

RE: MARRIAGE, DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

(A REBUTTAL TO BROTHER ASAOLU WRITE - UP ON MDR)

In writing this rebuttal/study I wish to sincerely thank brother Olumuyiwa Sunday Asaolu ,for his keen interest in studying and daring a lonely path which many older Christians venture not; the courage to be different on conviction. However I undertake a review /rebuttal of his article on Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage with the highest sense of responsibility to stick to the truth of God's word in its proper interpretation void of extremism I will neither go to the left nor to the right. In other to be thorough and unambiguous, I will carry on this study in the following order:

(1) Introduction

(2) Point by point rebuttal (where I disagree with him)

(3) Answers to his questions

(4) Biblical exposition

(a) Word study

i. What constitutes 'Marriage'?

ii. What constitutes 'Divorce'?

iii. What constitutes 'Fornication' as used in Matt5:32;19:9

(b) Exposition on

I. Deut 24:1-4

II. Ezra 10:1-3, 10,11

III. Matt 19:1-12; 5:32

(c) Summary of my exposition

(d) Conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

I agree in totality with bro Asaolu's introduction. Thus, when he said "it is the eligibility of a divorcee to remarry that is usually debatable when the circumstances of the divorce are scrutinized "...." We may not easily understand the discussion between Jesus and the Pharisees on MDR without the background information from the Law of Moses ...".

He is right. However, the basic question is how we understand the Law and the prophets? I will attach his (Asaolu) initials as SOA to quotations from his article, while my rebuttal will carry my initials JRO

(1) In trying to define what makes up a divorce, bro Asaolu declares that to "...divorce a spouse is to legally renounce a marriage, go apart and break the oneness union repudiated and forsake the vows, and to be relieved of marital obligations" (4).

JRO; The above definition is too broad and over encompassing of what God sees divorce to be in the Bible. Though bro Asaolu quoted the three step processes of divorce in Deut 24:1. However, I disavows that this is the strict meaning and dictates of a scriptural concept of divorce. I recommend that you read my exposition on what constitutes "divorce." The Bible teaches that God has placed restrictions on the marriage relationship. We find these restrictions in both the Old and New testaments. These restrictions emphasizes that God's approval is a thing that should be sought for in any marriage and anyone entering into marriage should have God's approval. If marriage does not have God's approval, it is not marriage as God intended it, it should be regarded null and void, by repenting of such illicit relationship and not seeking divorce as taught by God (Mark 10:11-12). A marriage may take place and not be "what God has joined together." It is a Marriage but does not have God's sanction. In Ezra's days, mixed Marriages had taken place (Ezra 10:1-4; Neh 13:23-27). The Israelites disobeyed God's Law of restriction placed upon them, therefore those relationship instead of been "what God has joined together let no man put asunder," they were already marriages which NEEDED TO BE PUT ASUNDER (Ezra 4:10, 11). Precisely therefore, in the scriptural marriage, divorce is "putting asunder" of what God had joined. In unscriptural Marriage it is still a "putting asunder"but one which needs not to be done. Not all putting away will amount to divorce in the sight of God (whether legal process are being followed or not). For a divorce to be scriptural, it must have God's approval. Bro Asaolu's definition is challenged here because it never separated the scriptural and the unscriptural make up of what divorce is all about.

2. In a bid to justify his view on marriage and divorce, brother Asaolu advanced the foundation for basic tenets of his teaching, which is NO DIVORCEMENT IN SCRIPTURAL MARRIAGES, my brother (SOA) posited "being tempted by the Pharisees, Jesus would have not contradicted God's law commanded via Moses. He went back to the beginning to reveal the mind of God on marriage. The exception clause He granted for one to put away a spouse, should correspond to the one actually commanded by Moses..." (5)

JRO; I have read the above assertion over and over, and could only draw a conclusion that bro Asaolu meant that the exception clause disclosed by Jesus (except it be for fornication Matt 19:9) and the Mosaic divorce clause (... He had found some

uncleanness... Deut 24:1) must be one and the same thing. This is so, for so long as he failed to make any Biblical exegesis on the passage at this point to clarify what he actually meant. On reading further his article, one is no longer kept in doubt as to the meaning of his words. On page 8, SOA posited "Recall the word fornication generally means sexual immorality in all its various forms and is regarded as sexual uncleanness- 11Corinthians 12:21, Eph 5:3, Col 3:5, Jude 2:7. Also specifically refer to sexual activity between persons who are not lawfully married (1 Cor 6:16-18, 10: 8; Gal 5:19). Christ thus explained the uncleanness envisaged in Deut... "

I am at sea on how bro Asaolu arrived at the above conclusion. It is a simple conjecture in his mind that led to such conclusion. The phrase translated UNCLEAN thing in Deut 24:1 is dabharervathit literally means "a matter or thing of nakedness"- (Strong, 220). The phrase is vague, it is intentionally vague because the precise nature of the cause of divorce is not under consideration in this passage at all (more on this in my exposition of the passage). That adultery was not the "unclean" thing is supported by Hebrew scholars who noted that:

The meaning of this expression as a ground of divorce was disputed even among the Rabbins. Hillel's school interpret it in the widest and most lax manner possible, according to the explanation of the Pharisees in Mt 19:3, "for every cause", the transgression of a thing; but this is contrary to the use of the word, to which the interpretation given by Shammai adhered more strictly (by interpreting the "unclean thing" as adultery). Adultery, to which some of the Rabbins would restrict the expression, is certainly not to be thought of, because this was to be punished with death (Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament).

Yes uncleanness means a matter of nakedness in that context as used, but to determine and conclude that it is fornication or adultery is a mere supposition. The passages quoted (2 Cor 12: 21 Eph 5:3 Col 3:5: Jude 7) none said uncleanness is fornication. I would be happy if our brother would do an exegesis that would amount that the "unclean thing discussed in Deut 24:1-4 is fornication and as such fornication could only be committed by those whose marriage are illicit before God and those who have the right to divorce in the Mosiac divorcement are those whose marriages are illicit ab initio. His conjectures are mere supposition.

SOA; "some have traditionally sought to justify divorce of a lawful marriage (and possible consequent remarriage unto another spouse) by using exception clause based on certain interpretation of Matt 19:19 and 1Cor 7:12-15. The idea is that one may divorce and remarry if:

- (a) His or her spouse becomes guilty of adultery
- (b) S/he has an unbelieving partner who wants to abandon the union because of

religious differences "... Brethren, it seems many things are being read into them that are not there yet with excuses and assumptions leading to human traditions and that make God's word of no effect".

JRO; At this point, let me state my agreement to brother Asaolu to the effect that many have read into those aforementioned passages as personal opinion, but I disagree with his presupposition that point (a) above, is a human opinion. Jesus said it and provided the exception and not of a human being; that is the basic thrust of Matt 5:32 and Matt 19:3-9.

In the next place, brother Asaolu proceeded to dwell on lessons on Matt 19:9

SOA; "Jesus says one is unfaithful to the marriage vows and partner if s/he divorces a spouse and marry another person. He also says what would make one guiltless or justified is if the action was **PROMPTED** or **PRECIPITATED** (emphasis mine) by reasons of "fornication/sexual immorality "

JRO; It would appear ordinarily that our brother was stating the very words of Jesus ,but his assertion above becomes a suspect in the Light of his following thoughts and "supposed" exposition meant to bring out the lesson on Matt 19:9; he drew up a three supposed view canvassed by men.

(a) SOA; "Anyone in a marriage may only divorce and marry another, provided the partner engaged in premarital sex or sexual immorality before their wedding, otherwise such commits adultery. The guilty party who is put away will be committing adultery if such remarries". He cited the claim of this school of thought as reliant on Matt 1:18-25 to buttress this claim, Joseph's attempt to put Mary away secretly.

JRO; I agree with brother Asaolu that that view is foreign to the words of Christ. Christ was answering questions concerning the putting away of one's wife and not an action done by would - be married people.

(b) SOA; "Anyone in a marriage may only divorce and marry another provided the partner committed adultery /sexual immorality after their wedding, otherwise such commits adultery. The guilty party who is put away is considered married in the eyes of God, so whoever marries such again commits adultery" (I believe wholeheartedly that this view is scriptural and the whole truth presented by Jesus -JRO). Brother Asaolu repudiated this clear, unambiguous truth with the following points; "... If true, it implies

(1) Jesus contradicted the prevailing Mosaic Law that specified **death penalty** not divorce for adultery in Lev 20:10 & Deut 22:22

JRO; Jesus would have contradicted Moses if He was not a Higher authority to Moses. Secondly, the Law was only for so long as God permitted it. Thirdly, what Jesus said would only be in effect after his death (Heb 9:17). Fourthly, Jesus never told them that it was sinful to stone to death anyone caught in adultery. There is therefore now no contradiction in terms of the words of Jesus. He enjoined people of that time prior to his death to keep the Law and not their traditions (Matt 15:1-9)

SOA; (2) "The said divorce is partial and against Deut 24:2 as God (supposedly) see the original marriage subsisting since He purportedly join one person(guilty) to another (the innocent) who is loosed from their marital union."

JRO; Since brother Asaolu is interpreting Matt 19:9 to mean only unscriptural (illicit)marriages that are to be divorced he see "contradiction" and "absurdities" in the correct reading of the passage. Why accuse true exegetes of partiality against Deut 24:2? A proper exegesis of that passage will help our brother not to see such. Here is what the passage says: "And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife "- Deut 24: 2 was not talking about guilty or innocent, but choice (of the man) and freedom (of the woman). How can God declare a woman guilty just because her husband finds something unclean about her? The matter of guilt (and its punishments) in marriage is dealt with in Deut. 22. 13-30. Guilt only comes in where there is sin, fornication in the context of Matt. 19. Many English readers are misled with the KJV and even the ASV rendition. Since I am going to be doing an exposition on Deut 24:1-4, I will only throw a little light here. The KJV rendition almost made it means that a second marriage is the recommendation here, alas it is not so. There's somewhat a violation of grammatical rule in the KJV and many translations. This rule is the "IF" "THEN" part of a proposition; it is called the protasis ("if" part of a proposition). The KJV erred in making the apodosis come in verse 1. The first three verses are the protasis of the passage while verse 4 contains the apodosis. The significance of this fact will be made clearer in my expository work (Deut 24:1-4) in later part of my write up. Her second marriage constitutes defilement because it is adultery. So the charge of partiality against the divorced guilty party based on this second school of thought (which I consider very scriptural) is not sustainable..

(3)SOA; "Jesus thereby endorsed divorce of a lawful marriage and negated His earlier statement; " what therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder."

JRO: Jesus simply allowed fornication as a ground for the dissolution of what God had hitherto joined on the condition that both parties will abide by His laws which, unfortunately, a party has betrayed. Did Jesus not also allow eating every food which God earlier prohibit? Jesus never negated His statements; "what therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder."Man has no power to put asunder a scriptural

marriage. Remember, that the question was - is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? Jesus answered - not at all, however He brought an exception to it by himself and not man. Bro Asaolu arguments at this point arrays one verse against another. When one divorces for scriptural grounds (because of fornication), he is not guilty of putting asunder what God has joined? He is not putting away with his own authority or hands. Take a closer look at the following example. A certain man is appointed an elder because he meets biblical qualification. Just because a preacher appointed him or sets him in that office does not make him a scriptural elder. What if the man appointed was not really qualified? Does God recognize him as a godly elder? The preacher only facilitated in the Holy Spirit ordination (Acts 20:28). He is not appointing by his own hand.

In order words, in any grammatical construction of this kind, the anti -thesis would be true. Who is it that commits adultery? What he? Is it every he? No! It is he that put away and remarried not for the sake of fornication. We understand this rule of grammatical construction in other passages e.g. John 3:3 "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God ". The general statement is - he cannot see the kingdom of God. But what he?Every he? No! Only he that is not born again. So who is he that put asunder what God has joined together? Every he? No! But "he that shall put away his wife and be married to another except it be for the cause of fornication, commits adultery." I hope bro Asaolu gets this clear and give up his objection at this point.

(4) SOA; Jesus later contradicted himself on the matter by His command stated through Paul in 1Cor 7: 10-11.

JRO; No Sir, there's no contradiction here. Paul wasn't discussing the totality of marriage but of some prevailing circumstance that were capable of affecting the marriage relationship. He emphasized that divorce is not God's choice; however for reasons best known to Him, He allowed it not as a **requirement** but as **permission**. Paul here, is not negating the exception clause, but simply re-emphasizing the dangers of breaking marriage outside God's approval and getting remarried. No contradiction whatsoever. The law of contradiction is a logical rule of things that cannot stand together and remain as one. Nothing in Paul's inspired words negates Christ teaching. I have said that dissertations is not a condition for remarriage except it is for the cause of fornication.

SOA; Another statement in the article under review /rebuttal that worth's attention is " the Lord gave a fundamental description of adultery in Matt 5:28 based on the intent of the law. In Matt 19 however, He describes marital states of adultery and not its punishment. **The gracious Lord interestingly used that occasion to reveal unto all a foretaste of forgiveness and divine judgment of adulterers and not stoning /divorce**

(emphasis mine)

JRO; In order to set the stage for his intended meaning of Matt 19:9 brother Asaolu posited that "Christ gave a fundamental description of adultery in Matt 5:28 based on the intent of the Law" (SOA) . Yes brother Asaolu you're right that the Spirit of the Law convict a man with lustful eyes against a woman. But the vital question is this; **is Christ saying that what constitutes adultery is only a lustful look upon a woman?** Did Christ teach in that passage of John 8:3-11 that it was sinful to stone to death the woman allegedly caught in the act of a adultery? How (corrected) did you arrive at forgiveness negating the divine exceptional cause? Since you based your explanation on the adulteress case, can you tell me that the Pharisee and scribes were right by bringing the woman to Christ? As far as this case was concerned, did they rightfully obey the law of Moses Deut 22;22lev 20;10? If they were right and were without sin, would they have committed sin stoning the woman to Death? Did Christ have the Authority to set the woman free under the Law of Moses?

Brother Asaolu, I put it to you that according to the passage, these were tempters who wanted to trap Jesus and they were not sincere people. Jesus posed a question to them because they were hypocrites as far as the woman and her sins were concerned. Remember this, that your argument would only be sustained if it is taught that the 'exception clause' is a requirement and not permission. You can't disallow what God allows.

Now to the third explanation offered in interpreting Matt 19:9, brother Asaolu wrote.

SOA; "Except the marriage itself was ab initio an act of fornication /sexual immorality, whosoever divorces and marry another commits adultery .Other divorcee who marries again commits adultery."

To elucidate and build on this interpretation he wrote, "The first part of the interpretation shows that a man is permitted to divorce his wife and marry another if and only if their marriage was unlawful and that they were not truly eligible before God in the first place."

JRO; This is an unfounded assertion or claim and could never have been drawn from the context of Matthew 19:1-12. Were the Pharisees asking Jesus of illicit marriage that ought not to be in the first case? Lev 18:6-18 you quoted are unambiguous as to whom an Israelite should not "uncover his/her nakedness (this is a Hebrew euphemism meaning 'have sex with '). I can't understand the hermeneutics with which you brought this supposition of yours to bear with Matt 19:9. Yes Deut 7:1-4 is clear as to the heathen nations which God forbade mixed marriages for Israel. You quoted this passage to mean that the Pharisees were asking Jesus if a Man could divorce an illicit marriage. Well since you didn't do any exegesis of Matthew 19:9 you're bound to fall into

this problem of eisegesis. It is an unclean thing for a man to have his brother's wife, God prohibited it. Therefore anything that results from it though called marriage is not sanctified by God. All you need was to establish by the context that the marriage address by Deut 24 and Matt 19 were illicit marriage. There is no slight hint of Deut 24 contemplating the divorcement of a marriage which in the first place was not God's ordained by using the bill of divorcement. Your contention that the bill of divorcement was issued is another great assumption which never put into consideration what constitutes marriage and what constitutes divorce. We must be rational in all our interpretation. The logical law of rationality states that we must only draw conclusions warranted from the available evidence. Brother Asaolu is assuming that the Marriage discussed in Deut 24 for which bill of divorcement could be issued are marriage God forbid. This is terribly strange. If our brother has carefully read the passages of Nehemiah and Ezra, he should have discovered that not only the wives were sent away, but also their children. Were the children equally divorced and given the bill of divorcement? And what does "according to the law" in Ezra 10. 3 stand for? Is it writing a Bill of Divorcement (which was meant for lawful marriage between Israelites) for a prohibited marriage or repenting by coming out from the unlawful union and making trespass offering as par (Lev. 6. 6 and Ezra 10. 19)? I believe it points to seeking forgiveness for the "...trespassed against our God, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land" and by putting "...away their wives; and being guilty...presented a ram of the flock as their trespass offering" as demanded by the Lev. 6. 6 for trespass.

It is obvious that both marriages are different: one met God's approval, but could not satisfy the man (hence Bill of Divorcement) while the other satisfied man, but did not meet God's approval (hence, trespass offering coupled with sending away wife and children) Ezra was dealing with a sinful relationship that called for repentance, not divorce. The length of time it may take to repent does not mean they were following the process of writing a Bill of Divorcement.

But, does "sending away" equates "divorcement"? The answer is NO! The Hebrew in Ezra is "yatsa" and means "to cause to go, to go away (Strong 3318). While the word used in Deut is "keirtut." The context did not imply Bibl of Divorcement; it is brother Asaolu who is reading it into the passage and using his assumption to sustain a false premise. Well more on the Ezra's topology in my exposition of Ezra 10.

The third point of interpretation which bro Asaolu believes is not taught in Matt 19:9 says that the law of forgiveness cancels the permission granted or to say that God granted permission for a man to put away what He never allowed ab initio stands against logic to so contend. Because bro Asaolu failed to do a word study on fornication, he formulated further assumption on what "except it is for fornication" meant. More on this later.

I agree on the point he raised on 1cor 7:1-40. He spent the next two pages addressing some objections. Points 1, 2, 3 are correct to the point of scriptural context on proper usage.

He concluded his work with further reinforcement of his assumed meaning of Matt 5:32; Matt 19:9. My exposition will deal with those assumptions as I think he misuse and misapply those scriptures.

ANSWERS TO BROTHER ASAOLU'S "REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR QUICK CONSIDERATION"

1. No(If you are alluding to 2Peter 1. 20, then you should know that it was not talking about interpretation of scripture, but origination of scripture)
2. No
3. Yes
4. Yes
5. For life (that is God's intention)
6. For better, for worse is vague and subjective unless defined by scriptures (ethics deals with right and wrong, moral values. It is sometimes better to cut off a cancerous breast than to live and die with it.)
7. Contemporary people say one thing and do the other; Scripturally, it is "according to the will of God."
8. Marriage is a cultural mandate given by God. A guy and a lady who survived a shipwreck on an island doesn't need any public proclamation. What matters is that it is honourable among the people and within scriptural parameters (Heb. 13. 4).
9. Marriage is a cultural mandate which God intends people do rightly for the good of the couple and the larger society. Where was consent when Jehoiada gave wives to King Joash (2Chron. 24. 3)? What about cultures where children were betrothed at adolescence?
10. No
11. No (except in the Old Testament where God spoke on the rape of a virgin.This lend credence to the cultural mandate of marriage.)
12. A conscious act

13. No (it only violates the marriage covenant)
14. It is not a requirement but a permission
15. God allow divorce; but he hates sending away one's wife (Malachi may not be referring to divorce since the word it uses simply means "to send away, cast away").
16. Yes (with such He is well pleased)
17. No
18. No
19. Not at all (only God has such a say and when he speaks on it that becomes final). He is the only one "to put asunder"
20. Yes
21. Yes, if divorce was not lawful. No, if divorce was due to sexual immorality
22. Monogamy
23. Yes (eligibility however must be 'in God's eyes')/ Matter of culture. Under Levirate marriage, wives are inherited by nearest of kin; nothing is said about the woman's right to refuse.
24. By men's authority
25. Never
26. Yes
27. Yes, unlawful marriages have no right to exist, they exist contrary to God's law of marriage
28. No (not lawful because it was not authorized by God)
29. He was pleased with it because it showed repentance on their side. He need not approve such because it was not lawful in the first case
30. It was based on "thus saith the Lord" because they had no right to embark on such marriage in the first case
31. Yes it is sinful; it is never a marriage in the sight of God. It is unfortunately called such by men

32. The God ordained divorce is for only the lawfully married partners for whom God has joined together but have violated the marriage covenant through extra-marital affairs – matt 19:9, 5:32. God's word never spoke of divorce for illicit marriage. However, these cohabiters can be counseled to marry/formalize the relationship.
33. No (Vs. 8 identified the wives they were asking of
34. There is never a right way to do a wrong thing. Man is to put asunder because it has no room to exist scripturally.
35. That that one has right to marry because hitherto he or she was not married in the sight of God but was simply cohabiting
36. Yes
37. Who joined him/her before that was 'approved' a 'divorced'. They were mere sinners who needed repentance and God never recognized them
38. If she/he were hitherto ineligible how did it get divorced?
39. If the opportunity is there fine, but not when he/she was put away for committing fornication in her earlier marriage matt 19:9
40. It is adultery if not for fornication
41. No (neither can his law constitute confusion)
42. Yes of course
43. For all ages in God's intention but circumstantial evidences accommodated the contrary hence the mosaic so-called permission
44. Men's hardness of heart.
45. The Jews misapplied the law as such Jesus corrected them (see my exposition in Deut. 24 and Matt 19:11-12)
46. Yes of course(it could be one of the reasons)
47. Sure
48. Christ answered them and provided an exception to His answers/God joins a couple who meets his requirement; He allows divorce when one violates his requirements.

49. No he gave a legislature that would come into effect after His death. He only faulted their hypocrisy and their wrong application of the law(For whom did he change it? For the Jews when, less than three years that law will pass away?)
50. No sir, 1Cor 7 is in the context of 'present distress' it was not the context of marriage, divorce for fornication. The two passage (Matt 19 & 1Cor 7) though related were in different context (The punishment for fornication in the Christian era is excommunication, not separation).
51. Yes, but such marriage was a defilement for her(Jesus made it difficult for men to divorce their wives "for any reason").
52. Yes
53. Christ prohibited remarriage in lawful marriage where divorce was not caused due to fornication
54. Where did you read that from? False assertion prove it from the passage (matt 19:1-12)
55. No, but the offended has a God given right to do so if he wishes (Matt 5:32; 19:9)
56. Yes
57. Yes (because there was no fornication/sexual sin involved)
58. It was being tolerated
59. Possible
60. No
61. No
62. Yes sir, for so long there was no divorce
63. Yes (because separation was not caused by divorce occasioned by the sins of sexual immorality)
64. Yes, if they want to be pleasing to God
65. Yes sir
66. No
67. It refers to renouncing one's faith (Christ)

68. Not at all
69. No
70. Depending on what brought about the separation
71. B
72. Yes
73. Yes
74. Yes
75. No
76. No
77. Yes
78. Not a sin
79. No
80. Only one
81. Pure assumption, where is such link in the passage that you derive such link?
State the rule of grammar that warrant such

PART TWO

WHAT CONSTITUTE 'MARRIAGE'

In our present world like it was in the Bible days but worst now, the word 'marriage' has been terribly abused. The word is used to describe many relationships ranging from monogamy, heterosexual, homosexual etc. Society uses the word "marriage" to denote relationships between males and females who God has not joined together. Even the scripture applies the term to relationships that man accepts and God rejects (Mark 6:17; Matt 19:9). So a true bible student must take care in thoroughly separating who God approved from generic usage. I do not intend to minimize the compliance with civil law as a necessary part of marriage. My chief concern is to determine from scriptures what constitutes marriage from God's view point.

"THE COVENANT"

The word “covenant” used to describe the husband and wife relationship is a key to understanding marriage. When the Israelites abandoned their wives for foreign women, the prophet Malachi rebuked them for dealing “treacherously” both with God’s covenant and with “thy companion and the wife of thy covenant” (Mal2:10-14) although the origin of the word “covenant” might be obscured, however, its inherent ideas are clear and lend important insight into the terms and character of marriage. A covenant is an agreement of binding contract between two or more partners. Therefore, the term of agreement is **RULE NO. ONE**. A covenant also called for an oath, a vow or a promise to fulfill the terms of the contract. God himself sworn by an oath to Abraham that He will bless the whole nation in the new covenant (Gen. 22:16-18; Heb. 6:13-15). Israel promised before entering the old covenant “All that Jehovah hath spoken we will do” (Ex 19:8). This will constitute **RULE NO. TWO**. Finally a covenant may require a formal seal of ratification to verify the agreement. Covenant at times might involve mere verbal confirmation or a sign as simple as a handshake. Covenants these days are ratified with signatures. Ancient times were with more fanfare and ritualism than modern contracts (see Gen. 15; 17:1-14; Ex. 24: 1-8; Heb. 9:18-20).

Understanding the nature of covenants is essential for specific analysis of the marriage contracts itself. The marriage contract, for example, demands, as God designed it, an agreement by a male and a female to be husband and wife to one another. The covenant must then be verbalized by a promise or oath ... a vow of faithfulness “until death do us part”. Finally, the covenant is completed by a sign or seal of ratification. How is all these spelled out in the Biblical teaching. God at the beginning said:

**“Therefore shall a man leaves his Father and his mother and shall
Cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24).**

Jesus spoke favourably of this law and confirmed its enduring nature when he discussed marriage and divorce with the Pharisees (Matt 19:5). According to God, marriage involves three commitments.

A man and a woman must leave father, mother, cleave unto one another, and unite themselves as one flesh. When these commitments are fulfilled God joins them together and a covenant is ratified. A closer look at each of these pledges will clarify the meaning of marriage.

- (1) **LEAVE:** Male and female who decide to marry must first “leave” father and mother. This means a definite and a final break is to be made between the new family and the two families from which the couples came. Fathers and mothers must not be permitted to interfere, regulate and dominate or control the marriages of their children. First and important term in the covenant.

- (2) **CLEAVE:** The Greek word used by Jesus (Kollao) means “to glue or weld together; to stick together like glue” emphasizes the promise or vow... “Until death do us part” (see Rom 7:1, 2; 1Cor7:39). “Whatsoever God join together let no man put asunder” (Matt 19:6). Cleave “implies acceptance of oneness in marriage and a vow or commitment to that union
- (3) **ONE FLESH:** The final action of marriage says “they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24) or as Jesus put it the two shall become (be) one flesh. Although, many argue against sex being the one flesh about, other things might be involved but it certainly include it.
- (4) **THE CONSUMMATION:** Then is marriage finalized? About two or three important passages indicates rather conclusively that the marriage is sealed and ratified by the “one flesh” relationship. Beyond civil proclamation, a male, a female seal their relationship by sexual union.

Observe the following:

1. God made marriage with three parallel actions: leave, cleave, be one flesh.
2. On what basis do we make two of these inherent and part of the marriage and deny the third?
3. After stating the three Jesus said “so that they are no more two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together let no man put asunder” (Matt 19:6). The two are not united by God until they leave, cleave and become one flesh

Finally, the case of Joseph and Mary clearly prove the difference between a betrothed and not married, only a request and promise (see Deut. 22:22-24). The two were “husband” and “wife” who needed a divorce to sever their relationship, yet they were only betrothed but not married (Matt 1:19, 20; Lk. 2:4, 5). Though they were husband and wife by virtue of the Mosaic Law, why are they not married? They were yet to come together as in one flesh. Marriage, it is clear, is consummated and ratified by sexual union.

I have proved beyond reasonable doubt what constituted marriage. Therefore the claim

that Jesus was discussing illicit marriage in Matt 19 as the marriages for which the “except for fornication” clause applied is without justification. We all know that exceptions are made to bonafide rules and not the contrary. BrotherAsaolucase fail here. Only marriages that comply with Jehovah laws are regarded by Him as true marriages. What therefore constitute marriage: (a) Agreement (b) the vows and their ratification and (c) God’s approval. The first two are the essentials of ANY marriage while all three are essential to a scriptural marriage.

WHAT CONSTITUTES “DIVORCE”

Is divorce just divorce? Or are all divorces pleasing and approved by God? In view of Mal. 2:16 which says that God “hates putting away” in view of our contention and proof above, can scriptural marriage be divorced? Brother Asaolu argues to the contrary, while in this rebuttal/study I am supporting the biblical view that says marriage can be divorced on grounds of sexual immorality, and the one putting away can remarry while the one put away cannot remarry. So what is divorce?

There are three Hebrew words used in the Old Testament to signify divorce. One is the verb “garish” which is used in Lev. 21:7, 14; 22:13; Num. 30:9 and Eze. 44:22. According to the lexicons it means “to drive out, cast out”. It is translated in septuagint by the Greek word “ekballo” “to cast out” (Francis Brown, The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon, p. 176).

Second is the noun *Kirethuth* from the verb *karath* which means “to cut”, the noun means “a cutting off” and is used in Deut. 24:1, 3; Isaiah 50; 1 and Jeremiah 3:8. In all these passages it is used in conjunction with the term for writing and is translated “a bill or writing of divorcement. It is rendered in the Septuagint by the Greek word *apostasion* (Brown, Driver and Briggs, 504).

The third term is *Shalach* which means “to send away, dismiss” it is found in Deut. 22:19, 29; 24:1,3; Jer. 3:8; Mal. 2:16. It is translated in the septuagint by the Greek word *exapostello* “to send from” (Brown, Driver and Briggs, 1019).

In the New Testament these words are used for the idea of divorce. *Apoluo* means “To loose from, sever by losing, undo to set free, to liberate one from a thing (as from a bond) Luke 13:12. Used of divorce ‘To dismiss from the house, to repudiate; Matt 1:19; 5:31, 7-9; Mk 10: 2,4, 11; Lk 16:18; Mk 10:12 (Joseph Henry Thayer, Grand Rapids: 1962) Page 65-66.

Arndt and Gingrich define *Apoluo* as divorce, send away *ten Gunaika*, one’s wife or betrothed, Matt 1:19; 5:3 if Matt 19:3, 7-9; Mark 10: 4, 11; Lk 16:18; Mk 10:12 (Arndt & Gingrich) 96.

The second Greek word translated divorce is the verb *Aphiemi* which mean to send or take away to bid of away or depart, of a husband putting away his wife. 1cor 1:11-13 (Thayer, 88).”In legal sense divorce *gunaike* (Arndt and Gingrich, 125).

Finally these is the word *Chorizo* to leave husband or wife (1Cor 7:11, 15) (Thayer) 674

What is the import of all the above? It means divorce is to put away, to end a relationship in this case a scripturally approved marriage contrary to the assertion of my Brother Asaolu that Jesus was discussing illicit marriage as only those which were to be put asunder. Apoluo as used in the Greek testament is an action taken by one party and not two parties each putting themselves away. Jesus frequent use of active and passive terms (the one who put away and the one who is put away) shows that He is thinking of one putting away. In the context of Jesus discussion in Mt. 19, one party does the putting away (active verb, apoluo) and the other party receives the action (passive verb, apolelumenen). Therefore divorce as used in the bible context, is the termination of scriptural marriage by one party, a person is either the one being divorced or the one doing the divorcing. Apoluo was used of Jesus sending away the multitude (Matt 14:22-23) Jesus actually sends them away by action. It is not after sending them away the multitude came back and send Jesus away. If Jesus was discussing illicit marriage a claim by the article under review, then God approves of illicit marriage by implication. It is action and consequence putting away and be put away. Rightful put away and wrongful (sinful) put away. Divorce in this context is the putting away which will amount to sin (Matt 19:9) and not sinful repentance in putting away a co-sinning wife or husband.

WHAT IS “FORNICATION”

(In the exception statements of Matt 5:32 and 19:9)

I have learnt long ago that the precise meaning of a ‘word’ must be determined by the context in which it is used (i.e. what is the subject at hand?) how it is used (i.e. is it in the place of a noun, verb or a modifier?) and by a consideration of its primary meaning when so used.

Again, to understand its precise meaning in Matt 5:32 and 19:9 we must be willing to stick with fundamental common sense principles for determining the meaning of words. The same principle we use every day. We might not have given thought to them but we use them every day.

THE MEANING OF FORNICATION

According to the English Bible (KJV), the word used by Jesus in Matt 5:32 and 19:9 in giving a lawful cause for divorce is “fornication” What does it mean?

According to Webster dictionary, the basic meaning is human sexual intercourse other than between man and his wife. Modern English Versions of the New Testament translate the word in these passages as “sexual immorality” (NKJV, 1984), “sexuality unfaith” (New Testament in the language of today). And “marital unfaithfulness (NIV, 1978) Greek language scholars who have studied how the word “fornication” (Greek “PORNEIA”) is used by God in the New Testament and how it was used by those who translated the Old testament from Hebrew and Aramaic into Greek, have concluded that “fornication” refers primarily to illicit sexual intercourse in general (Thayer 1976, 532). Yet another language authority “In a general context it may refer to prostitution, unchastely.....Every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse” (Arndt& Danker, 1979, 693). To “extra-marital sexual modes of behavior in so far as they deviate from accepted social and religions norms (e.g. homosexuality; promiscuity, pedophilia and especially prostitution), (H. Reisser, the New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, 1980 1:497)

They also noted that it has figurative usage as follows: “In accordance with a form of speech common in the Old Testament and among the Jew which represents the close relationship existing between Jehovah and his people under the figure of a marriage.... porneia is used metaphorically of worship of Idols “(Thayer 532).

What all these scholars have simply said is that “fornication” is a general term for sexual immorality, and that it is also sometimes used in a figurative way to refer to spiritual unfaithfulness. If I may pause to ask, can there be unfaithfulness where they have been no faithfulness hither to? When God’s people commits fornication against Him, is it not **the violation of the covenant God had with them** by joining themselves to idolatry? Would “except for fornication” not necessarily be that a covenant is violated by one in the marriage vow as a result of sexual immorality? Brother Asaolu can’t you see that clearly from the implication of the Old/New Testament usages of the word ‘PORNEIA’? Can’t you see that fornication is a variety of sin? Strong in his second meaning of PORNEIA and used in Matt 5:32; Matt 19:9 said “in Matt 5:32 and 19:9 it stands for or includes adultery;.....(Strong 2001, 207)while Jesus does give a special meaning to adultery in Mat 5:28 ‘where does He redefined fornication’? In the light of the above consider the “truthfulness” in brother Asaolu statement below:

1. “Recall that the word ‘fornication’ generally refers to sexual immorality in all its various forms and is regarded as **an uncleanness**- 2Cor12:21, Eph 5:3; Col 3:5, Jude 1:7”. Where does Brother Asaolu get his assertion that fornication is regarded as uncleanness in these passages? That is reading into the passages. There is nothing of such said in the cited passages, fornication and cleanness stands on their own. Even if granted that fornication is uncleanness, is covetousness not uncleanness? What about idolatry is it not uncleanness? It is

against the rule of biblical interpretation to build a doctrine on supposition and conjectures that are liable to other interpretation.

2. "It also specially refers to sexually activity between persons who are not lawfully married- 1Cor 6:16-18; 10:8, Gal 5:19 Christ thus explained the uncleanness envisaged in Deuteronomy and justifies why the woman may remarry after an approved divorce and the first husband could not take the wife back again" Yet another unwarranted conclusion by bro. Asaolu. The passages he quoted has no bearing with the issue of marriage and divorce been discussed by the Lord in Matt 19. Without proper exegesis of the passages he proceeded to assert that Christ explained the "uncleanness envisaged in Deuteronomy and justifies why the woman may remarry after an approved divorce" here is what he wants to force down the throat of the Lord- the uncleanness said by Moses is (a) fornication, (b) that is to say that the marriages under discussion was all along a case of fornication as such the woman/man put away can now remarry (with God's approval), (c) Christ was therefore saying that the marriages address by Deut. 24 and Matt. 19 were cases of fornication. I wonder how a careful student of the bible will read this kind of a thing from Deuteronomy and Matt. It brother Asaolu is right to claim that the woman divorced is not properly married to her husband hence she can now be married to another and be approved of God, and then I ask why does her second marriage constitutes defilement? (Deut. 24:4). More on this in my exposition on Deut 24:1-4. Where in Matt 19:1-12 did brother Asaolu see a remarriage of he or she put away for fornication? Can brother Asaolu do a word study/exposition to bring all those passages cited and arrive at his conclusion to which I have refuted about Deut 24 and Matt 19?
3. "Matt 19 exemption for instance applied to an initial incestuous marriage which when dissolved: each party involved may marry someone else". My above point and arguments has place the wrong on this action. The exemptions granted were for God's approved marriages and not God's rejected non-approved ones like incestuous marriages. There was no scriptural covenant. Jesus said and still saying, putting a scriptural wife or husband without it been cause by sexual immorality and been married to another is adultery. Brother Asaolu much proves that this is not the case from the context.
4. "It is evident Jesus deliberately said 'except for fornication' to refer to those not lawfully married before God. He would have again used the actual word adultery, **there in that exemption** if that was the intended message!"

Well any one reading me would have no doubt that whatever brother Asaolu intend to achieve with his assertions here, have been rendered invalid by the

lexicons as quoted above. Fornication is a variety of sexual sins. He owes us an exegesis of the word fornication and how it is restricted to the unmarried in that context to warrant his conclusion? If he does that, I will point him to scriptures that confirm Israel idolatrous life and fornication against God as nations figuratively married to Jehovah. By the way bro Asaolu knows the punishment for fornication under the land of Moses.

WHAT SAYS DEUTERONOMY 24:1- 4?

A lot of misunderstanding and misapplication has been done to this passage as a result of poor attention given to the passage through translations, how-be-it innocently. For example the KJV has the protasis (the "if" part of a proposition) consisting of the first part of verse one; "when a man hath taken a wife and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her....." Then it has the apodosis (the "then" part of a proposition) consisting of the last part of the verse one; "Then let him write a bill of divorcement.

The American Standard Version wanted to make some difference but the version makes the protasis "when a man taketh a wife, and marrieth her." The apodosis is "Then it shall be etc." The two versions differ slightly, but to me from the grammatical stand point they are wrong for making the apodosis come in verse 1.

Permit me to quote a near word to word internal translation as it is possible: "if a man takes a wife and marries her, and if it come to pass that she does not find favour in his eyes because of a matter of indecency and he writes for her a writing of divorcement, and give it into her hand, and she goes from his house and becomes to another man, and he hates her and the latter husband write for her a writing of divorcement and gives it into her hand and sends her from his house or if the latter husband who took her to himself for a wife should die, her former husband, who sent her away may not turn around and take her to be to him or a wife after she has been defiled, Because that would be an abomination before the Lord, and thou shall not cause the land to sin which the Lord thy god is giving to thee for inheritance." (The Torah, A modern commentary, '981, 1498 quoted by Bob Waldron).

What is the difference between these translations; the latter do have verses 1-3 as a continuous thought expressing a certain set of conditions and verse four expressing a conclusion. This view is supported by two notable Hebrew scholars on their commentary on Deuteronomy 24:1-5: "The four verses form a period, in which vv. 1-3 are the clauses of the protasis, which describe the matter treated about; and v. 4 contains the apodosis, with the law concerning the point in question" (Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament). Most translators and commentators agree that verses 1-3 are the protasis and verse four contains the apodosis. There is no doubt that this assignment is

correct. The significance of all these will be seen as you read on. There are real no difficulties in understanding these verses. They simply say that if a man marries a woman and finds some matters of impropriety or indecency in her, and he divorces her, and she marries someone else, that the first husband can never marry her again. Even though she may be divorced by the second husband or he may die, her former husband cannot take her back for his wife because she is defiled. Failure to observe this warning would cause the land God was giving Israel for an inheritance to be defiled.

The term translated “marry” is the verb *Baal* which means “to possess, to govern”. Baal is used in v-4 as a noun meaning husband, “her former Baal”. The verb is used only of the first marriage, and the noun is used only of the first husband. That the term *dabharervath*, is somewhat difficult to determine, the expression internal means a matter or thing of nakedness. Adultery is not implied here, since the Mosaic law was clear on the penalty of marital unfaithfulness. (Deut 22:22) since death is not even mentioned in connection with Deut. 24:1-4 in no way can it be assumed that the unclean thing could be adultery. The phrase is deliberately vague because the precise nature of the cause of divorce is not under consideration in the passage.

The ASV in verse 2 is misleading: “she may go and be another man’s wife.” The Hebrew literally says “And she goes and become another man’s”. In other words, when the ASV says she may go and becomes another man’s wife, permission is implied. There is no permission given for such a thing in this passage. Instead the law anticipated a thing and regulates one aspect of that thing, the return of a divorced woman, after a subsequent marriage to her first partner. There is neither permission nor approval implied on God’s part. There is an implication of tolerance of sufferance.

The Prophet Jeremiah sheds some light on our passage in Jer. 3:1, God was saying He would take Israel back even though she had been defiled by other “husband” through her idolatry.

If the second marriage defiles the woman, then how could that be God’s permission or approval? The term translated defile is used frequently in the Old Testament. It may refer to moral, religious or ceremonial pollution. Since no ritual can cleanse this defilement it is a serious matter. In what sense is she defiled? It amount to adultery. I say “amount to” because the law did not specify that it was adultery.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 anticipated the teaching of Jesus when He said “everyone that putted away his wife saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulterous: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committed adultery” (Matt 5:32) in the situation described in Deut 24, it was not the woman’s divorce that defile her but her second marriage. She was defiled even if her second husband dies. She was defile by her second marriage. What the law implied, Jesus specified when He said the

defilement of the second marriage is adultery. I am afraid that the way the Jews misuse Deut 24, so many are wont to use 1Cor 7:10-11 as a ground for remarriage.

Lest someone will contest the use of “husband” for the two men in Deut 24:1-4, I made bold to say God never recognized the second marriage. Though several terms are used in the O.T for husband (Ish, Enosh, Chathan, Rea, Baal), the word Baal is the one which emphasize the man’s possession of the woman who was his wife. As a verb, Baal is the most frequent term for marriage. The contrast in the passage between her proper husband (her Baal) and another man who becomes her husband (Ish) is clear, and its meaning should be obvious.

There is no conflict between Deut. 24:1-4 and the teaching of Jesus on marriage and divorce. When Jesus spoke in Matt 5:32 and 19:9, He was merely amplifying and correcting the law in Deuteronomy 24 and closing the loophole invented by the Jew through the hardness of their hearts. He made the point that whoever puts his wife away for a cause other than adultery makes his wife an adulteress (Matt 5:32). Jesus also showed that the man who put his wife away for a cause other than adultery and married another committed adultery himself (Matt 19:9). Conclusively Jesus only corrected the misapplication of Deut 24, and stated what was only applied.

Contrary to Bro Asaolu’s article that Jesus clarified what was anticipated by Mosaic law to the effect that only illicit marriages where to be divorce and fornication/adultery do not give right of divorce in scriptural marriages, Jesus taught that those who have the right to remarry while the first partners exist are those who put away sexually immoral partners. Again Deuteronomy only anticipated and regulated an aspect of a thing and never gave permission or approval for remarriage on any and every cause. Remember the woman return to her husband was only prohibited upon defilement. She is not defiled by divorce but her second marriage.

Is anyone still in doubts of this clear exposition? Let us now go to the popular “Ezra typology”

DIDTHE JEWS DIVORCE THEIR FOREIGN WIVES THEREBY CONFORMING TO DEUT 24:1-4

It is noted that during the post-exile period in the life time of Ezra the priest and Governor Nehemiah, some of the priest and Jews married from the nations for which God prohibited them not to marry. This the bible says: “Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them you have been unfaithful by marrying foreign women, adding to Israel’s

guilt. I therefore, make a confession to Yahweh the God of your fathers and do His will. Separate yourselves from the surrounding people and your foreign wives” Ezra 10:10-11.

I encourage all to remember that we have done sufficient work on what constitute a scriptural marriage and similarly that of scriptural divorce. Base on such knowledge, I proceed to ask the following three questions:

1. Did the Jews divorce their foreign wives?
2. What is the Mosaic condition for divorcement?
3. What is God’s rule on marrying foreign women?

My answers on the above come in these order:

1. The Jews under Ezra did not divorce those women because there was no marriage in the sight of the Mosaic constitution which forbids marrying such people:

“When the Lord your God brings you...you shall not marry their daughters...” You cannot divorce when the law didn’t approve the relationship as marriage.

2. The Mosaic Law stated that the man must see something unclean in the woman, NOT SOMETHING SINFUL OR AGAINST GOD’S LAW.

In Ezra, the men didn’t see anything unclean in their wives and children; it was Ezra who spotted ungodliness and unfaithfulness with the men. This was so because they by their acts violated Mosaic Law. Since brother Asaolu contend that Vs 3 implies conformity to Deut 24:1-4, it is proper we examine that verse vis-à-vis the total context.

- a. Shechaniah said “Now therefore let us make a covenant with God to put away all the wives (foreign-JRO) and such as are born of them (Vs 3a). Who was to make a covenant here? Israel including those guilty of this sin that has robbed on the nation. Why were the children to be put away? Did the Mosaic divorcement require such? They were put away because they constituted abomination to God (Nehemiah 13:23-30) for those children born to priest to remain and have entitlement to the Levitical priesthood and other specific benefits will amount to sin. Again if all these transgressors needed were Mosaic divorcement then the children will be spared.
- b. Shechaniah went further to say that this counsel should be “according to the counsel of my lord and of those that tremble at the command of our God; Vs 3b my lord here is Ezra and his faithful company. What was Ezra counsel Vs 10-11; “And Ezra the priest stood up and said unto them, ye have transgressed and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel. I now therefore make

confession unto the Lord God of your fathers, and do his pleasure and separate yourselves from the people of the land and from the strange wives". Was Ezra not aware of the Mosaic procedures? Where were they asked to write a bill of divorcement for foreign wives? These were illicit marriage that must be put asunder God never approved of them in the first case. Nothing like bill of divorcement.

- c. Schecaniah third clause was: "and let it be done according to the law" brother Asaolu without evidences concluded that "the law" here is Deut 24:1-4. I will waste no time here because I have provided beyond reasonable doubt that he is simply assuming. An assumption is not a proof of a thing. The law here is simply what God has forbidden mix marriage with these heathen nation and as such they should separate from these women and not give them bill of divorcement. There is no connection between Deut 24 and Ezra strange wives (Ezra 10:3).

3. What is God's rule on marrying foreign women? Many think it is totally prohibited for the Israelite to marry foreign women. No, just like divorce exemption by Christ, God specified those captured in war or bought as slaves (Deut 21:10-14). The men in Ezra could not have captured those women in war since Judah didn't have an army after returning from exile. Therefore, the separation in Ezra is not a case of divorcement according to Mosaic provision; it was repentance for ungodly living (cohabitation) and unfaithfulness to God's law (illegitimate marriage). Once again I have proved the case of Ezra Jews was not divorcement but pure repentance. The law in Deut was not teaching repentance from illicit marriage but the put away of a legitimate wife for whom God is a witness.

MATTHEW 19

Having spent so much time on divorce and fornication I intend to make my exposition of Matt 19:1-12 very brief. I have explained my points over and over. In Matt 19:8-9, it is recorded

Vs. 8 "He told them, 'Moses permitted you to divorce your wives (by giving her a bill of divorce for reasons other than fornication which would have resulted in death, not divorce) because of the hardness of your hearts. But it was not like that from the beginning"

1. Divorce was allowed by Moses where fornication is not the offense; God originally did not permit divorce for uncleanness though he punished Abimelech and Pharaoh for attempted adultery on Sarah.

Vs. 9 "And I tell you, whoever divorce his wife (by giving her a bill of divorcement

because of perceived uncleanness in her or for any other reason), except for sexual immorality (whose penalty would have been death not separation according to the Mosaic Law) and marries another, commits adultery.”

2. Which wife is under discussion here? Vs 8 shows it is the very one they would have given a bill of divorcement according to the Mosaic constitution, not a cohabitee. The Mosaic Law of Deut. 24.1-4 was not speaking about illegitimate marriage or cohabitation.
3. “...except for sexual immorality...” In other words, giving bill of divorcement to one’s scripturally wedded wife is only permitted where she commits fornication.
4. “...and marries another commits adultery.” Except the wife commits adultery, Christ made the bill of divorcement invalid. Hence, remarriage is null and void where fornication is not the ground for divorce.

From the above let me state it clear that it is a mere assumption on the part of anyone to say that “except for fornication” is addressing persons in illegitimate marriage. There is no contradiction between Jesus and Moses. God granted the exemption and not man. When scriptural marriages are divorced on grounds of fornication, it is done with God’s approval.

SUMMARY OF MY EXPOSITION

In order to clearly understand my work so far I draw attention to the following:

1. I have undertaken to refute the basic thesis of brother Asaolu’s paper on marriage, divorce and remarriage. In his article he posited that no scriptural marriage (marriages which are approved by God can be divorced for any reason. He interpreted the exception clause in Matthew 19:9 as referring to marriages that were by their nature and contraction illicit e.g. a marriage between siblings who hitherto never knew their family status. I have proved that this interpretation is wrong and unwarranted. To come to this conclusion, I proved
 - (a) That not all marriages are approved by God
 - (b) That for marriages to be lawful it must meet some basic criteria
 - (c) That these criteria were enunciated by God himself
 - (d) That marriage involves a covenant between two eligible partners in the sight of God.
 - (e) That the covenant is witnessed by God.
 - (f) That reference to “marriages which goes contrary to these criteria are aberration, and not approval by God.
 - (f) That only marriages that meet up God’s requirements are under the exception clause of Matt. 19
 - (g) That the Mosaic bill of divorce covers only legitimate marriages for which God is a witness.
 - (i) That no permission of remarriage is granted to the divorced wife

in the mosaic constitution

- (j) That a second marriage constitutes defilement to the woman.
- (k) That the marriages of the post exilic period to foreign women were contrary to the marriage law of God as such their unions were null and void before God even though socially accepted before Ezra's intervention.
- (l) That there was no bill of divorcements required for the dissolution of those marriages.

2. I have in the course of this review/rebuttal proved that marriages under discussion in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9, were marriages which were joined together by God. That man putting asunder means divorcing a marriage joined by God without His approval. Jesus granted the exception to the rule (any man that divorces his wife... and be married to another, commits adultery). Exceptions are made to rules and not the contrary. Thus the view that Jesus forbids the divorce of a scriptural marriage on the grounds of fornication falls to the ground.

CONCLUSION

Depths of gratitude to brother Asaolu, for courageously challenging our thinking capacity and knowledge base. I have presented my points very clearly to avoid been misunderstood. I urge our brother to rethink his interpretation and straighten his teaching to conform to scriptures and sound reasoning. Use concepts or terms as used in the bible context. Let us be more open to study and study tools. God bless you.

QUESTIONS/POSERS FOR ALL (provide scripture to support your answers or affirm scriptural silence).

Matthew 19. 3-9

- 1. Vs. 3 "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?"

Poser: God allowed the Jews to divorce for ANY reason: True/False

- 2. Vs 4-6 "And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' 5 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'? 6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

Poser: Jesus here was referring God joining cohabitators, not married couple: True/False

- 3. Vs. 7 "They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?"

Poser: The woman to be given bill of divorcement was not a wife, but a fornication partner: True/False

- 4. Vs.8a: "He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts,

permitted you to divorce your wives..."

Poser: Moses permitted them to divorce their fornication partner, NOT wife:
True/False

5. Vs.8b "...but from the beginning it was not so."

Poser: From the beginning, God allowed fornicating partners to continue in their cohabitation: True/False

6. Vs. 9a: "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife..."

Question: "Wife" here means a woman SCRIPTURALLY married to: True/False

7. Vs. 9b "...except for sexual immorality..."

Poser: this means divorce is allowed IN SCRIPTURAL MARRIAGE on the ground of sexual immorality: True/False

Ezr 9:1-2

1. Vs.1: "When these things were done, the leaders came to me, saying, "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."

Poser: This marriage is a violation of which of the Mosaic Law? (1) Deut. 24. 1-4 (2) Deut. 7. 1-4 (3) both

2. Vs2 "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."

Poser: Those Jews sinned by (1) marrying foreign women (2) cohabiting/living in fornication (3) both

Ezr 10:2-4

3. "And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, "We have trespassed against our God, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel in spite of this. 3 Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the advice of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law."

a. Poser: "put away" is equivalent to issuing bill of divorcement: True/False

b. Poser: children are to be put away under the bill of divorcement: True/false

c. Poser: "let it be done according to" which Law? (1) Deut. 7. 1-4 (2) Deut 24. 1-4 (3) both (4) none

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