

# The DAILY JESUS NEWS #229

## Jesus' Final Journey to Jerusalem Jesus Teaches on Divorce for the Third Time MT 19.3-9 (Parallel Text: MK 10.3-12)

<sup>MT</sup><sub>3</sub> Some Pharisees came to him in order to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?"

<sup>4</sup> *"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE,' <sup>5</sup> and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN WILL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE BONDED TOGETHER WITH HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO WILL BECOME ONE FLESH'?" (Gen. 2.24)*

<sup>6</sup> *"Therefore what God has joined together, I command that people stop separating."*

<sup>7</sup> "Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"

<sup>8</sup> Jesus replied, *"Moses allowed you to divorce your wives because your hearts were so hard. But it was not this way from the beginning."*

<sup>MK</sup> Later on, in the house the disciples asked him again about this issue.

<sup>MT</sup><sub>9</sub> *"I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman is committing adultery."* <sup>MK</sup> *And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she also commits adultery."*

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = <sup>MT</sup>, Mark = <sup>M</sup>, Luke = <sup>L</sup>, John = <sup>J</sup>, Acts = <sup>A</sup>. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	Somewhere on the Road to Jerusalem
Timeline	March (Month 38)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage VII: Jesus' Ministry in Perea
	C. Jesus' Final Journey to Jerusalem
Title	7. Jesus Teaches on Divorce the Third Time

### COMMENT:

After traveling along the border between Galilee and Samaria, Jesus continued his final journey to Jerusalem by crossing back over into Perea--on the east side of the Jordan river. This was the route that most pilgrims to Jerusalem from Galilee chose to take. They wanted to avoid Samaria altogether.

Five important teachings/events in Jesus' life occurred during these final days in Perea. Three of them have to do with family issues in discipleship. Today's teaching--regarding marriage and divorce--is the first of them.

Jesus had already addressed the issue of divorce and remarriage twice--once in Galilee in **"the teaching on the Mount"** (MT 5.27-32... DJN #68), and earlier in Perea (LK 16.18). He taught the same thing in both instances, almost

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word for word. (Please refer to Jesus' first reference to divorce in MT 5.27-32. We will not repeat the same commentary here.)

This fact that the gospels record Jesus' teaching on divorce three times shows us how important the issue was for him, his disciples, and the early church. Once again, Jesus' identified himself with God's view of marriage, in contrast to his surrounding culture and pagan thinking about this crucial institution.

In today's reading the Pharisees took the initiative to approach Jesus, with the goal of catching him in a statement that would be worthy of the death they were actively plotting for him. In Jesus' day there were two common Rabbinical schools of teaching about divorce. Rabbi Hillel took the "liberal" position that Moses' command about divorce in Duet 24.1 authorized divorce for any reason at all, as long as the legal procedure was obeyed. Rabbi Shammai took the "conservative" position that divorce was not permitted, except for unfaithfulness (either attempted or successful). Jesus' position was closer to Shammai, but his rationale was uniquely God-centered.

The Pharisees who came to Jesus apparently followed Hillel's open-ended view of marriage that allowed divorce by the husband for any reason. (Wives were much more restricted in their right to divorce.) Being legalists, they operated under the assumption that as long as the letter of the law was followed in the divorce process itself, divorce for any cause was a righteous action. That was how they interpreted Moses' command regarding divorce in Duet 24.1...in their own self-interests.

Jesus, on the other hand, went immediately to God's design for marriage, which was a union of loving cooperation forged by communication and mutual respect. This intention for marriage had never changed with God. However, sinful men had failed in their God-given role and wives were being abused and taken advantage of in divorce proceedings by Moses' day. Therefore, Moses gave a command regarding the process of divorce to limit and control the damage that was being done, while that only reason the divorce was occurring in the first place was that hearts were too hardened in enmity against their partner to be loving in their actions any longer.

Jesus went to crux of the matter by saying that divorce is a matter of the heart, not a legal process. If a person is merely seeking a divorce in order to be remarried to another person, there is no way to make that action into something good. Under Hillel's teaching, there was absolutely nothing wrong with such an action as long as the paperwork was handled right.

Jesus was telling them, and us, that desiring another person enough to divorce a faithful marriage partner was in itself an adulterous attitude toward one's existing partner. Proper paperwork did not purify a hardened heart toward one's existing mate.

Jesus was not teaching that all divorce is wrong under all circumstances. He WAS saying that his disciples are called to pursue God's design for oneness in their relationship because of their mutual relationship with him, not each other. **"Love one another as I have first loved you"** has profound implications for Christian marriage.

### APPLICATION:

Once again, we see the principle that discipleship is the process of adjusting our own thoughts, values, and attitudes to Jesus. Cultural views of marriage change. Our Lord's design and resources for marriage do not. Christians apply Jesus' **"as I have first loved you"** principle to every relationship of life, including marriage. That means we approach marriage with a different point of view than people who do not believe in Jesus as we do.

*How does Jesus' command to "love each other as I have first loved you" impact your present marriage, or family relationships today?*

*How can you specifically obey Jesus today, by expressing the same loving actions to your mate, or family members, that he has already extended to you?*