

The Government's Role in Marriage and Divorce

Rom. 13:1-2

Introduction:

- A. All are obligated to respect and obey civil authority – does this apply to marriage and divorce?
- B. The role of civil government in marriage and divorce is a relatively new issue.
 - 1. Perhaps partly caused by the relative ease with which one can receive a civil divorce.
 - 2. Perhaps partly caused by the what to do about a person who has been wrongfully divorced.
- C. A growing number of brethren are teaching that civil divorces are irrelevant to “real divorces.”
 - 1. Consistency demands that civil procedures in marriage are also irrelevant – most accept this.
 - 2. Thus, the real divorce or marriage is not on paper but what in the minds the people and God.
 - 3. One writer said that divorce papers “mean nothing to God and you may as well blow your nose on it and throw it into the toilet.”
 - 4. This is far-reaching and dangerous to the institution of marriage and souls of men and women.
- D. Before buying into this new doctrine one should consider certain Biblical facts and principles:

Discussion:

I. There Are Three God-ordained Institutions – Church, Home (Marriage), State.

- A. Marriage and government are universal and temporal and social in nature.
 - 1. The form of government is not specified but left to each society to work out.
 - 2. The means of ratifying and recognizing a marriage is not specified, but left to each society.
- B. Church is spiritual and eternal in nature – God more specific in matters pertaining to it.

II. The Nature of Marriage.

- A. Defined and ordained of God in the Beginning (Gen. 2:24)
 - 1. A relationship between a man and a woman – not between two men or women or man and beast.
 - 2. No individual, society or government has the right to redefine it.
 - 3. This definitions has survived:
 - a. “The legal union of a man and woman as husband and wife.” (Amer. Heritage Dict.)
 - b. “The formal union of a man and a woman by which they become husband wife.” (Oxford Press)
- B. A Covenant (Mal. 2:14), and as such it must be ratified (Gal. 3:15).
 - 1. Ratification processes have differed in ages and societies, but is formally and publicly ratified.
 - 2. Neither a covenant nor its nullification is a private or mental act.
- C. Much “marrying and giving in marriage” and in scriptures – no specific procedures.
 - 1. When a specific is mentioned differed often from others.
 - 2. Herod had married brother's wife – by what procedure? (Mark 6:17)
- D. By passing civil and societal procedure and ratification throws the institution of marriage into chaos.
 - 1. Two people can be married in back seat of a car under the stars and before God.
 - 2. One can divorce another by simply mentally repudiate his marriage with only God as witness.
 - 3. How could a community or a congregation know who to treat as married or divorced?
 - 4. Governments and societies determine when and how people are married and/or divorced
 - 5. God determines if each marriage or divorce meets his approval – according to his law.

III. The Distinction Between “Real” Marriages and Divorces and “Apparent” Is Modern Nor Biblical.

- A. Bible recognizes “marriages” in various cultures and societies as “real.”
- B. Some were unlawful (according to God's law) but real non the less
- C. Such distinctions make applying Matt. 19:9 a joke.

Conclusion:

- A. God's will on marriage is simply stated – man has complicated it and caused controversy.
- B. We had better get it right, because souls are at stake.