitutes an “adulteration” of biblical truths.

In 1 Corinthians 4:2 Paul goes on to state those very reassuring words—“but by manifestation of the *truth* commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” In other words, Paul is not relying upon clever augmentation to dispel the lies of confusion, but rather upon the simple laying out of the TRUTH, which commends itself to every sincere, God-fearing person.

The apostle Paul also stated the fundamental truth which has been repeated many times—“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing [lit., to cut straight] the Word of Truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Perhaps the best illustration of what this means is by the use of Paul’s own situation. Aside from his apostolic duties, Paul was by trade a “workman” in the tent making craft (Acts 18:3). In the making of a tent, by all means the fabrics or skins must be cut straight in the process of making the various sections which are to be fitted and sown together. The pieces could never be sewn together perfectly and evenly unless they had been cut straight. If they were not cut straight, once sown together and erected, the tent would have irregular shapes, wrinkles and bulges which would be an obvious embarrassment upon the worker and his craftsmanship. They would make some funny looking tents, to say the least. The same is true in our handling the Word of God. To cut straight in the application of Scripture or, as in the King James translation, “to rightly divide” the Word of Truth, will result in the straight and perfect fit in the overall fabric of the whole Word of God.

In this regard, Myles Coverdale, the earliest compiler of the complete printed edition of the Bible in the English language, nearly 500 years ago, gave this very practical advice—“It shall greatly help ye to understand the Scriptures, if thou mark not only **what is spoken or written**, but: **of whom**, and **to whom**, with **what words**, at **what time**, **where**, **to what intent**, with **what circumstances**, considering what **goeth before** and what **followeth**.” Now this is very comprehensive counsel. So, actually even in our own English speaking world, the realization of properly handling the Scriptures has been known for a long time.

Today, many of us have been taught the simple basics that, when studying the Scriptures, we always need to ask the questions—“*who is speaking, to whom is he speaking, on whose authority is he speaking, and for what period of time is he speaking?*” Dispensational Bible teaching has also been a great help in the proper understanding and application of the Scriptural instructions for ages past and for us today. To see the spectrum of the various Ages immediately cautions us to be alert to differing programs in these differing Ages. So, as we study this subject together, we are going to be asking these questions as we move along.

Are there Dispensational Distinctions on the subject of Marriage and Divorce?

The very first dangerous statement that some of my Christian brethren made in their study of the subject of marriage and divorce in relation to the dispensations was the following. In *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage, a Biblical Perspective*, principally written by Robert A. Grove, he expressed on the first page that they wanted to—

. . . determine if God’s attitude toward marriage, divorce and remarriage is dispensational. We have concluded that God’s attitude has not changed. God has always wanted one man to marry one woman for the duration of the lifetime of one of them. We have concluded that God has always hated divorce.

Now, it well may be true that God has always “hated divorce,” and that God has always wanted “one man to marry one woman,” but does that in itself mean that God’s attitude towards marriage and divorce is NOT dispensational? It most certainly does not! The fall of man into sin and rebellion brought several changes in how God determined to regulate and control marriage and divorce in different ages among different peoples. It is well-known that God even chose to allow men to have several wives in past ages. That is obviously not something acceptable today. The example God sets before the Christian communities today is set forth by the qualifications for an overseer and for the deacon. First of all, he must be “the husband of *one wife*” (1 Tim. 3:2 and 3:12).

That there were certain changes made in the application of God’s will on the subject of marriage and divorce throughout man’s history should be understood by all readers of the Bible. The Law of Moses brought obvious changes in the application of divorce amongst the Jewish people. For the first time there was the specified allowance for divorce in certain situations. We will note that change, the specific reasons for it and the consequence of it in this study.

As stated by Jesus Christ in the Gospels, there will be radically different restrictions on divorce as specified for the future Kingdom Age. No one can dispute this.

The apostle Paul makes even more changes in both the restriction on divorce between two believers, and greater leniency on divorce when initiated by the unbeliever. *These are all unmistakable dispensational differences* on the subject which must be specified if one is to properly understand the subject as discussed in the Scriptures. Therefore, to ignore the dispensational distinctions on the subject of marriage and divorce is to invite catastrophe in being able to understand God’s directives for us today. And we are now living at a very crucial time in the virtual flooding of immorality, and the caustic remarks of despair towards anyone wanting to walk by biblical principles.

At the very same time one must realize that there are obvious, fundamental, basic principles in the Scriptures that do not change over dispensational time. For instance, how God saves repentant sinners has always been on the same basis. There has been and is only one provision for the sinner’s redemption which God has provided for any and all Ages—the substitutionary death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I say again, this is the singular provision which God has made for the redemption of all mankind for all the ages. The difference as to how mankind appropriates that redemption is only one of perspective. God has manifested His grace by several different avenues—in man’s conscience, through the physical creation, and through the direct revelation of Scriptural truth. In past ages men looked forward to that sacrificial grace, and God instantly credited it to them for salvation as if Christ’s death for sins had already happened. They spoke the gospel message through the sacrificial system which prefigured the work of Christ as the future “Lamb of God.” In all future time from when Christ died, men look back by faith at the same gracious event and God credits that to them for salvation as well.

GOD'S ORIGINAL PURPOSE

God's original purpose in the creation of man and woman is the most beautiful and meaningful event in the whole creation account. It is obvious that the creation scenario of the specified seven days' work reached its crescendo on the sixth day when God specially created and made the man and woman. The inspired account of this event is actually spellbinding as the focal point of this original biblical record. The Creator Himself directly formed the man and woman and directly spoke to them of His plans and directions for their lives. The man and woman's fellowship with their Creator was the essential ingredient of their lives. They had been created "in the image of their Creator" and their purpose in the new adventure of life was to serve and interact with God's fellowship and plans.

Man was to have "dominion" on earth and the woman was designed as his perfect and essential complement. The institution of marriage then became the first of what theologians have called "the Divine Decrees or Institutions." This is encapsulated for us in Genesis 2:18–25. In addition, the union of the man and woman became the foundational institution designed by God for the propagation of the human family. (And today, in this enlightened and prosperous United States of America, we have accumulated a holocaust of over 56 million lives by the latest abortion statistic. Man is obviously in *rebellion against God!* And, furthermore, our very own American president, elected by the democratic vote of the people, has insisted that our own tax dollars go to the prevention of conception. The God of the Bible is obviously not the god of this nation's trust!)

Just over four thousand years after Adam, the apostle Paul was inspired to speak of this original, sacred institution as the major illustration of the relationship of the Church as the "new creation" with the "last Adam," Jesus Christ Himself. Paul spoke of the amazing formation of "the Church which is His body," patterned after Eve being taken from Adam's body, which truth he called a "great mystery." This later, God-ordained relationship serves as a replica for husbands and wives to imitate in their own personal relationships through the Holy Spirit working in their lives. (Please read Eph. 5:22–33; 1:22, 23; 1 Cor. 15:45).

So, the original purpose of God in the marriage relationship is breath taking, not only in its immediate design for the loving fulfillment of the man and woman, but also in its long term design for the larger family of God in the Church today.

Obviously, as a result of man's fall, a destructive ingredient instigated by the Devil, which would interrupt and destroy this beautiful relationship, was allowed by God to test man's allegiance to God. Consequently, rebellion and sin entered into the equation. Because sin and rebellion bring death and corruption in the created world, a loving and gracious plan of redemption was also implemented by God. Of course, one immediate target for Lucifer is to disrupt God's original design for man and woman. However, God's plan of redemption not only grants eternal life to believers, but it also contains the remedy for saving the beautiful relationship of man and woman in the family of God.

PART ONE

FOUR AGES OR TIME PERIODS

After the fall of man from a position of innocence, the history of life on earth can be divided into four basic time periods or “Ages.” The first is commonly called “The Patriarchal Age,” the second is “The Age of Law,” the third is the present “Age of Grace” and the fourth is the future “Kingdom Age.” We will explore the instructions of God concerning marriage and divorce in each of these Ages in sequence. We will also note certain distinguishing characteristics peculiar to each Age.

THE PATRIARCHAL AGE

The Patriarchal Age is the time period from Adam until Moses. Though this Age can be subdivided into particular economies or dispensations, yet one thing that is characteristic of the whole period is that the head of the household, the father, acts as the priest to the family. Thus it has come to be called “The Patriarchal Age,” or the age of fathers (patriarchs) presiding over the sacrificial service for the family.

This is by far the longest Age or time period—approximately 2500 years. The wickedness of man became great in the earth by the close of the first 1600 years and God brought upon the world the great flood of Noah’s day. Christ said at this time that mankind was “marrying and being given in marriage until the flood came” (Matt. 24:38). Divorce is not mentioned. After the flood human government was instituted and the nations were formed. Certain perversions came to be practiced in a few areas like Sodom and Gomorrah. The wealthy kings and rulers often had more than one wife. To Abraham and his descendants was given the land of Canaan and the promise of becoming a great nation and eventually even producing the Messiah. Divorce, as a formal declaration, was never stated.

Christ’s Declaration of No Divorce

The principle passage is Matthew 19:3-6—

The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him,
“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?”
And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He

Who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female.’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?” He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, **but from the beginning it was not so.**”

Christ stated very emphatically in verse 8, “. . . *from* the beginning [Adam] it [divorce] was not so.” It is important to note one preposition used by the inspired writer of the Gospel of Matthew. Christ could have said, “**In** [Greek, *en*] the beginning it was not so.” This would have meant that this condition was only true for Adam and Eve at the very beginning. However, this was not done. What Christ said was, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but **from** [Greek, *apo*] the beginning it was not so.” The Greek preposition *apo*, translated “from,” literally means “off or away from.” It tells us, “from the beginning” until the allowance by Moses, as stated in the context, God did not authorize divorce, and certainly not in the manner of the Law—“It was not so.” It was not until the Law of Moses was instituted that there was a formal declaration or provision for divorce. And then, Christ said that the allowance of divorce was only because of the “hardness of their hearts.”

Thus, for the longest Age of all, God did not formally authorize divorce, and certainly not in the magnitude of the Law. This does not mean that there was absolutely no divorce before, but simply that God made no formal decree for it, and generally it must have been rare. The Law, of course, was only for the operation of the children of Israel.

Hagar “Cast Out”

Actually, a crisis came in the life of Abraham. God had promised him a son, but when there was a long delay, Sarah, Abraham’s wife, told her husband to take Hagar, her handmaid, and have a child by her (Gen. 16:1-4). When Hagar did have a son there came a conflict between Hagar and Sarah (Gen. 16:5). Sarah eventually did have a son as God had promised. Because of the growing severity of this conflict, God did authorize Abraham to “cast out” the bondwoman. Here is how the Scriptures state the matter—

And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had born to Abraham, scoffing. Therefore she said to Abraham, “Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac.” And the matter was very displeasing in Abraham’s sight because of his son. But God said to Abraham, “Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman.

Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called.” (Genesis 21:9-12.)

We may not think of this as an actual divorce but, technically, it was. Earlier, Hagar had been made a “wife” of Abraham (Gen. 16:3), yet because of her and her son’s incompatibility with Sarah and Isaac (Gen. 16:4-15 and 21:9-21), God told Abraham to release her. The expression “cast out” (Gen. 16:10) was used, and is also used in the Law as an expression of divorce. For the meaning of the Hebrew word see *Strong’s Concordance*, #1644.

Now the apostle Paul was inspired to draw a very important parallel between this case and the situation in the present Church Age in the book of Galatians 4:21-31. Paul said Hagar was a type of the “flesh,” and her son as one born “after the flesh.” Whereas, he said, Sarah and her son represent the believer’s faith in the “promise” of God, and her son was said to be “born after the Spirit.” Consequently, Paul explained that Hagar and her son stood figuratively in opposition to salvation by faith and must be “cast out.”

Now this, as well, brings us to the very interesting parallel regarding marriage and divorce as described in this first time period with God’s counsel concerning marriage and divorce as described in the present Church Age—

Comparison of the Patriarchal Age With the Age of Grace

There is an amazing parallel between the Patriarchal Age and the Age of Grace on the subject of marriage and divorce. The comparison of the two Ages demonstrates striking similarities which reinforce the conclusion that God has not authorized divorce between two believers in the Church of Jesus Christ.

First of all, it is very clear from the words of Jesus Christ Himself, as recorded in Matthew 19:3-8, that God did not authorize divorce “from the beginning” until the Law of Moses. No one should even want to repudiate this revelation which Christ made. Now, if God did not authorize divorce for the first Age, why should anyone be surprised if God once again does *not authorize* divorce between the Christian man and woman for our own Age of Grace? To say it another way, if God did not authorize divorce for the man and woman of the original “*creation*” (Mark 10:6), why would it seem unreasonable that He would not authorize divorce for what the Spirit of God calls the “*new creation*” (2 Cor. 5:17 and Gal. 6:15)?

Second, in both cases, that of the Patriarchal Age and that of the Age of Grace, the Scriptural foundation of *Genesis 2:24* is plainly cited. In Matthew 19:5 Christ quoted *Genesis 2:24* for the Patriarchal Age, and in Ephesians 5:31 Paul quoted *the very same verse* for the Church of Jesus Christ in this Age of Grace.

For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and
be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

So the basis for God’s attitude on the subject of marriage and divorce for both Ages is based upon the very same principle stated in *Genesis 2:24*. Consequently, the conclusion would likewise be the same—as expressed in Matthew 19:6, “What God has joined together, let not man put asunder.” As expressed in 1 Corinthians 7:10 and 11, “A wife is not to depart from her husband . . . And the husband is not to divorce his wife.” In both these passages the order is clear; God does not authorize divorce! (Later in this study we will deal with the erroneous supposition that Paul, in 1 Corinthians 7:10 and 11, was quoting Christ from the time frame of the 4 Gospel accounts.)

Third, there are further parallels between these two Ages. In the first case, Christ, Himself, has stated that there was no divorce “*from the beginning*.” It is also a fact that the new institution in the Age of Grace had its own “*beginning*” (Acts. 11:15). In addition, as was true in the creation of the first “*man*” (God made them “male and female,” Matt. 19:4), so it is also true that the Spirit of God refers to the Church today collectively (both male and female, Gal. 3:28) as “*one New Man*” (Eph. 2:15). In fact, each individual believer is called a “*new man*” (Eph. 4:14 and Col. 3:10). Since God did not authorize “*divorce*” for the *first man* of the Patriarchal Age (Matt. 19:6), it should be easier to comprehend that God does not allow for “*divorce*” between two believers, constituting the *new man*, of the present Age (1 Cor. 7:10 and 11).

Fourth, again, no one should be surprised that, as in the first Age, God allowed the person who represented the “flesh” and unbelief to be divorced—as in the case of Hagar—even though Abraham did not want it. So it is that in the counsel of God for the present Age, concerning the marriage of a believer to a nonbeliever, once again God allows for the divorce when initiated by the action of the nonbeliever—see 1 Corinthians 7:12-16.

These parallels are too obvious and interesting to be missed. Allow me to list them in the following manner—

Comparison of the Two Ages on Marriage and Divorce

	PATRIARCHAL AGE	CHURCH AGE
1.	<u><i>The Orders for Both Ages are designated by Christ Himself</i></u> Matthew 19:4-6 “They asked Him (Christ)”	1 Corinthians 7:10 “yet not I but the Lord”
2.	<u><i>Both Ages are based upon the principle of Genesis 2:24</i></u> Matthew 19:8 “For this reason”	Ephesians 5:31 “For this reason”
3.	<u><i>Both Ages had a specific “beginning”</i></u> Matthew 19:8 “the beginning”	Acts 11:15 “the beginning”

THE AGE OF THE LAW OF MOSES

Divorce Laws Formally Enacted

The Age of the Law takes up the last 1500 years before Christ. For this time frame, divorce laws were formally enacted for the members of the nation of Israel. Israel was intended to be a racially pure and holy people, certainly representative of the people of God. However, it is very important to remember that Israel was also a mixed company of people, spiritually speaking. This means that the nation was composed of both saved and unsaved people. In actual times of apostasy, there appeared to be very few saved people among the Israelites. Nevertheless, the Law was the same for all flesh and blood Israelites and for any proselytes to the commonwealth of Israel who practiced the Jewish religion. The nation was said to be a Theocracy. That means that the nation was under the rule of the Law of Moses. This Law of the theocratic government was designed for everyone in the whole society regardless of their actual spiritual salvation. You will note a contrast to this in Paul's directions to the Church of Jesus Christ on the subject of divorce. Paul's instructions to members of the Church apply only to spiritually saved people and to no one else. Racial or national variation made no difference. Most in the world of sectarian Christendom try to make the rules on marriage and divorce in this Age for everyone, whether they are saved or unsaved.

Christ said that this law, which showed laxity as it pertained to divorcement, was allowed by God because of "the hardness of their hearts" (Matt. 19:7 and 8). In light of Israel characteristically being a mixed society of both saved and unsaved, it is more understandable as to why God would allow more leniency. Also, in the light of Israel's historical record, we will shortly see in this study another reason for this allowance.

On the other hand, no doubt, a saved, spiritual Jew, without the "hardness of heart," would be balanced in his life and family situation by the obvious and beautiful story of God's original purpose in creation, just as Christ had indicated God's original intent (Matt. 19:4-6). A Jewish couple, who were saved, would certainly see more binding truth in the marriage situation—as God originally designed it—than the unsaved Jews.

Under the Law of Moses, a woman could even be divorced several times and always remarry. However, she was never allowed to go back to her previous husband or husbands. The husband also could always remarry. The principle passage is Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Also, under the Law, there was special protection for slave wives (Exo. 21:7-11 and Deut. 21:14). If the Jewish husband found no delight in the slave wife, he could not sell her, but was required to set her free. Some have quoted this passage as if it was a normal provision for any of the Hebrew wives, which was not the case. These teachers have proposed this without taking note that this was only a special provision for the slave so that she could not be sold away to someone else. The slave did not divorce her master. The marriage was simply annulled and she was set free. Wives in multiple wife households, who were not loved, were also given provisions for equal inheritance settlements (Deut. 21:15-17).

One Important Key Feature

A key feature of the Law of Moses on the subject of divorce was the fact that it was only the husband who could issue the bill of divorcement (Deut. 24:1). Under the Mosaic Law there was no provision for the wife to divorce her husband. The reason for this stems back to the principle that, when sin came into the human family, one of the conditions God instituted was expressed to the woman as –“Thy desire shall be to your husband and *he shall rule over you*” (Gen. 3:16). Divorce, therefore, under the Law and even under today’s Orthodox Jewish Law still remains the exclusive right in the rule of the husband over the wife. There is no case in the Hebrew Scriptures where, under Mosaic Law, the Jewish woman could divorce her Jewish husband. This was also true in Judaism in the Greek Scriptures. *The woman could ask for a divorce*, but it was only up to the husband whether or not to grant it. This principle was repeated by the apostle Paul on two occasions—

For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from that law of her husband (Rom. 7:2).

A wife is bound by the law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord (1 Cor. 7:39).

It is noteworthy that, in this last context, Paul was applying the same principle to the Christian wife in this Church dispensation. In other words, this is one aspect of the marriage and divorce instructions that is not dispensational. It has been God’s attitude from the beginning on this feature of the subject.

Anyone who keeps up with the news concerning the modern state of Israel will have seen many articles relating to this law which has been enforced since Israel’s modern national beginning in 1948. To this day there seem to be no exceptions to this rule. Sometimes the rabbis are directed to help persuade the husbands to give a “Get” (bill of divorcement) to deserving wives. However, unless the husband yields to the request, the wife remains bound.

It is also to be remembered that, at the time of the ministry of Jesus Christ, Israel was under Roman occupation. Israel had also been under Greek occupation years before that. In contrast to Jewish law, both Roman and Greek laws allowed for women to divorce their husbands. Where there did exist intermarriages in Israel, the Jewish wives could divorce under Roman or Greek law, and sometimes they elected to do so. For instance, some of the wives of the Kings and ruling class over Israel at the time (the Herods) were Jewish by religion but they were also in possession of Roman citizenship. This subject is taken up by the Jewish historian Josephus in his Antiquities, Book XV, Chapter VII, Section 10. In one case he states,

But some time afterward, when Solome happened to quarrel with Costobarus, she sent him a bill of divorce, and dissolved her marriage with him. Though this was not according to Jewish laws; for with us it is lawful for a husband to do so; but a wife, if she departs from her husband, cannot of herself be married

to another, unless her former husband put her away. However, Salome chose not to follow the law of her country [Israel], but the law of her authority [Roman], and so renounced her wedlock”

Thus, it is that in the Gospel of Mark, which many recognize had special target for the Roman reader, it is also included in Christ’s statement regarding divorce (Mark 10:12), “And if a woman divorces her husband” Alford in his *Critical Explanatory Commentary* makes the explanation on this passage: “Under Greek and Roman law a woman is allowed to divorce her husband, but not by Jewish [law].”

Now, back in 1996, when we were discussing this issue, a fellow minister tried to find exceptions of this fundamental principle in the Mosaic Law because, as it was also applied by the apostle Paul to the Christian community in 1 Corinthians 7:39, it meant the Christian wife was never to divorce her Christian husband. She may choose to leave her husband, but she should remain “unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband” (1 Cor. 7:10-11). In written form this minister listed several passages in an attempt to find evidence of exceptions to this rule, as if they made such an allowance. Of course, when actually read, none of the passages he quoted substantiated his claims of exceptions to this rule. Probably, the only possible exception was the provision for the unwanted *slave wife*, as recorded in Exodus 21:7–11 and Deut. 21:14. However, it was a fact, as I stated before, that the slave wife could not divorce her master. Effectively, the marriage is simply annulled and the husband or master owner was obligated to release her without selling her off as a slave; she was then to be set free. In addition, it is understood by all that slavery was an entirely different social issue. It most certainly would not be an issue where slavery was no longer practiced. For instance, it would not be an issue today in Israel. So, “the law of her husband” still stands as comprehensive.

The Law Not Changed in Times of Crises

There was, no doubt, a time in Israel’s history when some Jews had wished there would be a change in how they understood and practiced the Law on the subject of marriage and divorce. In one time of Israel’s departure from the practice of the Law, there was a large number among them who had intermarried with Gentile wives. They simply had not taken the Law seriously, and now they had wives and children who practiced the pagan customs and had no intention of being Law observant, that is, of converting to Judaism. To these Jews, the strict requirements of the Law concerning marriage and divorce would effectively devastate their families and cause untold heartache and sorrow. No doubt they looked for leniency in their situations. This was actually much like situations in our own Age when compromising Christians do not take the truths of Christianity seriously, and thus, the time comes when they want to look for adjustments in their understanding and practice of the commandments on marriage and divorce. As I stated at the beginning of this study, more recently there appeared to be practical situations which made the application of firm principles given by the apostle Paul and Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 7:10 and 11) seem unreasonable to the reality of human needs.

So, what happened? Of course, the situation I am making reference to took place when a remnant of Jews returned to Jerusalem after the 70 years of Babylonian captivity. This was done under the leadership of very devout men like Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah. Please read again Ezra chapters 9 and 10, and Nehemiah chapter 13. This was actually a time of revival among the Jewish people. Though only a comparatively few of the Israelites had felt the enthusiasm of the privilege and responsibility of returning again to their desolate homeland, yet these few looked forward to once again practicing the Law in sincerity and without compromise within a restored Temple. To their constant sorrow, they met numerous obstacles and opposition. Many of the peoples who were already in the land vigorously opposed and mocked all their goals. The rebuilding process had been delayed and frustrated by violent attempts from these other nationalities to disrupt the reestablishment of the ancient Jewish Law and customs.

And, so, many years passed with some progress, and at the same time, great disappointments. No doubt, the worst disappointment of all came to Ezra with the news of the very sad compromises by the Jewish people themselves on the subject of mixed marriages. Ezra was told—

“The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, with respect to the abominations of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, so that the holy seed is mixed with the peoples of those lands. Indeed, the hand of the leaders and rulers has been foremost in this trespass.”

So when I heard this thing, I tore my garment and my robe, and plucked out some of the hair of my head and beard, and sat down astonished.

Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel assembled to me, because of the transgression of those who had been carried away captive, and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice. (Ezra 9:1-4.)

The prayer of Ezra which followed is one of the most beautiful and sobering prayers in the Bible (Ezra 9:5-15). To Ezra, it was either to become calloused in a compromising situation and make allowance for Jews to break God’s commandments, or else to institute righteous judgment in following God’s order, which would mean the breakup of many households. In this case, the remnant of Jews who had returned from the captivity to walk once again in the moral purity and righteousness of the Law decided to support Ezra in righteous judgment.

It was actually a great and complicated matter which would require individual consideration for each situation. Therefore, they arranged for each family head to “come at appointed times” for separate judgment and consideration (see all of chapter 10). No doubt there was a variety of cases, each with differing situations and consequences, all of which

needed to be individually taken into consideration. In the end, their decision turned away “the fierce wrath of God . . . in this matter” (10:14).

This incident, at such a very crucial time in Israel’s history, illustrates for us the importance of returning to the “ancient landmarks” no matter how impossible the situation may seem. No doubt, there were many “innocent victims” as a consequence of the failure of these Jews to live by the Law as God commanded. But men need to learn the sober lesson that victims are often created by selfish and irresponsible disobediences to God’s design and not by a misunderstanding of what the Law stated. Neither did the realization of there being “victims” detour this remnant of Jews from following the Law as they believed God wanted them to.

The History of Israel on the Backdrop of Marriage and Divorce

A final very important aspect of this subject for the Age of Law is how the historic relationship between God and Israel is portrayed by the prophets upon the backdrop of the marriage relationship as depicted in the Law of Moses. In this portrayal by the prophets we shall see that Israel’s total history actually followed the pattern of the Mosaic Law on marriage and divorce. This is an amazing revelation!

Another amazing revelation is the portrayal of the Church as married to Jesus Christ in Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians! When one looks at both histories, as depicted in the sacred Scriptures, he will see with clarity the difference between the divorce laws for each entity. This history of Israel and Jehovah, on the backdrop of the marriage and divorce laws, will be in striking contrast to the history of the Church of Jesus Christ, on the backdrop of her marriage to Jesus Christ in this Age of Grace. Indeed, the comparison between the two entities—*Israel* under the divorce law with Jehovah and that of the Church’s relationship with Jesus Christ in the Age of Grace wherein there is no permission for divorce between two believers—will demonstrate with assurance the specific will of God for His subjects in both Ages.

In Ezekiel chapter 16 the inspired prophet traces the whole history of the nation of Israel from the time of its birth until the time of its final restoration. This is a very striking passage which was designed by God to illustrate the apostasy of the nation and yet God’s amazing love for them. Ezekiel does this by way of the analogy of a birth, growth, maidenhood, marriage and divorce. Notice carefully the ingredients in this history—

Birth and Nativity (vs. 1–5). God pictures Israel’s birth as from the land of Canaan which was occupied by the Amorites and Hittites. It had none of the basic dignities for most births; in birth, its naval cord was not cut, it was not washed, nor rubbed with salt, nor wrapped in swaddling clothes. No eye pitied them, but the Israelite people as a nation were merely thrown into the open field and loathed on the day they were born. All this is reminiscent of the Egyptians casting them out into the wilderness like discarded slaves at the time of their becoming a nation.

Young Womanhood (vs. 6 and 7). Jehovah saw them struggling in their own blood in the field and made them thrive like a plant in the field. Surprisingly, Israel grew up and became like a very beautiful young woman.

The Marriage Contract (vs. 8–14). Jehovah spread his garment over them, an indication of betrothal. Then God entered into a “Covenant” relationship with them to make them His own. The Law became as a *marriage contract* between God and Israel. Israel then became decorated with jewels and precious garments and became “exceedingly beautiful,” even to “royalty,” which answers to the kingdom status. She prospered so as to become famous among the nations.

Israel played the harlot (vs. 9–30). In pride, Israel turned and committed many sins of idolatry and had intercourse (immorality) with the pagan deities, even with those of many other nations. As a consequence, God diminished Israel’s provision of “allotment” as Jehovah’s wife (v. 27). Israel then became classified as—

A harlot or the Adulteress Wife (vs. 31–38). God now regarded Israel as an adulteress wife who “broke wedlock.”

Judgment for breaking the Covenant (vs. 39–59). A long history of judgment befell Israel. Israel was then given up as one who had broken the covenant of marriage, i.e., the Law of Moses.

An Amazing Restoration (vs. 60–63). “Nevertheless,” God remembered His love for Israel and finally promised to bring her back to Himself. Then God would reestablish His Covenant with her.

Jeremiah used the same analogy of marriage and divorce in chapter 3 of his prophecy. However, Jeremiah went directly to the divorce law of Moses in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 to emphasize God’s unusual love for Israel in her restoration—

They say, “If a man divorces his wife, and she goes from him
And becomes another man’s, may he return to her again?”
Would not that land be greatly polluted?
But you have played the harlot with many lovers;
Yet return to Me, says the LORD. (Jer. 3:1)

Jeremiah specifically said Israel had committed adultery and God had put her away by giving her “a certificate of divorce” (v. 8). Yet Jeremiah also spoke of Israel’s final restoration (vs. 12–18). God’s judgments came upon Israel because “‘Surely, as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel,’ says the LORD” (v. 20).

In the prophecy of Hosea there is a repeat of the same truths. Hosea, himself, was instructed to take a wife of harlotry as a vivid illustration of Israel’s departure into religious harlotry—see Hosea 1:2. Later God said, “Bring charges against your mother, bring charges; for she is not My wife, nor am I her Husband” (2:2). Yet, finally in restoration, God said that Israel will once again “call Me ‘my Husband’” (2:16). At that time God said “I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice,

in lovingkindness and mercy, I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the LORD” (Hosea 2:19).

Isaiah, as well, speaks of God having given Israel “the certificate of divorce” (50:1).

So it is, that under the Law system there is an amazing parallel between God’s Law on marriage and divorce and the broad history of the nation of Israel itself. Thus, another reason for the allowance of divorce is precisely because it is reflected in the very history of Israel’s relationship with God. And, truly, just as Christ said that the allowance of divorce by Moses was “because of the hardness of their hearts,” so it was because of Israel’s national “hardness of heart” that she was historically divorced and “cast out” to captivity. Israel’s final and amazing restoration is yet to be realized.

The Kingdom Offer Rejected

The Age of Law would end with the national rejection of Israel’s Messiah. “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, . . .” (Gal. 4:4). John the Baptist had come “. . . in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17). An angel spoke to the virgin Mary and said, “And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His Kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:30-33).

When Jesus came of age, He went about preaching the good news of Israel’s long anticipated Kingdom (Matt. 4:17). This was called “the gospel of the Kingdom” (Matt. 4:23). He also sent out the twelve apostles with the same message to cover all Israel (Matt. 10:7). Encompassed within that message were also ingredients concerning marriage and divorce under the Kingdom administration (Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12 and Luke 16:18). Christ very clearly indicated that there would be a change in the allowance for divorce as provided by the Law of Moses. Matthew alone gave the specific allowance for divorce only on the basis of the immorality (adultery) of one partner.

I should note here, that in the whole context for the Matthew account of chapter 19 and verses 1-12, the “Kingdom of Heaven” is stated or indicated at least twelve times: 4 times in chapter 18, verses 1, 3, 4 and 23; 5 times in chapter 19, verses 12, 14, 23, 24, and 28; and 3 times in chapter 20, verses 1, 21 and 23. Therefore, there is no excuse for any supposed Bible teacher not recognizing that the first and foremost application of this passage, and these principles on marriage and divorce, is for the future Messianic Kingdom that is therein specified.

However, Israel as a nation was led by her rulers to reject that offer of the Kingdom (Luke 14:15-24), and to have her King crucified by the Roman government. Jesus said that “the Kingdom would be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it” (Matt. 21:43). Thus, at a future time the gospel of the Kingdom will once again be preached (Matt. 24:14 and Luke 21:27-31). That future time is the “ great tribulation”

(Matt. 24:21). Christ made it clear that, at His prophesied second coming, the Kingdom would be set up—Matt. 16:28 and 25:31-34. (See my study *The Kingdom of God*, SeparationTruth.com.)

Thus, at the time after Christ’s resurrection just before His ascension, He was asked by the apostles, “Lord, will you at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). Christ then clearly indicated that there was another intervening program, for an undisclosed period of time, before the establishment of that Kingdom (Acts 1:7 and 8).

In consequence of this postponement of the Messianic Kingdom to a later date, I have chosen to discuss Christ’s ministry on marriage and divorce—not as it has been mistakenly applied to the present Church Age—but rather for the future Kingdom. So, we will discuss it after the Church Age. Contextually and dispensationally, it directly applies to the fourth time period called “The Kingdom Age.” That will be an Age wherein the whole earth is restored to near Edenic conditions.

THE PRESENT CHURCH AGE **THE AGE of GRACE**

A Unique Organization with Unique Instructions

The time period between the Age of Law and the future Kingdom Age has occupied nearly 2000 years. Unlike the Age of Law (and even in the Kingdom Age, as well), the guidelines on marriage and divorce are strictly for saved, regenerated people, and NO ONE ELSE! Unlike with Israel, whose concern was their flesh and blood ancestry back to Abraham, the subjects in the Church Age are strictly and only concerned about the “new birth” from “the Spirit of God” (John 3:1-21).

Today there is a spiritual Kingdom in operation, not a physical one (see Rom. 14:17 and Col. 1:13). Today, individual Jews and individual Gentiles, who place their true heart faith in the substitutionary death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, are recreated into a *new species* on earth in the sight of God. They are said to form “*one new man*” (Eph. 2:14-18). The apostle Paul said, “Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh . . . if anyone is in Christ, he is a *new creation*, . . .” (2 Cor. 5:16, 17). Today God has re-categorized the whole human family into only three classes—“the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church of God” (1 Cor. 10:32). Only those who are “born again” and are consequently “baptized by one Spirit into one body. . . . the Church which is Christ’s body” (1 Cor. 12:13 and Eph. 1:22, 23) are the subjects of God’s instructions for marriage and divorce in this Age of Grace. Almost all expositors on this subject totally ignore these very important and most significant dispensational realities.

1 Corinthians 7 is the chapter containing the largest and most important instructions to the Church of Jesus Christ on the subject of marriage and divorce. The Church of Jesus Christ did not exist when Christ had His discussion with the Jewish leaders on the subject of marriage and divorce in Matthew 19. In the whole chapter of 1 Corinthians 7, from verse 1 all the way through to verse 40, there is admittedly not one single word of allowance for divorce between two Christians.

It is only conjectured by many that, in verses 10 and 11, Paul is actually quoting something Christ said in the Gospel accounts which, if applied to the Church, may allow for divorce between two believers in the case of adultery. Of course, we shall see that no one has ever found the passage in the Gospel accounts that Paul was supposedly quoting. Nor has any Red Letter Addition of the Bible, that I know of, placed these two verses (vs. 10, 11) in red, as if they are a quote from Christ in any of the four Gospels. These statements Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 7:10 and 11 are absolutely not to be found in any of the Gospels. We shall see that this misunderstanding of the passage has become one of the most flagrant “adulterations” of the Scripture on this subject by modern Bible teachers, including some of my own brethren.

The specific “command” in 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11 is not only from the apostle Paul, but from the Head of the Church. Christ commands that neither the Christian wife nor the Christian husband are to divorce their spouses. Actually, the Christian wife has two statements in this chapter directed to her in this regard—

- (1) . . . A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband [1 Cor. 7:10, 11].
- (2) A wife is bound by the law as long as her husband lives, but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, [but] only in the Lord [1 Cor. 7:39].

The Christian husband has the singular command which stands in bold opposition to the allowance of divorce made under the Law of Moses—

And a husband is NOT to divorce his wife [1 Cor. 7:11].

So, I say again, this command from Paul and/or the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ, as recorded in 1 Corinthians 7:10 and 11 stands in clear contrast to the allowance of divorce under the Law administration. Under the Law two Israelites could divorce under certain conditions. Under the administration of Grace two saved people are not to divorce! In the passage from 1 Corinthians, there are no stated exceptions as was made by Christ for the Kingdom Age. This fact by itself should warn professed Bible teachers today to not try and circumvent the obvious. The Holy Spirit Who inspired the Scriptures, including the 1 Corinthians passage in question, had it written exactly as He specified. Whereas two Israelites under the Law administration could divorce under certain conditions, under the administration of Grace, two saved people are not to divorce—PERIOD!

In addition, concerning the situation of a Christian married to an unsaved partner, Paul has no direct command from the Lord, as in the case of two believers, but he gave his apostolic, spiritual advice (vs. 12 and 40). Paul stated that the believer is not to initiate divorce with the unbeliever. However, Paul continued that if the unbeliever initiates the divorce, then the believer is not to fight it, but to accept it peacefully. Furthermore, the believers are not “in *bondage* in such cases,” which means that they are free to be remarried, but “only in the Lord” (i.e., to a believer). See verses 12-16 and 39.

In either case, in the marriage of two believers, where Paul emphasized that the Lord gives specific “command,” or the marriage of a believer to an unbeliever, where Paul gave his inspired judgment, the saved believers are not to initiate divorce, and fornication or adultery is not stated as grounds for divorce.

Furthermore, this is precisely why it is essential that young Christian couples today, who are contemplating marriage, if possible within the fellowship of those walking in the truths of the Church of Jesus Christ, take the Scriptures seriously and understand clearly that they must be prepared before the Lord to enter into a lifelong commitment.

In this dispensation of Grace there are no stated directions for the unsaved in these matters. There are absolutely no rules, counsel, commands or guidelines for any unsaved individuals, for any national entity, or for the rest of the world, from the Head of the Church. The unsaved are only directed by their conscience, whether pure or polluted, and

are under the rules and regulations of the governments and laws of the land in the individual nations in which they live. This will not be true in the future Kingdom Age.

*The History of the Church of Jesus Christ
On the Backdrop of an Unbreakable Marriage*

As we traced the history of the nation of Israel by the guidelines of the subject of the husband and wife relationship to Jehovah under the “Law,” so now let us also trace the history of the Church of Jesus Christ by the guidelines of the husband and wife relationship to Jesus Christ under “Grace.” We saw through the prophets that there was an amazing parallel between the marriage and divorce law for Israel with the actual history of that nation. We read, for instance, where Ezekiel summed it up in chapter 16 of his prophecy. We saw that the allowance of divorce under the Law was reflected in the divorce of Israel by God in their national history.

Now, most Bible teachers realize that the passage in Ephesians 5, verses 22 through 33, most certainly sums up the Church’s relationship with Jesus Christ from a total perspective. And, once again, it is under the similitude of a husband and wife relationship, even portraying the ultimate presentation of the Church to Jesus Christ at the very end of this Age. The one thing that is most obvious in this revelation is that there is NO DIVORCE between Christ and the Church as there was for Israel under the Law. ***This is obviously a reflection of the fact that in the instructions given to the Church there is no divorce allowed between two believers.***

In Ephesians 5:22-33 the apostle Paul gave very beautiful exhortations to Christian husbands and wives in the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. These are often read at Christian wedding ceremonies. The important thing about these instructions is that the husband and wife are repeatedly encouraged to pattern their relationship together after the example of Christ and the Church (vs. 22-25, 28, 29, and 32). And the pattern of Christ and the Church is what we are going to focus upon. Actually the passage traces the creation of the Church from the very “flesh and bones” of Jesus Christ until its final presentation to Christ at the very end of this Age. Though the Church actually began on the Day of Pentecost as revealed in Acts 2, yet it continues to be created day by day every time an individual looks by faith to Jesus Christ for salvation.

Of course, the outstanding example of Christ is that “He is the Savior of the body [the Church]” (v. 23). And again, He “gave Himself for her [the Church]” (v. 25). And, we shall see that it is through individual trust in the sacrificial death of Christ that the existence of the Church of Jesus Christ is continuously being added to. Though the Church began at Pentecost, as recorded in Acts chapter 2, yet it continues to grow every day and every instant that a new believer is added to its holy structure (Eph. 2:21, 22).

Then, in verses 28 and 29, Paul began to speak of the unique relationship of the husband and wife as being, in essence, one “body” and one “flesh.” The husband is to regard his God-given wife as he would his very own flesh. Then Paul spoke of the Church as being the very “members of His [Christ’s] body.”

Here, then, is where Paul was inspired to unveil the remarkable typology from our very first parents. The two verses which tell us how the Church became the “body of Christ” are 30 and 31. Let us read them carefully, because they use as a divine illustration the first man and woman—

For we [the Church] are members of His [Christ’s] body, “of His flesh and of His bones” [this line is in the Majority Greek text. It is taken from Genesis 2:23]. “For this reason A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” [This portion is from the next verse, Genesis 2:24.] This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.

There is no debating the fact that the inspired apostle is going back to our original parents to demonstrate how the Church of Jesus Christ was formed and became the members of Christ’s very body. Just as God took a substance from the body of Adam in order to form Eve (Genesis 2:21-24), so God has taken a substance from the very body of Jesus Christ in order to form the Church. This amazing analogy compels us to go back and read again the whole context of this account in Genesis and see the exact sequence—

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He [God] took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from the man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: “***This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh***; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man.” ***Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.***

From this whole quotation in Genesis 2, and by Paul’s explanation here in the book of Ephesians, the Holy Spirit has revealed that our very first parents, Adam and Eve, were an amazing type of Christ and the Church. Obviously, no one understood this typology as applicable to the Church today, until the Spirit of God revealed the meaning of their unique relationship through Paul. Paul had previously specifically spoken of Adam as a type of Christ in Romans 5:14 and 1 Corinthians 15:45. But now, the original story of Adam and Eve stands together as a picture of Christ’s unique relationship to the Church. Paul calls this revelation “*a great mystery*” (v. 32).

This amazing picture unfolds in the Genesis account. For the sake of emphasis, allow me to itemize it in the following manner—

1. Adam was placed into a deep sleep. This was not an ordinary sleep because God was going to perform a special operation upon Adam.
2. God opened Adam’s side and took the substance of a rib from his side.
3. Then God closed up the wound in the side of Adam.

4. From this very substance, taken from the side of Adam, God formed the woman.
5. This means that the woman is the same identical substance as the man from whom she was taken.
6. This means as well that the woman will be in a vital united relationship to the man.
7. Finally, when Adam was awakened, God brought the woman whom He had made to him. No doubt, that was an amazing and beautiful meeting.

Of course, this story is not a myth. It really happened! And antitypically, it is still happening to this very day! Yes, just as supernaturally as it happened at the beginning of the human family, so it is supernaturally happening at this very moment! Every time a repentant sinner turns by faith to Christ's shed blood on his behalf, he will be created anew in the exact image of Jesus Christ Who died for him.

As to the fulfilment of the inspired typology for the Church in this Age of Grace, allow me to itemize each point by the following realization—

1. God placed His own Son, "the last Adam," (1 Cor. 15:45) into a "deep sleep," the very sleep of death itself.
2. From Christ's spear-riven side came the substance composing the gospel of salvation, the very shedding of the blood of Christ for our sins.
3. Christ's deadly wound was sealed up by virtue of God's satisfaction with the substitutionary death of His Son in our place; Christ would be raised up again.
4. From this substance taken from the side of Christ, which constitutes the gospel of salvation, God is now forming the woman, the Church.
5. The woman thus becomes "the Church which is Christ's body." We are members of His very body, "of His flesh and of His bones" (Gen. 2:23 and Eph. 5:30).
6. The Church being formed as vital members of His very body constitutes a unique oneness. Those who are "*joined to the Lord [by faith] become one spirit with Him*" (1 Cor. 6:17). Collectively, the Church under the Headship of Christ forms "one body" (Eph. 4:3 and 4). The members are to endeavor, in their "walk," to keep "the unity of the Spirit."
7. In perfect and glorious finality, this woman, the Church of Jesus Christ, will be ultimately presented to Christ, just as previously prefigured by Eve's presentation to Adam (Eph. 5:27). And what a meeting that event is going to be!

As to the presentation of the Church to Christ, it is described by Paul in verses 26 and 27—"That He might sanctify and cleanse her [the Church] by the laver [literal Greek] of the water in the Word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish."

So it is, that the two passages which summarize the *Origin* and *History* of these two entities, Israel and the Church, both do so on the backdrop of the marriage relationship. The two passages are Ezekiel 16 and Ephesians 5. Let us now **compare** them and take note of the striking contrast—

MARRIAGE and DIVORCE
As Illustrated by Israel and the Church in Contrast

	ISRAEL (Ezek. 16)	CHURCH (Eph. 5:22-33)
1. Birth	<i>Ammonite and Hittite, natural descendants</i> “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, - that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”)	(Generated from God- Born of the Spirit, John 3:6.
2. Nativity	<i>Wallowing in blood Cast into the field</i>	Faith in the blood of Christ Taken from the side of Christ, through the Gospel
3. Young Womanhood	<i>Growth and natural Beauty</i>	A beautiful Institution- The workmanship of God, a chaste Virgin
4. Marriage Contract	<i>The Law of Moses</i>	Not under any Contract Taken from the side of Christ, Bone of His bones, flesh of His flesh
5. Became a Harlot	<i>Multiple Immoralities</i>	“Spots and wrinkles” But Not a Harlot (Harlot system kept separate)
6. Divorcement	<i>God put away His wife</i>	No Divorcement “bath of water of Word” (Separate judgment for Harlot)
7. Final Restoration	<i>In the Future- In the Kingdom Age</i>	Presented to Himself, holy and without blemish

Viewing Israel and the Church from this dispensational perspective positively demonstrates for us the obvious contrasts between the two entities. Especially is this true in relationship to the subject of marriage and divorce. Since their histories and natures were portrayed on the backdrop of the marriage relationship, it also emphasized for us the distinction in the divorce laws—for Israel, divorce took place ; for the Church, divorce is actually an impossibility. Since the Church is composed only of spiritually regenerated people, *those people cannot lose their salvation*, neither can they *collectively be divorced from Christ*. Consequently, we see a dispensational confirmation to the fact that there is to be no divorce between two believers in the instructions given to the Church by the apostle Paul from the Head of the Church. The commands to two believers to not divorce are therefore a consistent **reflection** of the Church’s standing with Jesus Christ in permanency.

God spoke to Israel and dwelt with Israel on a physical basis as a physical nation. In contrast, God speaks to the Church and dwells with the Church on a spiritual basis as a spiritual entity. God divorced Israel, whereas, Christ does not divorce the Church. The Church which is His body cannot be divorced from the Head. As a reflection of this truth, Christ has ordered the members of His body to *not divorce* under any circumstance.

The Spiritual Dimension

The contrast that we just studied, between Israel and the Church, very obviously emphasizes the spiritual dimension for the Church of Jesus Christ. This should be no surprise to us because the apostle Paul made the very same emphasis when he contrasted the “administration of the Law” with the “administration of the Spirit” in 2 Corinthians 3:4-18. In that comparison Paul literally *contrasted* the Law dispensation with the Grace dispensation. In the Grace dispensation the emphasis from many different Scriptures is always placed upon the spiritual dimension: the new birth by the Spirit of God (John 3); the worship of God in Spirit and in truth (John 4); the spiritual Bread (John 6); the spiritual Shepherd and sheep (John 10); a spiritual Sabbath (Heb. 4); a spiritual High Priest (Heb. 4-7); the spiritual temple (Eph. 2 and I Pet. 2); the spiritual sacrifice (Heb. 9 and 10) and, as was stated earlier, a spiritual Kingdom (Rom. 14:17), etc., etc., etc.

In contrast to the marriage of two believers, the apostle Paul does give spiritual guidance in the allowance for divorce between a believer and a non-believer. This once again demonstrates for us that the essential difference between the saved and the unsaved in marriage is *spiritual*. And in a similar manner, it demonstrates that the essential element in the marriage of two believers is the *spiritual* connection. In God’s sight, this is the *vital dimension*.

We must realize that marriage in the human family is thus a three-fold involvement. Man is essentially created in the image of God. The Godhead involves a Tri-unity of natures—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. There is plainly a reflection of these natures in the nature of man, himself. Man is said to possess “body, soul and spirit” (1 Thess. 5:23). Thus, in marriage there exists the physical union, the emotional union, and the spiritual union. Two people can have physical union, and even emotional union, but not have the vital spiritual union. Their spirits can actually be antagonistic to one another. This is what happens in the marriage between a saved person and an unsaved person. The unsaved person may find that his or her spiritual incompatibility is intolerable in the marriage relationship, and thus, he (or she) may choose to break the marriage. In such cases, the believer is to allow this. It also follows that the believer is free to remarry, but only to another believer (1 Cor. 7:15 and 39).

Only Christians can appreciate the instruction in Ephesians 5:22-33 and 1 Peter 3:1-7. These instructions are designed to give counsel only to the believer. Today, believers live in the midst of a very ungodly world which has little respect for Jesus Christ.

Where believers are married to nonbelievers, the believers are certainly not to shirk in any way their responsibilities in the marriage relationship. Their love and devotion, though not realizing the spiritual compatibility, should, for Christ’s sake, be a reflection of godly responsibility and loving grace. By all means they should make their partners feel glad to be married to a Christian who has high moral standards and who accepts their marital responsibilities with love and vigor. Such moral characteristics are rarely found among the vast majority of people in the world. Certainly this is true in our modern world

where self-centeredness is the norm. The Christian partner has the added strength of character, supplied by the Holy Spirit, in order to endure many hardships and disrespect heaped upon them. Their Christian responses to insult and certain abuse should be measured by God's grace and love in their lives. As the apostle Peter says, "Wives, likewise, be submissive to your husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without the word, may be won by the conduct of their wives" (1 Peter 3:1). This is an amazing privilege and responsibility for the Christian wife. She can preach a loud and powerful sermon without ever saying a word.

This is a similar reason why the apostle Paul exhorts the believing spouse to live compatibly with their unsaved mate, because it sanctifies the marriage by exposing the nonbeliever to the saving graces of Christ (1 Cor. 7:12-16).

What is marriage "in the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:39)?

We have found that the subject of marriage and divorce in the Bible is elaborated upon four specific times for four distinct Ages. *First*, by Christ, concerning the Patriarchal Age; *second*, by Moses in the Law for the nation of Israel (Deut. 24:1-4); *third*, by Christ in preaching the gospel of the Kingdom for the future Kingdom rule over all the earth (Matt. 5:31-32 and 19:1-10) and *fourth*, by the apostle Paul for the present Church Age (1 Cor. 7:1-40). It is only in the latter occasion that a clear and specific distinction is made between the saved and the unsaved in marriage and divorce. This specific distinction was not done from the beginning, nor in the Law of Moses and neither was it done in the gospel of the Kingdom. This is not to say that saved people under the Patriarchal Age, or the rule of the Law, or saved people under the rule of the future Kingdom, did not, or will not, appreciate the spiritual aspect of a marriage between two believers, for undoubtedly they have and will. It simply means that this aspect of marriage was not specified in those other two or three directives on that subject. This is similar to the subject of God's grace. There has always been the principle of grace in every Age of God's dealing with mankind. We can find examples of it in the Hebrew Scriptures. However, it is only in this particular Age, called "the Dispensation of the Grace of God" (Eph. 3:2), where the principle of God's grace becomes the very ruling economy under which we live today—"For you are not under Law but under Grace" (Rom. 6:14). Therefore, the principle of "grace" is greatly magnified in this Age.

It becomes obvious, therefore, to any honest Bible reader that in this particular Age there is a primary emphasis upon the spiritual aspect of marriage. This emphasis is demonstrated several ways:

(1) The only stated grounds for the allowance of divorce among Christians in this Age is by the departure of the *unsaved* partner. This means that God recognizes the *spiritual* status of both parties as the *primary binding factor* in marriage for this Age.

(2) The fact that both the Christian wife and the Christian husband are commanded *to not divorce*, without any equivocation, again demonstrates that marriage between two believers, in God's sight, represents an indissoluble union.

(3) As we saw from the book of Ephesians (5:22-33), the Christian husband and wife relationship is patterned after that of “Christ and the Church.” The Church in this case is composed only of saved people. Consequently, Christian marriage is a *reflection of the supreme truth of the reality of Christ and the Church*. This reality of Christ and the Church *will never, and can never, be broken*. This truth is to be reflected in the Christian marriage.

(4) It is specifically stated that the only option in the remarriage of a believer is “*in the Lord*” (1 Cor. 7:39). This is a statement indicative of the believer’s spiritual position as being “in the Lord.” This obviously means the marriage is only to be with another believer in that same position. All this emphasizes our *spiritual position in Christ*.

Actually, therefore, the expression Paul used of marriage as being “*in the Lord*” stresses several things. First of all, Paul was presenting, as it were, a new dimension in marriage which was not specifically stated in past ages. Second and foremost, it means the Christian’s marriage is only to be to another believer “in the Lord.” Third, it also obviously means that believers are to be *led by the Lord* in marriage. They are *to seek Christ’s will* for them in a mate. The two parties should certainly have *compatible spiritual interests* with the aim in life of building a home that is based upon the Scriptural principles which are honoring to the Lord Jesus Christ. And, of course, this means their life together should primarily be one *of service and testimony* to the Lord Who ordained and planned this union from the very beginning.

In this regard, some have made the observation that if marriage “in the Lord” is unbreakable, then surely, it always has been and always will be, because two believers have always been married in every Age. This appears to be true. In a sense it can be looked upon like the subject of the new birth. It is true that we must understand that the new birth has actually been true in every Age from the very beginning of time. However, that exact language is now specifically used by Christ in John 3, and is now emphasized for this Age of faith in Jesus Christ. The same is true about marriage “in the Lord.” We must, indeed, realize that marriage “in the Lord” has been true in every Age since the fall of man, where two redeemed souls are joined together in marriage. However, that exact language is now used and emphasized in this Age of Grace. Therefore, we must also understand that the fundamental institution of the marriage of two believers means that it was intended to be insoluble from the beginning. Christ, Himself, indicated this in Matthew 19 as he spoke of God’s intended purpose “from the beginning” of not allowing divorce. This truth, therefore, is like a substrata of fundamental, God ordained reality, which lies beneath the strata of allowances for divorce in both the Law and the Kingdom Ages wherein unsaved people have been involved. In this Age this strata of truth has now been brought to the forefront, built directly upon and emphasized, wherein only two believers are included. And the allowance for divorce in this Age is made only for the unbelievers if they so choose. Remember also that the allowance for divorce in the Law and the Kingdom are not *mandates* to divorce, but only the allowances if a party so wishes. God was not emphasizing then what He is now expressing for this Age.

An Illustration of Marriage “in the Lord”

Perhaps a most excellent illustration of marriage “in the Lord” can be taken from the account in the book of Genesis where Abraham sought a wife for his son, Isaac. In the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah we can see the ingredients of that type of marriage prefigured for us. In Genesis 24 Abraham sent out his servant with the sacred mission of finding a wife for his son. The instructions Abraham gave are clear:

- (1) The wife was not to be selected from the pagan women of the land of Canaan (24:3). For us today, that would be apropos to not marrying an unsaved person without Christ and without God’s directions in life.
- (2) The wife must be from his family heritage in his ancient land (24:4). Abraham’s people were spiritually saved people who knew the Lord. By application, this is in effect telling us today that the bride (and/or groom) must be a Christian.
- (3) But even then, Abraham cautioned, she must be willing to live here in “the Land of Promise” with her husband, and he was not to return to the other land and walk there (24:5-6 and 8). Though Abraham’s people knew the Lord, yet they were compromisers with idolatry. This is very significant and speaks to us today about the necessity of two Christians walking together in the truth of Christianity and not in compromise.
- (4) In the whole exercise the servant must be, and will be, led by the Holy Spirit, which was God’s promise (24:7). And, of course the same should be desired by two believers today—they should be led by the Holy Spirit.
- (5) The servant fervently prayed to God for blessing and direction (24:12-14). And, truly, the servant could offer thanksgiving at the results, “I being in the way the Lord led me” (24:27). Two believers should exercise thankfulness as well.

It is not accidental, therefore, that many recognize Isaac and Rebekah as a beautiful type of Christ and the Church. This is also a beautiful illustration of marriage “in the Lord.” As you remember, Christ said this Patriarchal Age was “[off] from the beginning” (Matt. 19:8). First there was the physical union of Adam and Eve, ordained by God from the *original creation* (Gen. 2). Then in the very same Age there was the physical union of two, ordained by God to typify or picture the *new creation*. This is beautifully illustrated by the story of Isaac and Rebekah in Genesis 24.

When one thinks of the love relationship between Christ and the Church, and understands that the Lord is expecting us to reflect that love between husband and wife, he may think this is beyond his capacity to perform. And, truly, we must realize this is a love beyond the human capacity of two people to produce. However, in the salvation of every believer, God does an amazing thing. According to Romans 5:5 the very “love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who was given to us.” This means that marriage “in the Lord” is also a union wherein God supplies the supernatural “love” as we open our hearts by faith in His promises and provisions. The whole secret of the Christian life is that we are now ALIVE to God through the Spirit. Our position in life, including the married life, can be expressed and realized by the following revelation—

*But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if **Christ is in you**, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. (Rom. 8:9-10.)*

Two Christians who are married can obviously share together these promises, and as they say, “cash in on them,” especially when problems and stresses come into the home. Though we live in our fleshly bodies with all their limitations, yet positionally the believer is now said to be “*in the Spirit*, as to his standing before God. When the repentant sinner places his heart’s faith in Jesus Christ, Paul further reveals “But he that is joined to the Lord is *one spirit* with Him” (1 Cor. 6:17). Thus two believers’ love for one another can be, and should be, an extension of the love of Christ in us by the Holy Spirit.

Today the “Kingdom of God is . . . righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17). Most certainly that spiritual Kingdom has spiritual guidelines for marriage and divorce. Those guidelines are given in such passages as Ephesians 5. Believers today are told of their bonding to Christ at the time of salvation (1 Cor. 6:17)—“one spirit with Him.” Believers are furthermore told of their bonding to all other believers the world over (1 Cor. 12:13)—“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” Likewise, in the Christian marriage, which is described as “*in the Lord*,” they can realize and believe that there is another bonding which in Ephesians is described as “So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the Church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones” (Eph. 5:28-30). The spiritual bonding of the Church with Christ is thus reflected in the marriage relationship between two believers.

No doubt, it is the Devil’s earnest pledge to disrupt and distract believers from these spiritual truths so that their marriages come to ruin. It is also a present reality that the vast majority of Christians in these “last days” are walking “carnally” as men in the flesh and not in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). Let all take heed—God never winks at sin—“whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7-9).

IN SUMMARY, SO FAR

Though there are certain obvious similarities and common truths for every Age of God's dealing with mankind—including the fact that God has always wanted one man to marry one woman, and that God has always hated divorce—nevertheless, there are very distinct dispensational changes made in the marriage and divorce laws as revealed in the Scriptures. To ignore these is to invite chaos when it comes to understanding God's instructions for us today. The instructions on marriage and divorce for the Church of Jesus Christ are not isolated commands hanging out in the middle of nowhere. Instead, they are specially crafted instructions befitting the program of the dispensation of the Grace of God. They are unique from other ages and are specially tailored to God's purpose in Christ for the present Age. Unless one recognizes this perspective he can never fully appreciate God's will and purpose for us today. Consequently, we have found at least four basic reasons why God does not allow divorce between two believers today in this Age of Grace—

(1) We have seen the basic similarity between God's original purpose, as Christ said, "*from the beginning*" (Matt. 19:4) in the original "*creation*" of Adam and Eve with God's present purpose "*in the beginning*" (Acts 11:15) in the "*new creation*" of the last Adam and the Church. "From the beginning [either one] it was not so!"

(2) We have also seen the uniform application of "the law of her husband." This principle forbids the wife to divorce her husband. This has always been true and, as such, has been applied to the instructions to the Church, as well.

(3) We also noted from Ephesians 5 that Christ does not divorce the Church! This is to be reflected in the Christian wife and husband. This also demonstrates for us the principle that physical immorality cannot break the spiritual bond in the marriage.

(4) We have also seen the fundamental "command" from the Head of the Church in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 for the Church today that there be no divorce.

THE KINGDOM AGE

The Contrast Between the Church and the Kingdom on Marriage and Divorce

Because many, if not most, of Christendom's religious teachers mix the teachings of Christ concerning marriage and divorce in Matthew 19:3-12 with that of Paul in 1 Corinthians 7, it is necessary to look at those passages from a dispensational perspective. When we do that, we will see the critical distinctions between them, just as we did between Israel and the Church on the same subject.

The Primary Passages Are—

Matthew 19:3-9

The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?"

And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning '*made them male and female,*' and said, '*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh*'? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?"

He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whosoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

1 Corinthians 7:1, 10-16

Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me:...

Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.

But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now are they holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. . . .

Now, as I stated at the beginning of this study, I am going to ask questions about each of these passages which will demonstrate their dispensational character and the particular people to whom each of the instructions belongs.

1. Who is the Speaker?

Christ, as “the Minister of
the *circumcision*” Romans 15:8

Paul, as “the minister of
the *uncircumcision*” Romans 15:16

Most people do not take into consideration that while Jesus Christ was ministering here on earth, He primarily came to minister the truths which were designed of God for the Jewish nation. As I have given already, Christ came to minister the truths pertaining to the Kingdom of God as expected by the Jewish people. The apostle Paul expressed it in Romans 15:8 in this explicit manner—“*Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant [minister] to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers.*” As we noted earlier, these truths concerned the promised Messianic Kingdom. Christ is going to reign over all the earth, in and through the restored nation of Israel, in the Kingdom Age. This message is the primary concern of what is called the “Synoptic Gospels”—in particular, Matthew, Mark and Luke. John more surely brings out those things in the life of Christ which prepare the Jewish believers for the coming Age of Grace.

In contrast to this, the apostle Paul is Christ’s special messenger to give His instructions and distinctive revelations to the Gentile people (the uncircumcision). “. . . that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, . . .” (Rom. 15:16).

2. What is the Setting?

Christ is answering the question about
marriage and divorce *from the Pharisees*.

Paul is answering a similar question
from the Corinthian saints.

It is quite significant that Christ gives consideration to the question from individuals whom He regards as rank hypocrites who are also trying to entrap Him. The very fact that He gives this consideration openly before His disciples and the general public actually demonstrates the fact that in the Kingdom Age the laws on marriage and divorce will be for everyone, even for those in that time period who may be unsaved.

In contrast to this, the apostle Paul is only answering the question from fellow believers in the Church of God, and we might add—from no one else. What the unsaved might ask about this subject would not be addressed because God’s counsels on the subject in this Age of Grace are not at all for them.

3. For What Age?

For the Messianic Kingdom yet to come.

For the present Age of Grace.

I pointed out earlier that there are at least twelve references to “the Kingdom of Heaven” in the context of Matthew 19 where Christ speaks on the subject of marriage and divorce: four times in chapter 18, five times in chapter 19 and three times in chapter 20. This makes it very obvious that Christ is not speaking on behalf of the Church, wherein there is neither Jew nor Gentile, but one New Man. The two different Ages, of course, have two fundamentally different economies. The Messianic Kingdom Age will be a governmental rule over the whole earth. At that time, according to the prophets, the earth

will experience near Edenic conditions. We are also told that there will be a rejuvenation of the Law under a New Covenant, and that the rule will be with “a rod of iron.”

In contrast to this, God is now calling out of this world a people for His name. During this time of “out-calling,” the saints are under the “dispensation of the Grace of God.” This is an altogether different administration from that in the Kingdom Age.

4. For What people?

For national Israel and all Mankind—
whether saved or unsaved.

Only for Regenerated People of this
Age of Grace.

It is clear from many prophecies that, when Jesus Christ returns to rule on this earth, He will rule over the whole earth and over all nations on the face of the earth. See the following references—Ps. 2:2-12; 72:8-11; Isa. 2:2-4; 11:4, 5; Dan. 2:35, 44; Jer. 23:5; 33:15, 16; Zech. 2:10, 11; 9:10; 14:9; Luke 2:11-14; Rev. 19:15, etc. Though the Kingdom Age begins with only those who are saved, yet every one born during this time will need to be saved. Many will not be. Consequently, by the time of the end of this Age, there will be mass rebellion by multitudes and nations against Christ (Rev. 20:7-10). Nevertheless, the moral laws during this time period, including these laws on marriage and divorce, will be appreciated by all nations. All the nations of earth will be required to have a representative present in Jerusalem for the annual Feast of Tabernacles. The seeming stringency in the rules on marriage and divorce will wipe away all the petty allowances in Judaism and, no doubt, the rest of the world as well. Of course, it is also to be understood that the earth being restored to near paradisiac conditions means that living conditions will be ideal, and the occasions for family strife and complaints will be nearly eliminated. These conditions are bound to make marriage more ideal and much easier to manage.

In contrast to this, the commands of Paul to the Church have nothing whatsoever to do with the world at large, nor to any unsaved people. These instructions do not, therefore, hold any jurisdiction over the lost and unsaved on earth. All the preachers today, who try to apply these principles to everyone today are only causing untold confusion.

5. On what Basis are these Instructions?

Based upon the purpose of God in the
original creation at the beginning.

Based upon the purpose of God in
the “*new creation*” in Christ.

The basic teaching of Christ on this subject is clear—He goes back to God’s original intent when the man and woman were first created. In the Kingdom Age there will not only be a restoration of the earth into the original Edenic conditions, but there will also be a reenactment of God’s original design and plan for the man and woman. When Christ spoke, as recorded in Matthew 19, and quoted from Genesis 2:23 and 24, there is a beautiful sense in which man’s attention was thus drawn back to the original scene of God initially creating the man and then the woman from the substance taken from the side of Adam, making her “bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh.” This certainly establishes that God intended the *physical* union of man and woman.

In a contrast that is on a higher plain, the whole setting for Paul's instructions is the "new creation in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; Col. 3:10 and 1 Cor. 6:17-20). These are the truths of Christ under "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1, 2). In Ephesians 5, when the apostle Paul quotes the same passage of Genesis 2:23 and 24, there is a beautiful sense in which the believer's attention is drawn to the revelation called "a great mystery" of God forming the Church from the riven side of Jesus Christ (see Eph. 5 comments, page 24). This clearly establishes the *spiritual* aspect of the union between two believers in marriage. Of course, this "mystery" was not revealed in the Gospel accounts.

6. The Primary Emphasis?

No Divorce is allowed

No Divorce is allowed

When one looks at all the passages in the Gospel accounts he will see that the primary emphasis for the Kingdom Age is that, in contrast to the Mosaic Law, divorce is generally not allowed. Neither Mark nor Luke mention any exceptions in their accounts (Mark 5:2-12 and Luke 16:18). Only Matthew mentions the exception of immorality (Matt. 5:31-32 and 19:2-11). Consequently, the primary emphasis is *no divorce*.

The same is basically true of Paul's instructions to both the Christian wife and husband. No exceptions between two believers are given (1 Cor. 7:10-11; 7:39 and Eph. 5:22-33). In this case the exception of immorality is not given. However, in this case there is exception carefully explained in the marriage between a believer and an unbeliever (1 Cor. 7:12-16). Consequently, the primary emphasis is *no divorce*.

7. Exceptions?

Divorce is allowed in the case of one of the partners committing **immorality**.

Divorce is allowed in the case of one of the partners being **unsaved**.

Fornication or adultery obviously breaks the physical and emotional bonds in marriage. It is therefore grounds for divorce in the Kingdom Age, if a partner so elects to dissolve the marriage. Please remember, this allowance, as expressed by Jesus Christ, is not a command to dissolve the marriage but only an allowance if one party so chooses. This consideration is certainly in the light of the fact that many in the Kingdom Age will be unsaved. Other considerations would certainly influence the decision of two believers in the Kingdom time period. The situation of believers and non-believers is not addressed by Christ. We are to understand from this that the unbeliever in the Kingdom Age cannot dissolve the marriage as in the Age of Grace.

In contrast, in the Church which is Christ's body, fornication or adultery is not a consideration. However, if one party is unsaved, that alone is grounds for the allowance of divorce on the part of the unsaved. This fact should make it clear that nothing physical can break what "God has joined together in Christ." That is, any physical unfaithfulness cannot break the spiritual union. On the contrary, the spiritual union can be the basis for restoring the emotional and physical union between two believers.

8. Remarriage of the Innocent Party?

The *Innocent Party* is free to remarry.

The *Christian* is free to remarry.

The inference in Christ's statements on the subject is that the innocent party, who did not violate the marriage, has the right to dissolve the marriage and to remarry. The guilty party, apparently, must live with the consequence of his sin.

There is no such right given by Paul in the marriage of two believers. In fact, the believing wife, who leaves her believing husband, is expressly told to "remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her *husband*." This tells us that—in God's sight—her believing spouse is still her "husband." However, in the marriage of a believer and an unbeliever, the believer is said to be free to remarry when the unbeliever dissolves the marriage. The only understood condition for the remarriage of the believer is that the marriage is to another Christian. They are thus said to be married "in the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:39).

9. Remarriage of the Guilty Party?

Guilty Party is not free to remarry.

The *Unsaved party* is not under any directives.

The guilty party must face the dire consequences of immorality during the Millennial Kingdom Age.

Concerning the unsaved party during this Church Age, Paul's words have no jurisdiction to them or over them. What they essentially need is a new birth. Only then could they come under the discipline of the truths designed for the Church which is Christ's body. As stated before, they can be moved by their conscience or the laws of the particular state or government under which they live.

10. Conclusion?

Fornication IS grounds for divorce,
Departure of the unsaved is NOT grounds.

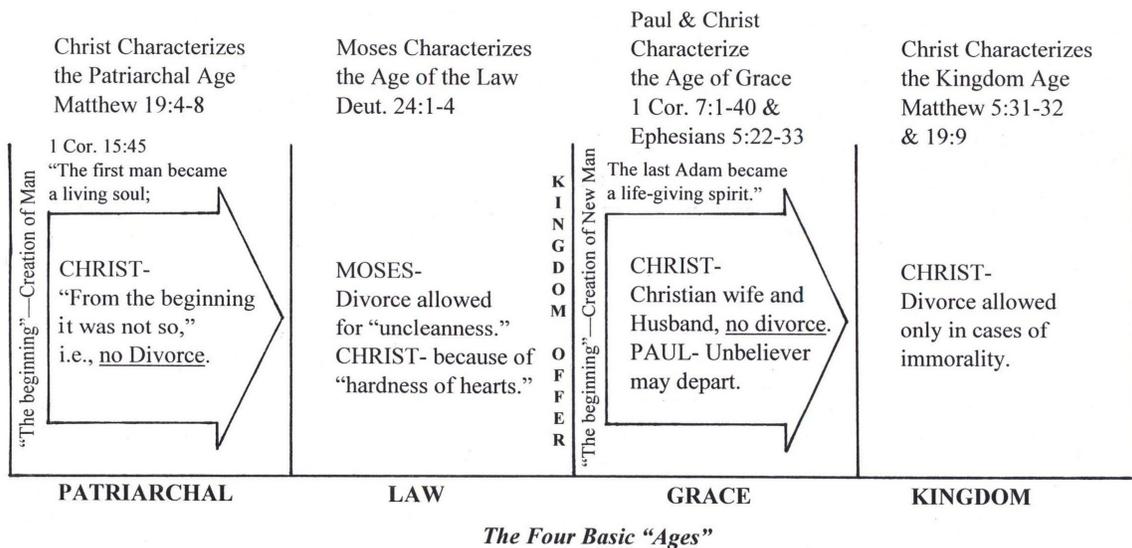
Departure of the unsaved IS grounds,
Fornication is NOT grounds for divorce.

The departure of the unsaved is not even mentioned by Jesus Christ for the Kingdom Age. It plays no consequential factor in that Age.

Fornication is not even mentioned in Paul's instructions on this subject. (Some think it is found elsewhere. We shall deal with that shortly.)

Chart on the Four basic Ages

Marriage and Divorce As practiced in the four basic Ages



"The beginning" for the Church—Acts 11:15
 Creation of the "New Man" collectively—Eph. 2:15 and individually—4:14 & Col. 3:10 (see also 2 Cor. 5:17 & Gal. 6:15)
 Christ ministered the Gospel of the Kingdom.
 In Matthew 19 the Kingdom of Heaven is mentioned 5 times.

PART TWO

MAJOR ERROR IN THE INTERPRETATION OF 1 CORINTHIANS 7:10 and 11

**Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord:
A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if
she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be
reconciled to her husband.
And a husband is not to divorce his wife.**

INTRODUCTION

Many in conservative, evangelical, fundamentalism have projected an assumption upon Paul's words in I Corinthians 7:10 that has never been substantiated, is very misleading and is not at all accurate. When Paul speaks of a "command . . . [from] the Lord" they have mistakenly assumed that this must mean a command from Jesus Christ while He ministered here on earth to the "circumcision" on the subject of marriage and divorce, as in Matthew 19. Many unsuspecting teachers have hastily repeated this assumption without ever attempting to "prove" it (1 Thess. 5:21). I, myself, heard and accepted this explanation until the time came when I realized I had never really given this assumption a careful examination. Then one time I heard an older minister, whom I appreciated very much, cast doubt that this was a quotation from something the Lord said in the Gospel accounts. Nevertheless, he reasoned, that even if Paul was quoting something from the Gospel accounts time frame, he purposely left out the crucial fact of immorality being an allowance for divorce. In consequence of this, I never gave it much attention until I realized how strongly some of my brethren were now using this assumption.

A side issue in this assumption is that it has been offered as a plausible explanation for the difference Paul made between a "*command from the Lord*" and "*to the rest I say, not the Lord*" in verse 12. It has sometimes been explained that in the first case Paul quoted something Christ said while the Lord ministered here on earth, whereas, in the other case Paul gave his own instructions in Christ's absence. I personally heard a high ranking Mormon Church representative leap on this assumption as acceptable to him as well. He then pointed out his version of the same thing. "On the one hand," he said, "Paul relies on Christ's words in the past for part of the instructions, whereas, in the other case, Paul is only giving his present human opinion." And therefore, he contended that there may be errors in our Bible just like there are in the book of Mormon. Of course, this is not at all what the passage is saying. If it was, it most certainly contradicts many of the plain statements concerning the divine inspiration of the Scriptures.

The truth of the matter is that the apostle Paul is simply being careful to distinguish for the reader the source of his inspiration. In studying this subject carefully we find that, on the one hand, Paul has certain direct revelations from the Head of the Church on the subject of marriage and divorce as it relates to two believers. On the other hand, as the instructions relate to a believer and a nonbeliever, Paul gives his apostolic counsel which was under the influence of the Holy Spirit. In either case, the instructions are understood to be binding on the Christian community.

We might ask, what is the major reason that this assumption has become so dogmatically held by many? The first reason, of course, is that most teachers want some semblance of proof for their contention in the allowance of divorce between two Christians because of immorality. Obviously, there is no such statement to be found in all of 1 Corinthians 7 where Paul takes up the subject of marriage and divorce. However, they reason, if Paul is quoting from Christ in the Gospel accounts, and applying it to us today, then it could follow that fornication, as Christ therein stated, is grounds for divorce today as well. They further argue that as to exactly why Paul obviously left out the particulars concerning “fornication” in his instructions to the Corinthians as only a matter of conjecture. Of course, they forget that this whole assumption is *mere conjecture*.

Looking elsewhere in the Scriptures

All realize that if immorality is grounds for divorce between two Christians, then it is not going to be proven from any specific statement anywhere in 1 Corinthians 7, which was Paul’s explanation of the subject of marriage and divorce for the Church of Jesus Christ in this Age of Grace. The simple reason is that Paul absolutely does not state anywhere in this chapter, or anywhere else in his epistles for that matter, that immorality is grounds for divorce between two believers. Men will have to project upon this passage something which Christ gave in the Gospel account of Matthew, where he stated that immorality was a basis for divorce. They are going to have to make the words of Christ on marriage and divorce, which was stated in the context of the book of Matthew for the Kingdom Age, apply equally as well to the Church Age. This must be done because, as all acknowledge, the Holy Spirit did not inspire the apostle Paul, in giving instructions to the Church, to say fornication was grounds for divorce among believers.

To illustrate this, one minister wrote—

The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:10 & 11 is NOT giving the options [namely, divorce] for the ‘defrauded’ spouse, the ‘victim.’ To find the options [divorce] for the ‘defrauded spouse,’ the ‘victim,’ we must look elsewhere in scripture.
(Robert Grove, *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage*, page 18)

Now this is the foundation which their whole contention must rest upon—that Paul is actually quoting or alluding to only a part of what Christ said on the subject as given in the Gospel accounts. If this is true, then they reason that they can go to the Gospel accounts

to get, as they say, “the rest of the story”—which makes allowance for divorce in the case of immorality. Thus, they contend, immorality is a basis for divorce today.

Obviously, if one cannot prove this assumption, he will find it impossible to prove this major thesis. In fact, if this cannot be proven, their major position on divorce between two believers for this Age of Grace collapses. It literally evaporates into thin air. This is actually the cardinal axiom on which everything else is supported and dependent. If one cannot prove his point here, he will be helpless to prove it anywhere.

Just here allow me to give you another illustration of what I am talking about. After studying this subject, I had affirmed to a group of leaders that this assumption that the apostle Paul was merely quoting from something Christ said in the time frame of the Gospel accounts, could never be substantiated from the Scriptures and was in serious error. The leader among them (Robert Grove), instead of offering any proof of this assumption, actually responded to me in writing with these pontifical words,

Just read them and don't fight them, '*Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord;*' (1 Cor. 7:10), then go read what the Lord said.

I was amazed at this response, to say the least! Not only did he offer no proof, but he then only quoted the first half of verse 10. He stopped in mid-sentence. Apparently he closed 1 Corinthians and said to me, “then go read what the Lord said,” as if what the Lord said was somewhere else way off in the Bible! Of course, I don't have to go somewhere else in the Bible to read what the Lord said—it was right there in the rest of the sentence and the next verse—

a wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And the husband is not to divorce his wife.

Now this is exactly what the Lord commanded, and furthermore, **these words are not to be found anywhere in the Gospel accounts, nor anywhere else in the Bible!**

When I first realized my brethren were trying to teach that fornication was grounds for divorce between two Christians (because Christ allowed it in the gospel account of Matthew, and they *assumed* Paul was quoting a part of that), I thought I had better study this more carefully, and not just *assume* this to be true. On the one hand, it was impressive to me that if the vast majority in fundamentalism, and even of my own brethren, consider this to be a fact, then who was I to reject their assumption? However, on the other hand, I knew quite well that there have been many assumptions in Christendom which have no basis, whatsoever, when searched out. Therefore, with prayer in my heart for God's guidance, I began my search. When I did, indeed, attempt to prove this assumption, I found that there was absolutely no Scriptural evidence for this, whatsoever. In fact, as we shall see, all the Scriptural evidences I found pointed positively in the opposite direction.

I found that there is absolutely no indication whatsoever, nor can proof be given, that Paul was quoting from Christ while He was here on earth. To be sure, Paul was most certainly quoting a new, presently revealed “command” from the Head of the Church in

heaven. And, in addition, Paul was giving his own inspired instructions for a believer married to an unbeliever. But, that he was quoting something Christ ministered in the time frame of the Gospel accounts was an empty and baseless assumption that was actually contradictory to the facts.

Consequently, I believe it is time to bury once and for all this faulty notion, which careless teachers so desperately cling to—that Christ’s “command” to the Church on the subject of marriage and divorce, as found in 1 Corinthians 7:10 and 11—is something borrowed or quoted from what Christ gave in the Gospel accounts. Let us progress through this assumption step by step in obedience to 1 Thessalonians 5:21—“test or prove all things.”

“Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord”

The very first twist one of my brethren (a fellow minister) made on this passage was to state, “Paul says what he is saying is the **Lord’s commandment, not his**” (emphasis exactly as made by this minister). He produced this statement in writing without any qualifications whatsoever. And then in his paper he immediately jumped into the Gospel of Matthew where Christ spoke on the subject of marriage and divorce. Thus, he effectively divorced the subject away from Paul and placed it squarely on the lips of Christ as He spoke in the Gospel account concerning the Messianic Kingdom.

I immediately recognized this as either a very hasty and careless statement, or else a clever maneuver to take the subject out of Paul’s jurisdiction and place it in an entirely different time frame.

However, the fact is—according to plain English language—the first phrase means this is positively Paul’s command. That is precisely what it says—“*Now to the married I [Paul] command.*” The second phrase, “yet not I but the Lord,” is actually a figure of speech often employed in the Greek Scriptures which means nothing akin to his naked affirmation that this is “**not**” Paul’s command.

What this second phrase was intended to do was to correct the first phrase in the aspect of **emphasis**. What the text is saying is that this is not merely Paul’s command, rather, above and beyond Paul, it is the Lord’s command. The text most certainly does **NOT** mean this is “**not his** [Paul’s]” command.

E.W. Bullinger’s “*Figures of speech used in the Bible*” states on pages 909-911 that this is a figure of speech called “epanorthosis; or correction.” Bullinger explains—

The figure is so called when a writer or speaker has said something, and immediately recalls it in order to substitute something better, or stronger, or weightier, in its place, thus correcting what has been said . . . The Greeks had other names for it, owing to its beauty and power.

Bullinger further states that there were three kinds of “Epanorthosis.” “1. Where the retraction is absolute. 2. Where it is partial or relative. 3. Where it is conditional.” Bullinger lists 1 Cor. 7:10 under category number 2, a “partial or relative” epanorthosis. Then

Bullinger gives examples of passages in this category. It is helpful to look at these and compare them to what Paul is saying here in 1 Corinthians 7:10 (From the King James Version)—

- Matt. 11:9, “But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? . . .
yea, and more than a prophet.”
- John 16:32, “. . . and [every man] shall leave Me alone:
and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.”
- 1 Cor. 15:10, “I labored more abundantly than they all,
yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”
- Gal. 2:20, “Nevertheless I live:
yet not I but Christ liveth in me.”
- 1 Cor. 7:10, “And unto the married I command:
yet not I but the Lord.”
- 2 Tim. 4:8, “. . . a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, . . .
shall give me . . . *and not to me only*, . . .”
- 1 John 2:2, “And He is the propitiation for our sins:
and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.”

As you look at each of these cases (and more) it is obvious that the correction is partial and intended for emphasis' sake. In each case the first statement is true. However, to emphasize something more important, the second statement (or correction) is made. In other words, Paul did give a command for the Church, but more importantly it was not just Paul's command. Paul actually received this as a direct revelation of command from the Lord, Himself. This is important to remember. It means that this indeed was Paul's command, just exactly as stated in the first phrase. However, the second phrase emphasizes that beyond and above Paul, it is the Lord's command. Paul is giving this command to the Church, but Paul wants all to know that the Lord originated this command.

This “command,” therefore, is not to be *divorced* from Paul's own unique ministry and revelations to the Church. Paul had already reminded the Corinthians earlier in chapter 4 (verse 17) in these words—

For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved
and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of *my ways*
IN CHRIST, as I teach in every church.

We are to understand therefore, that this “command” on the subject of marriage and divorce, as given in chapter 7, is also in accordance with Paul's *unique* and *distinctive* revelations for this Church Age. If the text says this is Paul's command, then it also means that this command is one of the directives that was peculiar to the Pauline apostleship on behalf of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Did you also notice that in the passage I just quoted above (1 Cor. 4:17), Paul did not merely say these were “his ways”! Paul emphasized that these were “*my ways*—IN CHRIST”! In other words, beyond Paul is Jesus Christ—and this is exactly the same thing Paul is doing in chapter 7 and verse 10! Note the comparison—

4:17, “. . . **my ways**—IN CHRIST.”
7:10, “. . . I command, **yet not I**—but THE LORD.”

The “command” is issued in the PRESENT tense.

Second, it is important to establish when this “command” was given. And please remember the basic simplicity here. The word “command” whether in English or Greek, does not mean “to quote.” A “command” is to “issue a charge” or “commanding order.” What Paul and/or Christ is doing here is to issue a “*command*.” The text does not indicate anywhere that this is a “quote” from Jesus Christ in the past.

I say again, the real question is—WHEN did the Lord originate this “command”? In other words, is this a *present* command from the Head of the Church, through His “minister to the uncircumcised,” or a *past* command from the Lord as “Minister to the circumcised”? In both the English and in the Greek language this is a *present tense* “command.” This is not something old, but something NEW! This is not something Christ stated in the past, but in the PRESENT. This is a “command” to be understood by the saints as made at the time Paul was writing.

In this sentence we have two nouns, “**Paul**” and “**the Lord**,” *connected* to the same verb “*command*,” which is in the present tense. The meaning is unmistakable. This is what Paul and the Lord are NOW “commanding” the Christian assemblies concerning marriage and divorce. It most certainly is not what Paul would be saying some 25-30 years earlier because he was not even a Christian then! Nor could it be something the Lord commanded 25-30 years earlier because He was not *connected* with Paul at that time. So it becomes even more obvious that this is what Paul and the Lord were NOW “commanding.”

In Greek, the word *parangello* (command) here is in the “indicative, present active” tense. That simply means “action in progress contemporary with the time of speaking.” Or, in this particular case, the indicative action is in the form of a “command” made in the present to be continually acted upon. Since, in the Greek it is so emphatic we can ask, “When was Paul speaking?” There is general agreement that Paul is writing this letter to the Corinthians about A.D. 56 at the close of his three year residence in the city of Ephesus (Acts 20:31 and 1 Cor. 16:5-8). This is the time of this “command.” At this time the Lord, Himself, has long been resurrected, ascended and seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. Christ had become “Head over all things to the Church which is His body” (Eph. 1:22-23 and 2 Cor. 12:1). Christ, as the Head of the Church, is now issuing a specific “command” to that Church on the subject of marriage and divorce!

It is also very important to know that while Christ was here on earth, it is never stated that He actually gave a “command” (*parengello*) to anyone concerning marriage and divorce. He simply explained what the conditions were to be concerning this subject in the Kingdom of God. So, technically, there is no recorded issuing of a “command” on this subject in any of the Gospel accounts. Whereas, now being glorified and seated in heaven at the right hand of the Father, Christ is issuing a direct “command” to be executed by an entirely different company of people on this important subject. It is vitally important to remember the following—

Christ still spoke after His Ascension

In making their erroneous assumption that Christ could only be speaking in the past time frame of the Gospel accounts, most teachers either deliberately ignore, or else forget all about the fact that Christ told His disciples a most important truth on the night of His betrayal, as recorded in John 16:12-15—

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth;...”

In other words, Christ did not stop speaking and giving directions to His people after His ascension into heaven. **Christ had many things to say in the times ahead for the sake of the Church which He would be building.** His words mean that He will, no doubt, be making special revelations through His apostles, and also through the inspiration of the promised Holy Spirit of God.

It is a cardinal fact, stressed by the apostle Paul, that the gospel program of Christ for this present Gentile dispensation came to him by direct *revelations* from Christ—

But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelations of Christ. (Galatians 1:11-12.)

So it is that the gospel program preached by the apostle Paul came directly from the Head of the Church Who is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. In no way, shape or form did this present program originate from some man on earth, and certainly not even from Christ’s past ministry on earth which, as we saw earlier, was directed to the Jewish nation, called the “circumcision.”

There is an overwhelming abundance of information, telling us plainly of the many instances of direct revelation from Christ to Paul, on any number of subjects concerning the Christian life and the whole Church program. It is surprising how many times this aspect of reality is recorded for us. No doubt, many teachers have carelessly forgotten these facts. Some Bible teachers have accurately pointed out that, as Moses was called by God to come up to the top of mount Sinai to receive the Law for the nation of Israel, so it is that the apostle Paul was caught up to the third heaven to receive the divine revelations concerning the Church of Jesus Christ.

During the book of Acts time frame we have many records that the Lord personally appeared to the apostle Paul and spoke to him on many different occasions—

- Saul initially *heard the voice of the Lord* when he was on the road to Damascus as described in Acts 9:1-9, and “*He [the Lord] had spoken to him,*” verse 27.
- Likewise, Ananias was told by the Lord that Saul was chosen by God to “*hear the utterance of His voice*” (Acts. 22:14). This clearly means that Paul would continue to hear instructions from Jesus Christ, Who was now the “Head over all things to the Church. . .”

- Paul makes reference to this in Galatians 1:16 where he says that God had chosen “to reveal His Son in me.”
- A few years later when Paul was in Jerusalem “the Lord appeared to him in a trance”—Acts 22:17-21.
- Paul spoke of his being “caught up into the third heaven” where he “heard inexpressible words” (2 Cor. 12:2-6).
- As a preface to his being caught up into heaven, Paul spoke of his “visions” and “revelations” (2 Cor. 12:1).
- Paul spoke of his having “seen Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 9:1).
- Again, Paul reminded the saints of his having seen the resurrected Lord (1 Cor. 15:8).
- When Paul went to Jerusalem for the conference with all the apostolic leaders, as recorded in Acts 15, he spoke of his going “up by revelation” (Gal. 2:1-2).
- When Paul first went to the city of Corinth, the Lord “appeared to him in a night vision” and encouraged him to continue ministering in the city for the Lord had many people there (Acts. 18:9-10).
- Paul spoke of the Corinthians “seeking a proof of Christ speaking in me.” And the evidence of such was “mighty” to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 13:3).
- Paul spoke of the “abundance of the revelations” given to him (2 Cor.12:7).
- Paul spoke of his personal request to the Lord for the healing of his infirmity. In answer from the Lord, Paul gave the Lord’s exact words to him (2 Cor. 12:9-10).
- The Lord “stood by Paul” while imprisoned in Jerusalem and assured him of his safety all the way to Rome (Acts 23:11).
- Again, Luke stated that “the Lord stood by” Paul while on the dangerous voyage to Rome (Acts. 27:23-24).

In addition, Paul did not hesitate to clearly inform all believers of the distinctive revelations made to him concerning this present Church dispensation—

Now to Him Who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen. (Rom. 16:25-27.)

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—if indeed you have heard of the dispensation [or stewardship] of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery

(as I have briefly written already). . . . (Eph. 3:1-7.)

. . . of which I became a minister according to the stewardship [or dispensation] from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill [or complete] the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. (Col. 1:24-27.)

Thus, the apostle Paul had innumerable direct personal experiences with Jesus Christ Who is the Head of the Church. The purpose for these experiences was to equip Paul as the authentic, apostolic recipient of an abundance of special revelations, directions and commandments for the guidance of the Church of Jesus Christ. As Christ's special messenger, Paul had also been translated into heaven to hear the revelations from the Head of the Church. Paul, in turn, faithfully delivered these revelations to the Church—and he did so here in 1 Corinthians 7:10 and 11. So, if Paul spoke of “commands” which he had received from the Head of the Church, then we can obviously see and understand that he had personally received many of them. It has even been stated many times in the past, that if we really had a “*Red Letter Edition* of the New Testament” it would have included all of Paul's epistles to the Church.

Other “commands” as examples

There are other examples of “commands” issued by the apostle Paul of a similar nature to this in 1 Corinthians 7:10. In fact, there are several in this same general time frame of A.D. 50-60. We will note those made in Paul's first three letters. One can see immediately the similarity with the “command” of 1 Corinthians 7:10. Though Paul stated that Christ is the author of these commands, no one has ever thought that Paul was merely quoting Christ from the Gospel accounts—

1 Thessalonians 4:2 “For you know what commandments [Greek, *parangelia*] **we gave you through the Lord Jesus.**”

According to this passage Paul gave many “commandments” to the Thessalonians which originated from the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who was seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. This is exactly what Paul was saying in 1 Corinthians 7:10. Furthermore, no one of whom I know of has ever tried to prove that these commandments originated from Christ while ministering to Israel in the Gospel accounts.

2 Thessalonians 3:6 “But **we** command [Greek, *parangelo*] you, brethren, **in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . .**”

Here again is a command being made by the Pauline ministry, but its origin and authority is from the Lord Jesus Christ in the heavens.

2 Thessalonians 3:12 “Now those who are such **we** command [Gk, *parangelo*] and exhort through **our Lord Jesus Christ. . . .**”

Once again, the ministry makes the command, but the responsible party for the command is the Head of the Church in heaven.

1 Corinthians 7:10 “Now to the married **I** command [*parangello*],
Yet not **I but the Lord.**”

Obviously, this is the same as those above. It has nothing whatsoever to do with a quote from Christ in the Gospel account.

1 Corinthians 7:25 “Now concerning virgins: **I have** no commandment [Gk., *epitagee*] **from the Lord**; yet I give **my judgment** as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy.”

In this case Paul is saying that he has no special revelation or “command” from the Lord in heaven. However, just as he did in verses 12-16, where Paul gave his spiritual judgment as guidelines for the believer married to a nonbeliever, so Paul gives his judgment concerning the subject of “virgins” (verses 26-40).

In the very same book of 1 Corinthians Paul stated very plainly—

*“that the things which **I** write unto you are the **commandments of the Lord.**”* (1 Cor. 14:37)

In chapter 14 Paul had given many commands concerning guidelines for speaking in tongues in the Church congregational meetings. Obviously, Paul was not telling them in this passage that he was merely quoting things Christ said in the Gospel accounts. Actually, Christ never spoke on the subject. I don’t know of anyone who believes that Paul was quoting things Christ said on the subject.

It is also noteworthy in this regard that the special revelation concerning the Church’s being suddenly “caught up together . . . to meet the Lord in the air” came directly to the apostle by “**the word of the Lord**” (1 Thess. 4:15-17).

In all these cases we have the same similar factors which we have in 1 Corinthians 7:10. **(1)** These are Paul’s (and/or those with him) initial commands. **(2)** At least three other times it is the same Greek word *parangello*. **(3)** But beyond Paul, it is the Lord’s command or instruction. **(4)** No one ever even dreamed of saying any of these commands actually originated from quoting Christ as found in the Gospel accounts. **(5)** All the commands are from the Head of the Church, seated by the right hand of the Father.

In light of these many facts, so far gathered, the simple clear understanding of the passage is—“**Now to the married I command**” means this is a new and unique directive from the apostle Paul. “**Yet not I but the Lord**” means this command is not merely Paul’s, but it originates directly from the Head of the Church. Finally, this is not some quote from the past ministry of Christ, but a **PRESENT ACTIVE** command for this Church Age.

I heard an older, experienced, Bible teacher once say, “When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense—seek no other sense.”

In Summary, so far—

Thus far, the results of our search have produced the following facts:

- (1) The passage very plainly says this is **Paul's command**.
- (2) The passage further emphasizes that this is **the Lord's command**, not merely Paul's.
- (3) The words plainly indicate that the "command" was made **at the time the text was written** and not on some earlier occasion while Christ was ministering on earth. The "command" is in the *indicative, present active* tense.
- (4) There is **no statement to the effect that Paul is merely quoting** something Christ said 25-30 years earlier. (In fact, this command is nowhere to be found in the Gospels.)
- (5) This command is directed to the Church of Jesus Christ and **no one else**.
- (6) In the Gospels Christ was **not speaking to the Church**, but rather to the nation of Israel concerning the Kingdom of Heaven.
- (7) In the Gospel accounts Christ never **issued a "command"** on this subject.
- (8) The text is **plainly similar to other "commands"** issued by Christ through the apostle Paul on behalf of the Church of Jesus Christ.
- (9) **Not one of these examples** we have noted has anything whatsoever to do with quoting Christ in the Gospels.
- (10) This is obviously a **new "command"** from Christ as the Head of the Church on the subject of marriage and divorce for this Church dispensation.

"Quoting" or "Synopsis"

I have already stated that Christ never gave a "command" on this subject as recorded in the Gospel accounts. Nevertheless, in spite of being further tedious, and in order to satisfy every curiosity, we will examine the further argument that at least the substance of this "command" is found in the Gospel accounts.

Some, who realize that Paul's words of 1 Corinthians 7:10 and 11 cannot be found in the Gospels, have resorted in vain to the claim that Paul's words are to be understood as only a "synopsis" of what Christ said in the Gospel accounts.

What is even worse for those who insist on this, is the plain fact that, according to the three records of Matthew, Mark and Luke, Christ does not even address the subject of a believing wife departing from her husband, and remaining in an unmarried state of separation from her husband until such time of possible reconciliation. So there is no way under heaven it could be the "substance of," or a "synopsis of" anything Christ said on that subject—He did not speak on that particular issue!

So, even if we pretend that all the facts which we have seen before did not exist, no one could ever actually prove that this "command" is in some way, shape or form, a quote from Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospel accounts. The simple facts are: (1) not only is

such a command nowhere to be found in the Gospels (admittedly, no one has ever found this “command” in the Gospel accounts), but (2) even the actual subject of the departure of a wife from her husband and remaining in an unmarried state, is nowhere to be found in the Gospels.

Paul’s statement or “command” is very clear and simple—“*A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And the husband is not to divorce his wife.*” This statement from 1 Corinthians 7:10 and 11, by words or phrases does not even come close to matching anything Christ said on the subject in the Gospel accounts. The statements from the Gospels are well known and easily read—Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-10; Mark 10:2-12 and Luke 16:18. You will search in vain to find this statement or anything even similar to it.

Many people have relied upon statements concerning this assumption like the one found in *The New Scofield Reference Bible*. There one will see a footnote for I Corinthians 7:10-11. It says,

In vv. 10-11 Paul is repeating in substance something already taught by the Lord (Mt. 19:3-9).

Of course, when one goes to Matthew 19:3-9 (or any other Gospel) he will search in vain for any remote similarity of “substance” with what Paul was talking about in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11. No one has ever pointed to Matthew, Mark and Luke and said, “Look here is the *substance* of what Paul was quoting from!” Christ gave no “substance” on the subject! It has long been admitted by scholars that Christ actually says nothing whatsoever about a believing wife departing from her Christian husband and remaining in an unmarried state or else being reconciled to him.

Now I have a lot of respect for many of the Scofield notes. But there are some that simply prove to be inaccurate. I would hate for anyone to rely upon statements like that for proof of anything on this subject.

Indicators of a quote

The first normal indicator that a quote is being made is that quite often the text says so! For instance, in 1 Corinthians alone Paul often tells us he is quoting from a past source or Scripture. He will say, “It is written,” or “It was said,” or something similar—see, 1 Cor. 1:19, 31; 2:9; 3:19, 20; 6:16; 9:9; 10:7; 12:21 and 15:54. Does Paul say anything like this here in 1 Corinthians 7:10 and 11? No, he does not!

It is also true that on other occasions Paul does not actually come out and say he is quoting; he just does so. Of course, in most all contexts it is plainly seen that this is what he is doing. One can certainly know that Paul is quoting because the words will line up in a close or similar fashion with the Scripture being quoted. Scholars tell us they even know the particular translation Paul is quoting from because of the parallel and the words. In most cases Paul quotes from the Greek Septuagint called the LXX. Here are examples of where Paul does this in 1 Corinthians—2:16; 5:13; 10:20, 27; 15:25-27 and 33. Do Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 7:10 and 11 match in any way, shape or form what is stated in the

Gospel accounts about marriage and divorce? Absolutely not! All admit that they do not match anything in the Gospels.

Now every Bible teacher worth his salt knows this cannot be found in any of the three Gospels where Christ speaks on the subject. One scholar has stated very emphatically that, if this is a quote from something Christ said while He was here on earth, then it must be “from another source, other than one of the three Synoptic Gospels” (John does not mention the subject).

It is also a fact that at this early date the Gospels may not yet have been written. Most scholars believe that Paul’s early epistles of 1 and 2 Thessalonians were the first of the Greek Scriptures written. So, it is very possible that, even at the time of 1 Corinthians, still none of the four Gospels had yet been written. Furthermore, there is absolutely no indication that Paul is merely quoting from an “oral tradition” handed down by the Christian communities. It is believed that this was done once by Paul, as recorded by Luke, in Acts 20:35. But, again, the text plainly says it is a quote from the Lord, whereas this is not the case in 1 Corinthians 7:10 and 11. Consequently, in the book of Acts the quote is placed in red letters in the Red Letter Editions of the New Testament.

Paul does quote from Christ at the last supper. This was specially revealed to Paul from the Lord (1 Cor. 11:24, 25). Again, this is placed in red letters. However, no Red Letter Edition of the New Testament that I have ever seen places 1 Corinthians 7:10 and 11 in red letters!

So, I ask the question again, does 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 make perfectly clear sense without resorting to a claim that Paul is quoting from something stated in the Gospels? And the answer is clear and resounding “Yes!” to anyone searching for the truth of the matter!

Summary on the issue of a “quote”

- (1) The text does not say it is a quote!
- (2) It is never placed as a quote, either by red letters or italicized print, in any translation of the Bible of which I know!
- (3) It does not grammatically or linguistically match anything stated in the Gospels on the subject of marriage and divorce!
- (4) The facts obviously do not prove it is a “synopsis”! This aspect of the subject is not taken up by Christ in the Gospels.
- (5) No one has even professed to have found it in the Gospels! No one has ever pointed to the specific verses in the Gospels which contain the same thoughts as expressed by Paul.
- (6) It remains in the realm of a forced *conjecture* or *supposition* which has never been—and can never be—substantiated!
- (7) Furthermore, we should remember that the rest of the counsel of Paul, in the allowance of divorce by unbelievers, is actually contradictory to certain things Christ said in the Gospel accounts about immorality being the only grounds for divorce in the Kingdom Age!

Most every mistake men make in biblical doctrine rests upon a faulty, untested assumption. The assumption that in 1 Corinthians 7:10 the apostle Paul is only quoting something Christ gave in the Gospel accounts is proven to be a faulty assumption.

“But to the rest, I, not the Lord, say; . . .”

(1 Cor. 7:12)

In verses 10 and 11 the apostle Paul reveals a direct “command” from the Lord, as the Head of the Church, on the subject of marriage and divorce for two believers. In other passages in this same chapter Paul tells us he has no direct “command” from the Lord on certain issues. Such is the case on the question of remaining single in verse 6. Here Paul says, “But I say this as a concession, *not as a commandment.*” Again, on the question concerning virgins (verse 25) Paul said, “Now concerning virgins: *I have no commandment from the Lord*; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy.” In verse 40 Paul tells us that his “judgment” is not to be taken as mere whimsical opinion, but rather as given under the direction of “the Spirit of God.”

Thus, the meaning of verse 12 is simply that Paul is telling us that this section is not a direct, miraculously-given “command” from the Lord. Rather, this is Paul’s own inspired, apostolic judgment on the matter. Paul is not saying, as the Mormon Church contends, that in one place Christ speaks, whereas in another place a mere uninspired man speaks. Nor is Paul saying that in one place he is quoting from the Lord in the Gospel accounts, whereas in another place he is definitely giving a “new revelation,” wherein there is now allowance for divorce between the believer and the unbeliever. Actually, in both places—that wherein the “command” originates from the Head of the Church, and that which originates from his own inspired judgment—they each constitute *new directives* for a *new company of people*, “the Church which is Christ’s body.”