



Jesus On Divorce

Mark 10:1-12

Barna on Divorce

- According to The Barna Group, Ltd., “In Barna Research Group studies, born again Christians are not defined on the basis of characterizing themselves as ‘born again’ but based upon their answers to two questions. The first is ‘have you ever made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in your life today?’ If the respondent says ‘yes,’ then they are asked a follow-up question about life after death. One of the seven perspectives a respondent may choose is ‘when I die, I will go to Heaven because I have confessed my sins and have accepted Jesus Christ as my savior.’ Individuals who answer ‘yes’ to the first question and select this statement as their belief about their own salvation are then categorized as ‘born again’” (<http://www.barna.org/cgi-bin/PageCategory.asp?CategoryID=8>).

Barna on “Born Again Christians”

- In surveying these “born again Christians,” Barna found that:
 - 85% believe “the Bible is totally accurate in all of its teachings.”
 - 76% believe they “personally have a responsibility to tell other people their religious beliefs”
 - 98% say their religious faith is very important in their life.
 - 60% have read from the Bible in the past week.
 - 61% attended church in the past week.
- At the same time...
 - 45% believe that Satan is “not a living being but is a symbol of evil”
 - 34% believe that if a person is good enough they can earn a place in heaven
 - 28% agree that “while he lived on earth, Jesus committed sins, like other people”
 - 15% of born again Christians claim that “after He was crucified and died, Jesus Christ did not return to life physically.”
 - 26% believe that it doesn’t matter what faith you follow because they all teach the same lessons (<http://www.barna.org/cgi-bin/PageCategory.asp?CategoryID=8>).

I. A Surprising Question about Marriage and Divorce (1-2)

- **A. The Historical Context (1-2a)**
 - In the white space between Mark 9 & 10...
 - John 7-11
 - Luke 10—18:14 – nearly 30 percent of Luke’s gospel.
 - 5 ½ months.
 - During those 5 ½ months Jesus has traveled to Jerusalem 3 times for two Jewish feasts and a third time on an important mission...
 - 1) To Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2—10:21; November 29 AD)
 - 2) To Jerusalem for the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22-39; December 29 AD)
 - 3) To Bethany to raise Lazarus (John 11:1ff; ca. February 30 AD)

I. A Surprising Question about Marriage and Divorce (1-2)

- In 9:33 Mark last has them in Galilee.
- Cf. Matt. 19:1 - When Jesus had finished these words, He departed from Galilee and came into the region of Judea beyond the Jordan.

The Final Journey to Jerusalem



Recent Conflict between Jesus & the Pharisees

- Sept/Oct – in Judea
 - John 7:32 – frustrated attempt to arrest Jesus at the Feast of Booths.
 - John 8:56-59 – an attempt to stone Jesus for blasphemy at the Feast of Booths.
 - Luke 11:37-54 – Jesus spoke a series of woes or pronouncements of judgment and damnation publically, while eating a meal with a Pharisee.
 - Cf. Luke 11:53-54
 - Luke 12:1-12 – warned the crowds about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees.

Recent Conflict between Jesus & the Pharisees

- Nov/Dec – Feast of Dedication
 - John 9 – conflict in Jerusalem after Jesus healed the blind man.
 - John 10 – Jesus called the Pharisees thieves and hirelings rather than shepherds.
 - Cf. John 10:22, 27-31, 39
 - Luke 15 – Jesus extends an invitation to the Pharisees in the parable of the Two Sons, but he characterizes them as equally in need of reconciliation with the Father as the prodigal.
 - Luke 16 – Jesus confronted the Pharisees about their love of wealth and essentially told them that they are headed to hell (Luke 16:14).

Recent Conflict between Jesus & the Pharisees

- Feb 30 AD – The Raising of Lazarus
 - Jesus confronted the theological system of the Sadducees by raising Lazarus from the dead and affirming a future resurrection.
 - Luke 18:9-14 – Jesus made it clear that the typical Pharisee had not been declared righteous before God.

I. A Surprising Question about Marriage and Divorce (1-2)

- “Testing Him”
- 1) They probably already knew Jesus’ previous strong teaching on the permanence of marriage (Matt. 5), and they probably hoped to show that He was at odds with Moses in the key OT text: Deut. 24:1-4.
- 2) They may have hoped to undermine His popularity with Jewish men by showing that He held to a very strict and unpopular view of divorce and remarriage.
- 3) They may have hoped to get Jesus arrested.
 - At one point during the previous 5 months...
 - Luke 13:31 - Just at that time some Pharisees approached, saying to Him, “Go away, leave here, for Herod wants to kill You.”

I. A Surprising Question about Marriage and Divorce (1-2)

- **A. The Historical Context (1-2a)**
- **B. The Cultural/Theological Context (2b)**
 - Cf. Matt. 19:3 - Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?”
 - All assumed Deut. 24:1-4 was the definitive OT teaching on divorce and remarriage.
 - Key phrase from Deut. 24:1 – “some indecency in her.”
 - Lit., “the nakedness of a thing.”

The Rabbis’ Debate

- The Jewish Mishnah:
- “The school of Shammai say: A man may not divorce his wife unless he has found unchastity in her, for it is written, ‘Because he hath found in her *indecency* in anything.’ And the school of Hillel say: [He may divorce her] even if she spoiled a dish for him, for it is written, ‘because he hath found in her indecency in *anything*.’ R. Akiba says: Even if he found another fairer than she, for it is written, ‘And it shall be if find no favor in his eyes.’” [m. *Gittim* 9:10]

Flavius Josephus

- In *Antiquities of the Jews* he writes:
- "He that desires to be divorced from his wife for any cause whatsoever (and many such causes happen among men), let him in writing give assurance that he will never use her as his wife any more; for by this means she may be at liberty to marry another husband, although before this bill of divorce be given, she is not to be permitted so to do. (IV.viii.23)."

Flavius Josephus

- In his *Life of Flavius Josephus* (75), he writes that while he (Josephus) was a young man Vespasian ordered him to marry a captive, "yet she did not live with me long, but was divorced...However, I married another wife at Alexandria."
- In the same work (76), Josephus says that "... I divorced my wife also, as not pleased with her behavior, though not till she had been the mother of three children... After this I married a wife who had lived at Crete."

Jesus' 12 Disciples on Divorce

- Matt. 19:10 - The disciples said to Him, "If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry."