

“A DIVORCED PERSON MAY NOT REMARRY” -- REALLY?

by Bill Reeves

Many brethren, who in the present controversy wrongfully accuse others of “mental divorce,” are quick to speak of “divorce” as the proper translation of the Greek word APOLUO. They usually quote versions that employ the word “divorce” instead of “putting away,” because how can they speak of “mental divorce” if they don’t use the word “divorce?”

Ignoring the context in which Jesus spoke of putting away a wife for just any cause (excepting fornication), a context in which no fornication is in evidence in the putting-away, these brethren loud and long assert that “no divorced person may remarry.” For alleged proof they quote the words of Jesus found in Matt. 19:9b, “and he that marrieth her when she put away committeth adultery.”

Well let’s see. A man goes to court and legally divorces his fornicator wife. Since he all along has been a husband faithful to his vows, he exercises the divine right to put a way, or repudiate, his unfaithful wife. The court grants the divorce, and declares both him and his wife as divorced. **Both are divorced**, according to the court!

So, the ex-husband goes and remarries. The ex-wife also goes and remarries. We all agree that with divine approval he may, but that she may not. Why may she not? “Because she is a divorced person,” we are told. (No, it is because God does not loose her from her marriage vows). But, **he also is now a divorced person!** (If anyone questions this, let him ask the court if just the woman in this case is divorced!) So, we have a divorced person remarrying!

“But **she** is the put-away person; **he** put **her** away, not she put him away,” comes the objection. Well, isn’t it argued by some brethren that divorce is action taken in a courthouse? (It can’t be “mental divorce,” you know!) And does not the judge in the courthouse declare **both of them** divorced? What happened in the court procedure produced **two divorced people**. In our scenario above the husband is scripturally permitted to remarry, so here, according to the court, you have a divorced person remarrying! These brethren who put so much emphasis upon civil procedure do not like the ramifications of civil procedure, one of which is that both spouses are now divorced persons!

The reason that this ensnares the false teacher is that he wants legal procedure (divorce) without legal consequences (the state of divorce for both parties). If, according to some brethren, one is not divorced until the judge’s gavel comes down, when it does come down **two persons find themselves divorced!** Now, may one of the two divorced persons in our scenario above remarry? Yes, but he is a divorced person!

What happened to the famous claim that “no divorced person may remarry?”