Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage, Part 2: "…Except for Porneia…" (Matthew 5:31-32)

Summary of last week:

- Marriage (Gen. 1:27; 2:22-24; Matt. 5:31-32; 19:1-9; Mk. 10:9; Lk. 16:18; Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7) is: (1) God-instituted and God-directed, (2) a monogamous relationship in the form of a covenant, (3) a heterosexual relationship, (4) involves leaving and cleaving, (5) is a one-flesh relationship that binds a husband and wife until death, (6) a divine covenant, institution, and vocation.
- God provided the Mosaic Law as a concession to sinful Israel, to reward righteousness, discourage and punish wickedness, and protect the nation because through Israel, the Messiah would come. It was never intended to be permanent and was given because of transgression (2 Cor. 3:1-8; Gal. 3:19). It made it more difficult for sinful men to divorce their wives, as they are required to provide a certificate of divorce with specific details for the divorce (Matt. 19:1-9; c.f. Deut. 24:1-4):
  - In this certificate of divorce, the husband is: (1) required to provide his wife with a document of divorce, (2) to release her from all domestic obligations, (3) not allowed to interfere with her future husband if she marries again, and (4) not permitted to re-marry her again, even if her new husband dies.
- The concession of divorce is not the prescriptive will of God but His will of permission because of the hardness of the hearts of men (Matt. 19:8). God's design is no divorce.

Four Views on….Except for Porneia (Matthew 5:31-32)

Porneia: as a noun, it is used in 24 verses in the NT.

- The root word means "to sell," which is to offer one's body for a price. It can also refer to sexual aberrations, such as homosexuality (Rom. 1:20) and incest (1 Cor. 5:1). It was generally used to refer to sexual behavior by single people who were committing fornication, though it is a broad term that includes broader applications of sexual immorality.

1. Unfaithfulness during or before the betrothal period (Deut. 22:13-21)

Understanding the Jewish culture and formal stages of betrothal and marriage:

A. The signing of the ketubah (marriage contract): the soon-to-be groom and father of the bride would enter a contract and pre-arrangement that established all the details and pre-requisites that both parties were required to meet:
   - The ketubah was legally binding. The groom, bride, and bride's father would know what was expected of all parties during the betrothal period. The groom expected his bride, most importantly, to be a chaste virgin.
   - As soon as both parties reached the arrangements, the "betrothal" period began. The groom was expected to provide the father with a bride price (2-3 years' worth of wages to compensate the father for the economic loss of domestic activity).
   - The betrothal period is not the same as our "engagements." Legally, they are married, although they have not consummated the marriage bed (copulation).

B. The chuppah (sexual consummation/copulation):
   - The consummation was often at the bride's home (bridal chamber). Within the bridal chambers, there would be a bed with the chuppah (cloth/linen). The party of the groom would be within a short distance of the bridal chamber (outside) to receive the good news: the hymen is broken through copulation and the chuppah is stained with blood. The groom handed the chuppah to a groomsman, who would present it to the bride's father for safekeeping.

Why is this important? *This is the evidence of virginity* (v.13-17):

- If the husband, at some point in the future, tried to divorce his wife on claims that she was not a virgin, the witnesses (groomsmen) and the father would be summoned before the courts. They would testify against the husband and present the evidence (stained chuppah). If the husband made this false accusation, he was beaten, fined, and not permitted to divorce her (v.18-21).

C. The wedding feast: after the consummation, the celebration would continue. However, there were apodictic and caustic potential scenarios that may have occurred which would have factored into the ketubah (Deut. 22:22-29).

Joseph and Mary (Matthew 1:18-21): Mary could have been stoned according to the law as a pregnant betrothed virgin, with no human father (Deut. 22:23-24; 25-27) if Joseph divorced her.

Summary: the chastity and purity of the woman (presumably) was part of the ketubah. If the groom discovered any element of the ketubah (contract) is incorrect, the marriage could be nullified. The Mosaic legislation, however, provides apodictic and casuistic circumstances to the chastity of the woman (Deut. 22:22-29).

The problem with this view: (1) Jesus is not referring to the betrothal period, but after the husband and wife have already entered the covenant of marriage i.e.; post-wedding feast. (2) The traditional Jewish ketubah and progression of the betrothal/marriage have no parallel in our culture (3) we do not live under a theocracy, nor the Mosaic law. (4) Jesus does not allow for discovered sexual promiscuity after marriage to be retroactive.

2. Unlawful marriages with Gentile idolators (Ez. 9-10; Neh. 10; Mal. 2-3):

- The Law of Moses prohibited mixed marriages with the heathen (Ex. 34:11-16; Deut. 7:1-4).
- Between the first and second governorship of Nehemiah in Jerusalem (432-431 BC), God raised the prophet Malachi to address and protest the spiritual corruption of the nation and the priesthood. The prophet announced that repentance is a prerequisite to blessing (Mal. 2:7, 10-14).
- When Nehemiah returned from visiting the Persian king (Artaxerxes, Neh. 13:6), he instituted reform and corrected the abuses Malachi had rebuked (Neh. 13:4-31). The nation was hypocritical (Mal. 2:17) and had not only neglected the tithes (3:7-9) but had also committed idolatry in interracial marriages and uncontrolled divorce (2:10-16). Ezra addressed it (Ez. 10), as did Nehemiah (Neh. 10:30), yet it happened again, as the nation dealt treacherously. They were an abomination because they divorced their Jewish wives for idolatrous heathen women (Mal. 2:11).
- Ezra issued a proclamation 25 years earlier for the returned exiles to gather in Jerusalem, and there he detailed their sin, commanded confession, and ordered the divorce (10:10-11). The people agreed.

Summary: Under the Mosaic law, marriages can be annulled lawfully before God when a Jew marries a pagan Gentile. The purpose was to preserve the Jewish nation from idolatry and participate in pagan worship with a forward-looking anticipation for the Jews to receive their promised Messiah.

Problem: under the New Covenant, there is no specific prohibition on marriage cross-culture. Not every Israelite was a true believer. Israelite men were prohibited from entering a covenant with certain nations. The New Covenant does not include this prohibition, nor does Paul in 1 Cor. 7. The unbeliever is not equated to the pagan nations. Additionally, there is no indication that they remarried.

3. Marriage among prohibited kin (Lev. 18; Matt. 19:9; Mk. 10:1-12)

- The Mosaic law prohibited uncovering the nakedness of kin, which is a euphemism for sexual relations (Deut. 22:30; 1 Cor. 5:1).
- The immediate context of Mark's account of the testing (Mk. 10:2) of the Pharisees is to trap Jesus and infuriate Herod. A year (or so) earlier, John the Baptist had been imprisoned and executed for rebuking Herod for his unlawful marriage to his niece.
- In 29 AD, Herod Antipas (ruler of Galilee) visited his half-brother, Herod Philip, on his way to Rome. During his visit, Herod Antipas fell in love with Philip's wife, Herodias, who was Herod's niece.
- Herodias divorced her husband, and Herod Antipas divorced his wife. The two violate the Mosaic Law (Lev. 18:16; 20:21). John the Baptist applied the Mosaic law, given to Jews, to a Gentile governor for his incestuous marriage (Matt. 14:1-12).
- Herod committed incestuous marriage, and presumably *porneia*, which, in substance, was alluded to before the Mosaic law (Gen. 19:30-38; Lot is not noted as marrying his daughters). John the Baptist rebuked Herod for incest and was subsequently arrested, imprisoned, and martyred. Perea is Herod's jurisdiction. If Jesus' comments on marriage reach the ear of Herod, they hope that Herod does to Jesus what he did to John: put Him to death.

Summary: in cases of incestuous marriage, (and unlawful marriages with Gentile heathen) divorce is commanded.

Problem: (1) it is difficult to demonstrate that Jesus, in Matthew 5:32, is taking this view of *porneia* and incest and (2) that His disciples would understand this narrow position.

4. Any unchastity, fornication, or adultery within the marriage