

UNCLEAN! OR THE “**BIG D**”: Divorce

by

Dr. Lewis R. Woodard

There is found in the Bible certain conditions that are to be met in order for the blessings of God to be manifest in the Christian's life. I believe we Christians often miss out on the true blessings of the Lord **1) by not following what He says to do, 2) by doing something He has said not to do, 3) by misinterpreting guidelines He has set forth in His Word.**

For this study I want to consider number 3 as listed above, namely “*misinterpreting guidelines He has set forth in His Word*”. I have attempted to simply let the Bible (KJV) speak for Itself in this study.

Certain facts need to be considered as we look into the study at hand:

1. FACT: there are local churches that refuse to allow someone to join the local assembly who has been married more than once. This, of course, means a person cannot join if they have been divorced.

2. FACT: there are local churches that will not allow a man to be a Pastor if he has been married more than once. This, of course, means he could never have been divorced. **(Of course, divorce is never mentioned in the Bible as to disqualify a man from being a Pastor.)**

3. FACT: there are local churches that will not allow a man to preach in the pulpit if he has been married more than once. This means he could never have been divorced. **(Once again, divorce is never mentioned in the Bible as to disqualify a man from preaching the Word of God: standing in the pulpit.)**

After considering these three (FACTS) scenarios, you may say: “*So what? That's what the Bible teaches, isn't it?*” Is it, or are these three scenarios simply following the traditions of men as set forth in the dogmas of men instead of based on the Word of God? Draw your own conclusions as we look at God's Word. God is the final Authority.



I. PHARISAICAL PHILOSOPHY

1) Pharisaical - Associated with Pharisees: *relating to or characteristic of the Pharisees;*

2) pharisaic – pharisaical = *self-righteously obsessed with rules: acting with hypocrisy, self-righteousness, or obsessiveness with regard to the strict adherence to rules and formalities.*



What is “philosophy”?



1) Philosophy is a set of beliefs or aims: *a precept, or set of precepts, beliefs, principles, or aims, underlying somebody's practice or conduct;* **2) school of thought:** *a particular system of thought or doctrine (teaching); guiding or underlying principles;* **3) a set of basic principles or concepts underlying a particular sphere of knowledge.**



Notice the number three definition of philosophy: *a set of basic principles or concepts underlying a particular sphere of **knowledge**.*



Notice the last word “*knowledge*”. Knowledge can come from many sources: books, what we hear, what we see, what we smell, what we taste, what we touch, tradition, and etc.

Knowledge certainly can come from these sources, but where is true knowledge found? **Proverbs 2:6** *For the LORD giveth wisdom: **out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.***

It is out of God's mouth that true knowledge comes to us. Where do we “*hear*” what God has to say? We hear what God has to say only from His Word, the Bible. True knowledge comes only from God!

We know that we do not hear the “*audible*” voice of God, but we do know we “*hear*” Him through His Word (Romans 10:17).

Romans 10:17 *“So then faith cometh by **hearing**, and **hearing** by the word of God.”*

So, **TRUE** knowledge comes from God.



Notice that part of the definition of the term “*pharisaical*” is “*Self-righteousness; the strict adherence to rules and formalities*”. In other words, a person who is pharisaical is a person who holds to personal beliefs, a person who believes they are morally superior, and one who believes in their own personal virtue. Now, don't misunderstand. A person does not have to have pharisaical tendencies in order to hold to traditions not found in the Bible.

To have a pharisaical philosophy you would **1)** believe you are morally superior, **2)** believe in your own personal virtue, and **3)** hold to personal man made beliefs (***traditions***) instead of drawing upon God's knowledge found in His Word.

We have become so pharisaical in expressing our “*pharisaical philosophies*” that we seem to have forgotten that what we read in the Bible has already been translated (**actually transliterated in the KJV**). As humans, we want to add our “*two cents*” and tell people what God is **really** saying in Scripture. God does not need our help. What He says in His Word is what He says, period! People, even Baptists and others, have become so “*Roman Catholic*” in their thinking they actually don't think for themselves when it comes to understanding the Word of God. Instead of depending on the Holy Spirit for guidance, people have more and more come to depend on what “*man*” says (tradition). Rome has said for decades that if you want to know what God says then you must listen to the Pope [God's representative on earth], or to one of the Pope's “*underlings*” [Catholic priests]. This type of thinking on the part of Rome, and people, is why the Reformation took place.

God has given you a “*spiritual*” mind [if you are saved] and He wants you to use it. God has given mankind His Word and he wants mankind to understand it.

Through the Word of God, a man/woman can understand that he/she is a sinner (Romans 3:23). A man/woman can learn from the Word of God that he/she must pay for sin [Romans 6:23a = death: for all eternity], **or** accept what God offers, the **gift of eternal life** through **Jesus Christ** (Romans 6:23b). Instead of man paying for his sin, Jesus has paid for him **if** he accepts Christ as Saviour. After a person receives Jesus as Saviour (Romans 10:13) that person can now understand the teachings of God through the Holy Spirit (John 16:13). In fact, it is the Holy Spirit who guides the unsaved person to Jesus letting that person know he can be saved. Then, after a person is saved, that individual can understand for him or herself what God is saying in Scripture. As a born again person, you now have the ability to understand what God has to say when you **STUDY** His Word (2 Timothy 2:15). 2 Timothy 2:15 is saying you are to be a workman who studies the Word of God. You can't just take for granted that a “*casual*” reading of the Word is going to open God's “*storehouse*” of knowledge. You must **WORK AT STUDYING THE WORD OF GOD** in order to understand what God has for you as a Christian. You cannot open your mouth and expect God to fill it with His Words until you work at filling your heart and mind with “*thus saith the Lord.*” Then, you might ask: “*Isn't 2 Timothy 2:15 written only to preachers?*” Read Psalm 1:1-2 to see what God has to say about the man, not only the preacher, who meditates on and studies the law (His Word).

Psalm 1:1-2 *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law [the Word] doth he meditate [studies and ponders] day and night.*

You might not have thought of it before, but humans by nature are lazy. Don't be lazy when it comes to studying God's Word. Try studying the Word for yourself instead of listening to “*pharisaical philosophies.*”



What did Jesus have to say about Pharisees?

Matthew 23:1-4 “*Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, 2 Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: 3 All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, **that** observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. 4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay **them** on men's shoulders; but they **themselves** will not move them with one of their fingers.*”



II. DISQUALIFIED?

Some people are no different than the Pharisees. Where is it written in God's Word that a divorced person is disqualified from being a church member, as some churches teach? Where is it written in God's Word that a divorced man is not allowed to hold any office in the local church, as some churches teach? Where is the Scriptures to support such things?

Not many healthy adults can do what some people in a local church are asking them to do. Paul understood, through the Holy Spirit, that man should have a “*help meet*” as God said (Genesis 2:18), and not be alone.

1 Corinthians 7:1-5 *Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: **It is good for a man not to touch a woman.** 2 Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have **his own wife**, and let every woman have her **own husband.** 3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. 4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. 5 Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.*

1 Corinthians 7:8-9 *I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. 9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.*

Some folks claim that if a person is divorced, that person is still married in God's eyes to the one they are divorced from as well as the one they are presently, legally married to. If that were the case, then God would say in plain language “*you are a bigamist.*”

1 Timothy 3:2 *“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;”*

The verse of **1 Timothy 3:2** is often used to support the idea that a divorced man who marries again cannot be a Pastor. Some churches carry the idea further saying a person cannot be a missionary, preacher, evangelist, etc., if they are divorced and married.

Some even say the positions mentioned cannot be held by a man who is divorced even if he has not married again after being divorced. Would a church be wrong in asking him to their Pastor?

Or, let's say for arguments sake that all divorce is sin. Where in the Bible does it say all divorce is sin? In fact, where in the Bible does it say divorce **IS** sin? If divorce is a sin, what can the divorced person do? **1 John 1:9** says “*If we confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and just to forgive us **our** sins, and to **cleanse** us from **all** unrighteousness.*”

Some people (**with their words and thoughts**) even hang the **BIG D** “*over the head*” of the divorced person making it (divorce) a manmade “*stigma*”, making it appear that the person remains unclean as a leper even when God says He will and has forgiven (1 John 1:9). God's Word is made of none effect when the **Pharisee** says sin is forgiven by God except for divorce.



III. THE SIN OF DIVORCE?

Do you think that divorce is sin? Do you think divorce disqualifies a person from serving God after God has called the person to serve Him in the ministry? Do you think a person who has been divorced and now married to another is living in sin? Many people are discouraged today because “religion” says they are dirty because of divorce.

Many have gone to God and confessed divorce as sin and asked God's forgiveness. What if I told you divorce is not sin? What if I told you when a person confesses to God and has asked God to forgive them for the “sin” of divorce, that they have **not** confessed what is the **REAL** sin?

➡ ***Divorce is not the sin, but what caused the divorce is the sin.*** ⬅

Have you confessed to God and asked His forgiveness for what caused the divorce if it was your sin that caused it? Sometimes we get so confused by the hypocrisy of manmade religion we miss the **REAL** sin!

We need to ask God's forgiveness first of all for listening to what manmade religion says. We then need to go to God in prayer asking His forgiveness **if** our sin caused the divorce. If another person's sin is at fault for the divorce then that person needs to ask forgiveness. [We also need to forgive that person as God has forgiven us of other sins we have committed.]

To some a divorced person is living in sin. Divorce is not sin as some see it. God could not forgive a person for divorce, if divorce is sin, because you cannot undo divorce. To some, a divorced person is living in sin. Some teach that if you are divorced and the person you are divorced from dies, you are no longer divorced. Death does not negate divorce. Once a person is divorced, that person is divorced, period.

If you are divorced from a spouse and that spouse dies, YOU ARE STILL DIVORCED! What hypocrisy to teach that the divorce is over when a person dies! You can't change divorce.

What about the sin that caused a divorce? God forgives sin if we confess it, period! (1 John 1:9) There is only one sin God cannot (**will not**) forgive and that is the blaspheming of the Holy Ghost (Luke 12:10). [By the way, to blaspheme the Holy Ghost is refusing His witness concerning Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost speaks to the man or woman's heart and says "believe on the Lord and be saved." If a man or woman refuses to believe the Holy Ghost about Jesus, then there is no forgiveness for that person. That person will die and go to Hell.]

Luke 12:10 *And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.*

Sin can be forgiven by God when we confess it and ask His forgiveness. We need to listen to God and not to man. (**Acts 10:15**)

Acts 10:15 *And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.*

There are those **Pharisees** who will say you can serve God, but only in the way **they** see fit. Hypocrites!

May I say, based on what the Pharisee **thinks**, the Pharisee would have to say that God is a sinner!

Believing what the Pharisee thinks about divorce would make God a sinner and God would be disqualified to serve **HIMSELF**! You may think that now I am blaspheming God. Not me, but the Pharisee is actually, in my opinion and according to the Word of God, blaspheming when he or she says in actions and words that God is a sinner because He, God, has been divorced. The Pharisee will never tell you that God has been divorced from Israel. The Pharisee will never tell you that divorce is not sin.



IV. GOD AND DIVORCE

Isaiah 50:1

What does the Bible say? Not, what do you or I think, but what does the Bible say?

In describing God's relationship to the nation of Israel, God says in **Isaiah 50:1**, "*Thus saith the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, **whom I have put away** [divorced]? Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away [divorced].*"

Of course, in Isaiah 50:1, it was the nation of Israel who had separated (**divorced**) **themselves** from God. It was not God who divorced Israel, but Israel had played the harlot who in essence had divorced God by their actions. Isaiah 50:1c says "...for your transgressions is your mother put away [divorced]." God was saying "**prove that I divorced you by producing a bill of divorcement**". He had not divorced them, **they had divorced Him**. Still, He was divorced, even though Israel had done the divorcing. (God was asking them to produce a bill of divorcement to prove that **HE** had divorced them.)

Jeremiah 3:8

Jeremiah 3:8 adds, "And I saw, when for all the causes whereby **backsliding** Israel committed adultery I had put her away [**divorced**], and given her a bill of **divorcement**; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also." (NOTE: **backsliding** = transgressions in Isaiah 50:1c.)

In Jeremiah 3:8, unlike in Isaiah 50:1, God **DOES** say He divorced Israel and had **given** "her" a bill of **divorcement**. If divorce is sin and disqualifies a man from serving God in the ministry, or if divorce keeps a person from having peace from and with God, then, with that line of Pharisaical reasoning God is disqualified to be God because the Bible says He was divorced from Israel (**Isaiah 50:1; Jeremiah 3:8**). Was God a "sinner" because of Israel "divorcing" Him, or by Him divorcing Israel? Of course God is not a sinner. God cannot sin. God cannot be found guilty of iniquity or wickedness (Job 34:10).

Job 34:10 *Therefore hearken unto me ye men of understanding: far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity.*

In both instances (Isaiah 50:1 and Jeremiah 3:8) we read about God and His divorcement from Israel. In both instances the divorce was not God's fault. It was Israel's sin that caused the divorce. I point out once again that it was what caused the divorce that was the sin not the divorce itself.

How does a person get rid of sin? Again, the answer is to confess that sin. I also believe that the Blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from **ALL** sin-not just some, but **ALL**. When we confess and ask forgiveness, God is faithful and Just to forgive us of sin(s) we have committed (1 **John 1:9**).

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Psalms 103:12 "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

After a person is saved, once sin has been confessed, God says: "**WHAT SIN?!**" Confessing sin to God means that the sinner's "slate" is clean. God wipes the slate clean when the man or woman who was a drunkard, an adulterer, a persecutor of the church, and etc., has given those things over to Him.

If God can take the "*chiefest of sinners*", Paul the Apostle, (1 Timothy 1:15) and use him, then God can use any man or woman for His honor and glory, once they have come to Jesus and asked for forgiveness.



V. MARRIAGE

God's perfect will for the man and woman is that they marry for life. (Matthew 19:6)

Divorce is not God's perfect will for anybody. I do not minimize the importance of a marriage lasting a lifetime.

Matthew 19:6 *Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*

I will point out that humans make mistakes. Thank the Lord for a God of forgiveness!

GOD CAN USE THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN DIVORCED AFTER THEY HAVE CONFESSED THE SIN THAT CAUSED THE DIVORCE, IF THEY WERE AT FAULT!

GOD SAYS: WHAT SIN?