

# Thrasher - Waters Debate

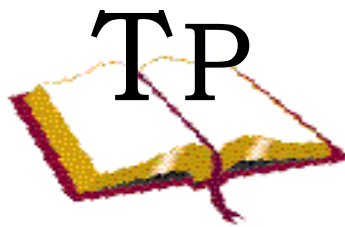
on

Divorce & Remarriage

Thomas N. Thrasher

&

Robert Waters



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## Introduction

Practically from the beginning of the church, there have been controversies (e.g., Acts 6 and Acts 15). Among the most controversial issues discussed among Christians today are those involving marriage, divorce, and re-marriage. Many books have been published on these issues, including numerous debates. We should study these materials cautiously, “searching the Scriptures” to determine whether these things are so (Acts 17:11).

Robert Waters is happily married to his first and only wife, Freda. They have two children, Angela and David, both of whom are Christians. He has credits from five colleges, and received a B.S. degree in Agriculture Education from Arkansas State University in 1979. He spent five years preaching the gospel, then, in 1985, he took a job with USDA's Farm Service Agency, where he continues to be employed as a County Executive Director for two counties. In addition to his work as a government employee, he preaches the gospel regularly at a congregation in the Forum community near Huntsville, Arkansas. Robert has a unique web site called Total Health ([www.TotalHealth.bz](http://www.TotalHealth.bz)) through which he seeks to teach people how to be healthier, especially in a spiritual way. He started a Yahoo list (*Focus on Truth*) where people could express their views on controversial subjects without being intimidated, insulted, and slandered. He has engaged in several written debates on various subjects, especially divorce and remarriage (MDR).

Thomas N. Thrasher and his wife, Jerretta, have been happily married for 36 years. They have one son (Tommy, an electrical engineer employed by the U.S. government), and two grandsons (Andrew and Luke). He began preaching the gospel in March 1966, shortly before graduating from high school. He has preached in 20 states and Australia and participated in approximately 100 formal debates, 12 of which have been published in book form. In addition to his preaching, he has worked as a mathematics teacher or school administrator for 35 years. He has earned four academic degrees in connection with his secular work: B.S. (University of Alabama, 1970, mathematics), M.Ed. (Alabama A&M University, 1974, school administration), Ed.S. (UA, 2005, educational leadership), and Ed.D. (UA, 2007, instructional leadership). One of his on-going projects is a five-volume *Encyclopedia of Religious Debates*, the most comprehensive record of religious debating ever compiled.

“You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).



Thomas N. Thrasher



Robert Waters



## Robert Waters' First Affirmative

I am pleased to affirm in this discussion with Thomas Thrasher that “All divorced persons may marry.” This is not a new topic, nevertheless it is possible that you may not have given consideration to the position that I shall set forth in this discussion. I hope you enjoy and profit from our thrashing around (in a brotherly way) and that you do not just decide that both of us are all wet.

In this debate I shall show that the position my opponent holds (denying the unmarried to have a marriage) is not plausible and shall present to you a position that, when good hermeneutics are applied, passes every text.

It seems to be taken for granted by many that when Jesus condemned the practice of “putting away” a wife, He was talking about divorce as we understand it today. But, if that were the case, why have translators not consistently used the word *divorce* instead of *put away* where *divorce* is supposedly the meaning? Is it possible that there was indeed the practice of “putting away” that was something different from a legal divorce, and which did not dissolve the marriage, regardless of the reason for the separation? As we study this important subject let us put aside our current opinions and be willing to face the facts.

The Law under which Jesus lived (and was obligated to follow) made provisions for a marriage to be dissolved (Deut. 24:1-2) because of the hardness of man's heart (Matt. 19:8). We see, then, that God laid down the procedure for a man to dissolve a marriage. This command was a procedure consisting of three separate actions (see below). Previous to this, men were simply putting away or sending their wives out of the house (women did not have the same rights). At that time, men were permitted to have more than one wife and received a dowry also. But if a man divorced his wife then the dowry had to be returned. The dowry, however, did not have to be returned in a case where there was no formal divorce. We can see, then, that simply sending his wife out of the house was a way for a man to avoid any financial loss. However, the consequences were very serious for the wife: without a formal divorce, she was left without a home and a means of support; and, being still married, it was not lawful for her to marry someone else. For a married woman to have sexual relations with another man was considered an act of *adultery* that was punishable by death (Leviticus 20:10). Husbands who dealt treacherously with their wives (by putting them away and marrying another, which was contrary to the teaching of Moses) were committing adultery against them – adultery meaning “covenant breaking” or “breaking wedlock.” (See Mark 10:11 and Ezek 16:38 ASV, BBE, and CEV.)

The wife that was put out of the house may well have been innocent of any wrongdoing, yet she could not marry another without a certificate of divorcement that proved her marriage was legally dissolved. Thus, husbands who refused to give a *bill of divorcement* to those whom they had *put away* were disobeying God. It is interesting that the same evil practice among the Jews is still going on to this day. The following is an internet link that you will find enlightening:

[www.totalhealth.bz/spiritualneeds/Jewish\\_Women\\_in\\_Chains.html](http://www.totalhealth.bz/spiritualneeds/Jewish_Women_in_Chains.html) .

Nowadays, in most countries, wives too are permitted to divorce their husbands; consequently women are not so vulnerable to being left homeless and destitute the way Jewish wives often are due to their husbands' refusal to present them with divorce papers. Nevertheless, the same sort of thing is experienced by both women and men today! People who have been

divorced are being told by church leaders that, being divorced, they are *ineligible* for marriage and must remain celibate or face the loss of fellowship in their church.

During the Mosaic age, a husband would often *send* (put) his wife away (Heb. *Shalach*, Gk. *Apoluo*) without a certificate of divorce. In God's sight, though, the husband committed adultery against her. Furthermore, his wife would find herself homeless and destitute and unable to marry another; to do so would be to commit adultery, and any man who married her would commit adultery (see Mark 10:11; Matt. 5:31-32), a crime that was punishable by death (Leviticus 20:10).

However, God laid down a procedure to prevent such evils and protect wives from this sort of thing. This procedure consisted of three actions: writing her a bill of divorcement, placing it in her hand, and sending her away (Deut. 24:1-2).

Interestingly, Jesus did not suggest that the man who initiates "divorce" commits adultery (Matt. 5:31-32; Mark 10:11). Seeing this, some people, contending that the "put away person" has no right to marry, reason that a person needs only to ensure that he is the one filing for divorce. (This suggestion is, apparently, imprudent as it tends to encourage divorce because people feel compelled to divorce when they have the "grounds" and before the other spouse divorces them, making them a "put away person" and "ineligible for marriage".) But the only significance to this observation is that the men would not commit adultery in the marriage with another because they were allowed to have more than one wife. No evidence suggests that the men discussed in the context (which goes back to Deut. 24:1-4 for the specific passage of the Law) were divorcing their wives "for fornication" or because they had committed adultery. Since the Law called for the death penalty for adultery, this theory lacks credence (Leviticus 20:10).

Jesus, like all faithful Jews, was obedient to the Law. No one could accuse Jesus of changing the Law (before the cross) because He Himself promised, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:17-19). In view of this, we see a serious error with the traditional teaching, attributed to Jesus, that a divorced person commits adultery if he remarries. The problem, then, in understanding who has a right to marry, hinges on the meaning of *divorced*. Many of the newer Bible versions translate the Greek word *apoluo* as *divorced* but many of the older and more reliable versions consistently translate *apoluo* as "put away" (or something similar).

Let us now note a couple of definitions from **Random House Dictionary** and make some observations:

### ***Divorce***

1. Law. a judicial declaration dissolving a marriage in whole or in part, esp. one that released the husband and wife from all matrimonial obligations.
2. Any formal separation of man and wife according to established custom, as among uncivilized tribes.
3. Total separation; disunion: *a divorce between thought and action.*
4. To separate by divorce: *The judge divorced the couple.*

5. To break the marriage contract between oneself and [one's spouse] by divorce: *She divorced her husband.*

### ***Judicial separation***

Law. a decree of legal separation of husband and wife that does not dissolve the marriage bond. Also called limited divorce.

It is interesting that some contemporary writers use the phrase “put away person” when referring to a *divorced* person. This is misleading because “put away” is equal to being *separated*, not divorced – according to the Law of Moses. Even a *judicial separation* is not a divorce and does not end the marriage. While it is true that a *divorce* does separate a couple, it is also true that a couple can separate without divorcing. A married couple who *separate* might claim they are *divorced* but, in reality, they are still married. Those who teach that “putting away” a spouse (without a “bill of divorcement”) constitutes a divorce are not only teaching error, but they make Jesus a liar! If a “put away” person equals a “divorced” person then Jesus broke His promise that the Law would not change until all was fulfilled. When one who is “put away” marries another he/she obviously commits adultery. But it is important to understand that God gave a procedure for divorcing that would allow both parties to marry another. Jesus could not possibly have contradicted Moses on this because to do so would have been transgression and would have given the Jews just cause to condemn Him. Interestingly, they did not charge Jesus with breaking the Law on this matter, yet people today (supposedly His friends!) contend that He did.

The apostle Paul spoke to the “unmarried” person in 1 Corinthians 7:8-9. The word *unmarried* means: single, unattached, free, not married. “Not joined to another by marriage” [Encarta Dictionary]. To anyone who might not understand His universal divorce law, which freed the divorced, God gave a direct command: “**let them marry.**” Unfortunately, a misunderstanding of Jesus' teaching has led many to ignore this command.

My opponent believes that the only instance in which God recognizes a divorce is when one's spouse has committed fornication. This is based on his conception of what Jesus was teaching: “And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” (Matthew 19:9). The misunderstanding centers around two things: 1) the phrase “put away” and, 2) the definition of the word *fornication*. We have already discussed the meaning of *put away* so we will focus on the meaning of *fornication*. The word *fornication* is often believed to be a general term for any type of illicit sex. But consider the following quote:

“The Old Testament commandment that a bill of divorce be given to the woman assumes the legitimacy of divorce itself. It is this that Jesus denies. (Unless the marriage is unlawful): this ‘exceptive clause,’ as it is often called, occurs also in Matthew 19:9, where the Greek is slightly different.... It seems, however, that the unlawfulness that Matthew gives as a reason why a marriage must be broken refers to a situation peculiar to his community: the violation of Mosaic law forbidding marriage between persons of certain blood and/or legal relationship (Lev. 18:6-18). Marriages of that sort were regarded as incest (porneia), but some rabbis allowed Gentile converts to Judaism who had contracted such marriages to remain in them. Matthew's ‘exceptive clause’ is against such permissiveness for Gentile converts to Christianity; cf the similar prohibition of porneia in Acts 15:20, 29. In this interpretation, the clause constitutes no exception to the absolute prohibition of divorce when the marriage is lawful” [www.usccb.org/nab/](http://www.usccb.org/nab/)

bible/matthew/matthew5.htm (footnote 21). The word *fornication*, then, includes the violation of Mosaic Law forbidding marriage between certain persons because of being kin. The only two examples of unlawful marriages (fornication) recorded in the New Testament were cases of the man who “had his father's wife” (1 Corinthians 5:1) and Herod, who married his brother's wife (apparently after divorce) while he still lived (Mark 5:18; Lev. 20:21). With this in mind, we offer the following paraphrase of Matt. 19:9:

“And I say unto you, whoever shall put away his wife without a certificate of divorcement, except in cases where the marriage is contrary to the Law, and shall marry another, commits adultery: and whoso marries her which is put away without a certificate of divorcement also commits adultery.”

Therefore, the traditional teaching that divorced people are still married in the sight of God is without Biblical support.

The idea that Jesus was giving the *grounds* for a “scriptural” divorce, and that only the one who initiated the divorce may marry another, is not in harmony with the Bible. Such a doctrine has God not only punishing innocent persons, contrary to His nature, but also has Him contradicting Himself. When the apostle Paul (by inspiration) dealt with questions pertaining to marriage, he said to let men and women have a spouse so they can avoid fornication (1 Cor. 7:1, 2). By teaching men to “love their wives” (Col. 3:19) and women to “be in subjection” to their husbands (Eph. 5:22) he teaches against separation and divorce; but obviously it happens. Yet only during the “present distress” were those who were separated commanded to remain “unmarried” or in the state they were in -- as unmarried (1 Cor. 7:10, 11, 26). No command, example, or inference teaches that divorced persons must remain celibate.

In his answer to the brethren in Corinth, Paul makes it clear that people should marry, if necessary, to avoid fornication. He says to anyone who would object to unmarried persons marrying “**let them marry**” and “**He sinneth not.**” We must accept that a legal divorce dissolves a marriage and that “unmarried” persons do not commit adultery when they marry. Paul's teaching in 1 Cor. 7:1-2, 8, 9, 27, 28, 36 should leave no doubt in our minds that divorced persons may scripturally marry another. For a church to refuse to accept a couple because one person in the marriage has been divorced is to place an unnecessary burden on the couple, and their children, which often results in their turning away from Christ. Thus, Paul's classifying “forbidding to marry” as “doctrines of devils” (1 Timothy 4:1-3) surely condemns the traditional teaching and practice of forbidding legally divorced persons to marry, or to continue in a legal marriage. Furthermore, he said: “But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of her age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: **let them marry**” (1 Cor. 7:36). The phrase *any man* is not limited to virgins or those who have never been married. Thus, persons who are *unmarried*, which includes those legally divorced, must be allowed to marry if they see the need, for they do not sin if they do. On the other hand, one who is thus guilty of “forbidding to marry” does indeed commit sin.

If you have carefully considered what I have written and truly seek the truth on this important issue you are probably thinking that what you have heard makes sense, yet you have some questions that need to be answered. I'm confident that my opponent will bring up the standard objections as we proceed through the debate. These objections can all be reasonably explained to harmonize with the truth that I have thus far presented.



## Questions:

1. Does divorce end a marriage? (If not, prove your answer.)
2. When a couple divorce how can one be free and the other not?
3. What is the first and primary meaning of *apoluo*?
4. Can one be “put away, sent out of the house, repudiated” yet not divorced?
5. How could Jesus have been speaking to Jews yet it not be applicable to them?
6. If *apoluo*, as used by Jesus, refers only to separation how would this fact affect the way you believe and practice relative to MDR, and how would it affect the church?



## Thomas N. Thrasher’s First Negative

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss this important subject with brother Waters. Although I believe his viewpoint is flawed and his teaching potentially destructive, I love him as a brother in Christ. I want us to “speak the same thing” and “be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10). The desire for scriptural unity in teaching and practice is my motive for participating in this Bible study (John 17:21-23).

Robert says, “I am pleased to affirm in this discussion with Thomas Thrasher that ‘All divorced persons may marry.’” Well, Thomas Thrasher is pleased to *deny* the Bible teaches that proposition! The standard I accept as authoritative is the Bible. However, in his first affirmation Robert neglected to produce even one passage of scripture that teaches “*all divorced persons may marry.*” Since I am in the negative, I will look at every passage Robert cited in his article to see if even one of them provides proof of his proposition.

**Leviticus 18:6-18.** Robert refers to “the violation of Mosaic law forbidding marriage between persons of certain blood and/or legal relationship (Lev. 18:6-18).” It appears that we agree on what this passage teaches. However, Robert’s proposition is *not* that “the Mosaic law prohibited incestuous marriages,” and I am not denying that in this debate. These verses do *not* teach that “*all divorced persons may marry.*” In fact, they teach that some marriages were wrong!

**Leviticus 20:10, 21.** “And the man that committeth adultery with another man’s wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.... And if a man shall take his brother’s wife, it is an unclean thing: he hath uncovered his brother’s nakedness; they shall be childless.” I suppose Robert deduces from this that “*all divorced persons may marry*”! I fail to see any proof of that in these verses.

**Ezekiel 16:38** (“And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy”) and **Mark 10:11** (“Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her”) offer no support for the

proposition that “*all divorced persons may marry.*” In fact, the latter verse refers to one who marries being guilty of adultery!

**Mark 5:18.** Robert meant Mark 6:18 (“For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife”). This case also offers absolutely no support for Robert’s proposition. Since the verse refers to a practice that was “not lawful,” how does it offer proof that it *is lawful* for all divorced persons to marry?

**1 Corinthians 5:1.** “It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife.” As indicated in the next paragraph, Robert claims that this is an example of an “unlawful” marriage. Therefore, how could it prove that “*all divorced persons may marry*”?

Robert admits some marriages are *not approved* by God: “The only two examples of unlawful marriages (fornication) recorded in the New Testament were cases of the man who ‘had his father’s wife’ (1 Corinthians 5:1) and Herod, who married his brother’s wife (apparently after divorce) while he still lived (Mark 5:18; Lev. 20:21).” However, Robert overlooks some *other* unlawful marriages mentioned in the New Testament:

Matthew 19:9—“... and shall **marry** another, **committeth adultery**: and whoso **marrieth** her which is put away doth **commit adultery**” (emphasis in this and the next four passages is mine, TNT). Here are *marriages* that involve *adultery*! Are they “lawful,” Robert?

Matthew 5:32—“... whosoever shall **marry** her that is divorced committeth **adultery.**” Is this marriage lawful?

Mark 10:11-12—“... Whosoever shall put away his wife, and **marry** another, committeth **adultery** against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be **married** to another, she committeth **adultery.**” Are these marriages lawful?

Luke 16:18—“Whosoever putteth away his wife, and **marrieth** another, committeth **adultery**: and whosoever **marrieth** her that is put away from her husband committeth **adultery.**” Why aren’t these marriages “unlawful”?

Romans 7:3—“... if, while her husband liveth, she be **married** to another man, she shall be called an **adulteress.**” Robert, is this woman’s “marriage” to another man “lawful”?

**Ephesians 5:22** and **Colossians 3:19.** Robert states: “By teaching men to ‘love their wives’ (Col. 3:19) and women to ‘be in subjection’ to their husbands (Eph. 5:22) he [Paul] teaches against separation and divorce.” If these verses teach “against separation and divorce,” they do *not* teach that “all divorced persons may marry.” Consequently, they do not sustain Robert’s proposition.

**Matthew 5:17-19.** “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” Robert says, “Jesus ... was obedient to the Law.” True. However, Jesus’ teaching often pointed people to a time beyond Moses’ law to the arrival of His kingdom (Matthew 4:17— “From that time Jesus began to preach ... Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”). For example, He taught people about the Lord’s supper (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20), the new birth (John 3:3-5), and church discipline (Matthew 18:17). Although He kept Moses’ law perfectly while it was still in effect, He also prepared people for service to God according to the “new testament” (Hebrews 9:15; 12:24; 2 Corinthians

3:6-11). While His life was consistent with the law of Moses, Jesus unquestionably proclaimed New Testament doctrines in anticipation of His kingdom.

**Acts 15:20, 29.** These verses teach that we should “abstain from ... fornication” and some other things. I wholeheartedly agree with these instructions. However, I find nothing in these verses to provide even a remote hint that “*all divorced persons may marry.*”

**Deuteronomy 24:1-4.** Robert says, “The Law under which Jesus lived ... made provisions for a marriage to be dissolved (Deut. 24:1-2) because of the hardness of man's heart (Matt. 19:8).” Robert uses a considerable portion of his article elaborating on what he thinks Deuteronomy 24 means. However, regardless of what the Old Testament law taught, **that law is not** God's law for us *today!*

“Wherefore **the law was our schoolmaster** to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are **no longer under a schoolmaster**” (Galatians 3:24-25).

“... Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: **not according to the covenant** that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt ...” (Hebrews 8:8-9).

“He **taketh away the first**, that he may **establish the second**” (Hebrews 10:9).

“... our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the **new testament**; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the **ministration of death, written and engraven in stones**, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be **done away ...**” (2 Corinthians 3:5-7).

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith **Christ** hath made us free, and **be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage**. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, **Christ shall profit you nothing**. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a **debtor to do the whole law**. Christ is become of **no effect** unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are **fallen from grace**” (Galatians 5:1-4).

“For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a **change** also of **the law**” (Hebrews 7:12).

**Matthew 5:31-32.** “It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I [Jesus] say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and **whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery**” (emphasis mine, TNT). Since **the Lord** declared marriage to this **divorced** person as involving **adultery**, it should be obvious that NOT “all divorced persons may marry”!

**Matthew 19:8-9.** Jesus clearly contrasts His law on divorce and remarriage with Moses' law: “He saith unto them, **Moses** because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And **I say** unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” (Matthew 19:8-9). I find nothing in this

passage to the effect that “all divorced persons may marry.” In fact, by marrying, some “commit adultery”!

**1 Corinthians 7:1-2, 8-11, 26-28, 36.** The apostle discusses whether or not an individual should marry; however, his remarks presuppose that the individual is scripturally eligible to marry. Paul uses expressions such as “let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband” (v. 2): “let them marry” (v. 9); “if thou marry, thou hast not sinned” (v. 28); and “he sinneth not: let them marry” (v. 36). In each of these cases, Paul’s instructions assume adherence to the remainder of God’s instructions given elsewhere. Nowhere in this chapter does Paul state that “all divorced persons may marry”! Nevertheless, this chapter will be discussed in some detail in a subsequent article.

**1 Timothy 4:1-3.** Robert argues that “forbidding to marry ... surely condemns the traditional teaching and practice of forbidding legally divorced persons to marry, or to continue in a legal marriage.” Of course, Robert is mistaken in his application of “forbidding to marry” in this passage to my position on divorce and remarriage. The Bible teaches that it is right to forbid *unscriptural* marriages. For example, John was right in forbidding Herod’s marriage to Herodias: “For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife” (Mark 6:18). It is right to forbid same sex marriages (Romans 1:26-27). It is right to forbid an already-married man from marrying a second wife (1 Corinthians 7:2). Furthermore, didn’t the Lord forbid some marriages when he said, “Whosoever putteth away his wife, and **marrieth** another, committeth adultery: and whosoever **marrieth** her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery” (Luke 16:18, emphasis mine, TNT)? These marriages are the kind that God and I “forbid”!

My friend asserts that “God gave a procedure for divorcing that would allow both parties to marry another.” I’m sorry, Robert, but I missed your citation of that verse in the New Testament where God gave such a procedure. I reviewed every verse that you cited in your first affirmative, but not one provided proof of this assertion.

Robert quoted part of a note on Matthew 5 taken from the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. However, if you look at his quotation, there is an ellipsis (...) between the words “different” and “It.” The part that Robert chose to omit from the original source is as follows: “There are other sayings of Jesus about divorce that prohibit it absolutely (see Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18; cf. 1 Cor 7:10, 11b), and most scholars agree that they represent the stand of Jesus. Matthew’s ‘exceptive clauses’ are understood by some as a modification of the absolute prohibition.” In other words, they appear to be saying that Matthew 19:9 states an **exception** to the Lord’s **general prohibition** against divorce and remarriage. If that is what they are saying, then I agree.

However, I do not accept the USCCB’s utterances as authoritative. (Do you, Robert?) For instance, they also comment on Matthew 16:18 on the same website (<http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/matthew/matthew16.htm>): “Jesus’ church means the community that he will gather and that, like a building, will have Peter as its solid foundation.” (Footnote 13). Does Robert agree with USCCB’s view that “Peter” is the “solid foundation” of “Jesus’ church”?

### **Brother Waters’ Questions**

Robert presented me with six questions in his first article. Because of space limitations, I will address three questions now and the remaining three in my next article.

1. Does divorce end a marriage?

*Answer:* Divorce ends some marriages; death ends the rest (Romans 7:2). However, divorce does not sever the bond that God has established (Romans 7:2-3).

2. When a couple divorce how can one be free and the other not?

*Answer:* God has “loosed” one and “bound” the other. Notice Romans 7:2-3—“For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.” A person commits adultery if he (or she) divorces his wife (or her husband) for any reason other than fornication and marries someone else. The reason is that he/she is still bound (i.e., obligated) to that first wife/husband. There is a difference between the “marriage” and the “bond.” In Romans 7:2-3 the woman is “married” to the second man but still “bound” to the first.

3. What is the first and primary meaning of *apoluo*?

*Answer:* According to the *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Thayer, 1967), the first definition listed is “to set free ... to liberate one from a thing” (page 66). Thayer proceeds to state that the word is “used of divorce.” For the definition “divorce,” Thayer lists the following passages: Matthew 1:19; 5:31f; 19:3, 7-9; Mark 10:2, 4, 11; and Luke 16:18. Therefore, according to Thayer, “put away” (KJV) in these verses refers to “divorce”!

According to *The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker, 1979), the first definition listed is “set free, release, pardon ... a prisoner” (page 96). This lexicon goes on to give “divorce” as a definition, under which Matthew 1:19; 5:31f; 19:3, 7-9; Mark 10:2, 4, 11; and Luke 16:18 are listed. Consequently, “put away” (KJV) in these passages means “divorce.”

Robert misrepresents my position as being “that divorced people are still married in the sight of God.” That is not my position! Married people are married, and divorced people are divorced. However, God does not approve all marriages (since some are unlawful), and He does not approve all divorces (since some are unlawful), as previously demonstrated.

Nowhere in all of God’s Book has my brother found proof that “all divorced persons may marry.”



## **Robert Waters' Second Affirmative**

In his opening remarks Brother Thrasher states that he is happy to deny that divorced people are free to marry. In view of the problems that result from the teaching of his doctrine -- busted up families, lonely lives, divisions, preachers fired, countless souls caused to turn away from Christ, and discouraged evangelists -- one would think that he would be ashamed to deny the freedom of marriage to those who have no marriage, especially in view of the fact that Paul tells him to “let them marry” for “they do not sin.” Paul even gives the reason we must let the unmarried marry: so they can “avoid fornication.” The position I am setting forth in this debate

does just that while my opponent's position forbids marriage to the unmarried. My friend admits the divorced are not still married, yet he contends that God still has them “bound” to their previous spouse. This assumption is drawn from a few passages that, in the course of this debate, we shall show he misuses.

I do not know what evidence it would take to prove to my opponent that the Bible teaches that divorced persons may marry. Part of my proof is the fact that Jesus promised that nothing about the Law would change before the cross. Thus, if we are of a mind to follow good hermeneutics in studying this subject we must reject the idea that Jesus spoke contrary to Moses. If Jesus did not do so Tom’s ship never made it to water. Some brethren (Tom not included), in their zeal to defend tradition, emphatically affirm that Jesus changed the Law. Let us take a look at Tom’s explanation of this conundrum, which I shall show is nothing but smoke. First, let us note that his teaching clearly has Jesus saying that divorced persons may not marry. He explains: “However, Jesus' teaching often pointed people to a time beyond Moses' law to the arrival of His kingdom....”

Indeed, Jesus did often do what Tom affirms. However, in the case of Matt. 19:9 Jesus was not pointing to the future. He was dealing with the present. He told the Pharisees that their practice of “putting away” and marrying another resulted in committing adultery against their wives (Mk 10:11). They were GUILTY. But if my opponent's position is true Jesus lied to those men. My opponent tells us it didn't apply to them but it would apply LATER, to people not being addressed at the time.

Tom, you are able to see that it would be ludicrous to contend that Jesus changed the Law. But why can you not see that it is ludicrous to contend that Jesus' words did not apply to the people to whom He addressed – the Pharisees. If my opponent gives up this argument (or answer?) he gives up the debate. If he does not give up the argument he will lose credibility, as others have done with the same argument. If necessary I shall use much of my space on this one point in forthcoming installments. Tom, I expect you to deal, as best you can, with this conundrum for your position.

I want you to remember that my opponent's teaching regarding who may marry denies divorced persons the right to marry, but it can only be correct if Jesus changed the LOM by saying divorced persons may not marry another. If Jesus said divorced persons commit adultery when they marry then He obviously changed the Law because the Law allowed it. It is obvious from the text that Jesus’ words applied to the people to whom He was speaking, which is good hermeneutics. Thus, Jesus did not change the Law.

But how do we explain how these observations do not show Jesus to be a liar and transgressor of the Law? It is very simple: the word “apoluo” is falsely translated and errantly believed to be the same as divorce. Thus, Jesus was not saying that a divorced person commits adultery when he/she marries another; He was saying a “put away” person does, which is different. A put away person is still married! The bond (marriage) still exists! It takes a “bill of divorcement” to end a marriage – not just the putting away, or sending away. If you are willing to apply good hermeneutics you will reject the idea that Jesus said “a divorced person commits adultery” and accept the only logical conclusion you can come to, which is that “divorce” was not the thing Jesus condemned. Rather, He condemned the practice of “putting away” which is only part of the divorce procedure – not THE divorce.

My position was affirmed in my first article in another way. I showed the clear teaching of Paul regarding the “unmarried”. He said, “Let them marry.” Paul states why such is needful: “to avoid fornication”; and he says “they sin not.” Now, these passages do not harmonize with my opponent's doctrine, nevertheless he vainly seeks to explain them. I have shown that his position has no foundation because the text he uses to support his doctrine that forbids divorced persons from marrying, is in fact not condemning divorce. Thus, we have no basis for even thinking about trying to make Paul's clear teaching harmonize with the idea that divorced persons may not marry. We just need to accept what Jesus said and what Paul said.

I will use the remainder of my space to deal with relevant comments made by my opponent.

First, I showed that the “exception clause” was not intended to be applicable to a spouse that committed adultery, but was applicable only to cases where fornication is being committed (resulting in the need to end the sinful relationship by permanent separation) because it was not a scriptural or legal marriage. I presented Lev. 18:6-18 to support the fact that certain marriages were forbidden. My friend agreed but stated that it did not prove my position and that the text showed that some marriages were wrong. Tom, I'm not arguing that all marriages are right. I am affirming that all divorced persons have a right to marry. I'm not saying they may marry anyone, for some are already married to others and some are close family, which would be incest. But they MAY marry SOMEONE. You say they may not ever marry ANYONE.

I used Lev. 20:10, 21 to show that the Law required the death penalty for adultery. This shows that Tom's position (that the “exception clause” refers to adultery) is wrong. Thus, while this does not prove my position true it does prove his to be wrong.

I used Mark 10:11 to show that adultery is committed AGAINST the wife that is put away rather than WITH the woman that the man marries. This text completely destroys Tom's position that a man commits adultery in a new relationship when he divorces his wife and marries another. The adultery was treachery against his wife for dumping her but not releasing her so she could marry another. Remember, the men during that time could have more than one wife and my opponent has stated that Jesus did not change the Law at that time.

#### Mark 6:18 (Herod)

Tom asks, “Since the verse refers to a practice that was ‘not lawful,’ how does it offer proof that it is lawful for all divorced persons to marry?”

In the past, brethren commonly used this text to uphold Tom's position, but not anymore. Many have actually asserted that John was teaching (contrary to the Law) that a divorced person, who marries again, is in an unlawful marriage. But brethren are seeing that they have John contradicting the Law even before Jesus did, and they realize John had no authority to do that. That the marriage was “unlawful” (and we agree that divorce was allowed at the time) is just an example of where the “exception clause” applied. Herod needed to “put away” his “unlawful wife.” To do so, and marry another, would not have been sinful.

#### 1 Corinthians 5:1

This is another example supporting my point above. Thus, it cannot be charged that “sending away,” but not divorcing, was not an issue. Remember, I provided a link to a source

that proves that the Jews are to this day doing what I am affirming was the problem Jesus addressed.

Tom says, “However Robert overlooks some other unlawful marriages mentioned in the New Testament....”

Tom notes Matthew 19:9 and asks me if the marriages are lawful. First, thanks for pointing out my failure to include this text. It indeed sets forth a scenario where adultery is committed due to an unlawful marriage. Here is a paraphrase of the text:

“Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for an unlawful union, and shall marry another, commits adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is improperly put away, commits adultery.”

Tom asks about Romans 7:3 – “Robert, is this woman's ‘marriage’ to another man ‘lawful’?” First, we have no specific case here. Second, the text does not deal with divorce and remarriage. Third, my opponent does not believe that the text is saying that marriage is forbidden to all except where a spouse is dead, thus he misuses it.

#### Matthew 5:17-19

I used this text to show that Jesus could not have said divorced people commit adultery by marrying again, which is Tom's position. Tom replied, “...Jesus unquestionably proclaimed New Testament doctrines in anticipation of His kingdom.”

The issue is not whether Jesus proclaimed New Testament doctrine; it is whether Jesus contradicted Moses by saying a divorced person may not marry. This text very clearly destroys my opponent's position, which leaves mine as the only one that is believable.

#### Deuteronomy 24:1-4

My friend seems to want to reject the teaching in the above text because it is Old Testament. While it is true that the church does not look to the LOM for doctrine virtually all believe that we can look to it for teachings regarding marriage and divorce. It is common for defenders of MDR tradition to use Old Testament texts to try to support their teachings. Of course, those texts are always shown to harmonize with the truth I am affirming.

Since Tom is seeking to remove Deut. 24:1-4 from the debate I have some questions:

1. What NT passage authorizes divorce?
2. What NT passage defines a divorce?
3. What NT passage shows that it is wrong for a man to simply send his wife away (without divorce papers, resulting in separation) and marry another?
4. Do you think you can understand and apply Matthew 19:9 without understanding and applying Deut. 24:1-4?
5. Do you think one who uses God's definition of a divorce (the three essential parts), given in Deut., is seeking to be justified by the law?



## Matthew 5:31-32

Tom said, “Since the Lord declared marriage to this divorced person as involving adultery, it should be obvious that NOT ‘all divorced persons may marry’!” The ASV, which has long been considered to be the most accurate and trustworthy version (as well as several other highly respected versions), does not use “divorce” in the text. That “apoluo” means “put away” not “divorce” is the basis for understanding how Jesus did not lie or contradict Moses (as previously discussed).

## Matthew 19:8-9

Tom stated, “Jesus clearly contrasts His law on divorce and remarriage with Moses' law....”

No, if we are going to believe Jesus always tells the truth it is clearly a fact that Jesus did not make new law before His death, because He promised not to do so. Thus, there must be some other explanation, and that explanation needs to harmonize with all the other scriptures on the subject. The Jews were not being faithful to their wives. Jesus said from the beginning it was God's intention that man not separate. But because of their hardness of heart, regarding how they dealt with their women, Moses gave the divorce law. But they evidently were not following the command of Moses (Deut. 24:1, 2; Mark 10:3) because Jesus said what they were doing was resulting in adultery.

Since Jesus could not have condemned legal divorce, for such would be contrary to the Law that He was obligated to follow, it must be that He condemned something else. Indeed the Jews are still not giving the “get” (certificate of divorce) that would release the “put away” wife so she may marry another.

## 1 Corinthians 7:1-2, 8-11, 26-28, 36

“The apostle discusses whether or not an individual should marry; however, his remarks presuppose that the individual is scripturally eligible to marry.... In each of these cases, Paul's instructions assume adherence to the remainder of God's instructions given elsewhere.”

Paul says to let the “unmarried” marry. I showed in my first article that the word “unmarried” includes the divorced. Tom ignored it and continues to teach in such a way that he has Paul contradicting not only Jesus but himself. Thus, the position he holds is seriously flawed. If you are looking for a position that has Moses, Jesus and Paul in perfect harmony then you need look no further for that is what I am teaching.

## 1 Timothy 4:1-3

My friend says, “The Bible teaches that it is right to forbid unscriptural marriages.” That is true, but such is not what the text condemns nor is it the objectionable practice that is being taught today. Preachers are telling men and women who have no marriage that they may not marry. Since Tom has admitted that divorced people are not married, although “bound,” the fallacy of his position is apparent. When anyone tells a divorced person that he may not marry anyone, that person is guilty of “forbidding to marry.”

Tom noted Matthew 19:9 and said, “These marriages are the kind that God and I ‘forbid’!” No, Tom, God did not forbid anyone from ever marrying, as you and many brethren do. But He did say that those “put away” may not marry and the obvious reason is that they are not divorced. But if their husband would have given them the “bill of divorcement” they could “go be another man's wife.”

Tom concludes by denying “that divorced people are still married in the sight of God.” He says, “Married people are married, and divorced people are divorced.” Amen! Tom explains: “However, God does not approve all marriages (since some are unlawful), and He does not approve all divorces (since some are unlawful), as previously demonstrated.”

That God does not approve of all marriages is irrelevant to the debate. The evils that I have noted previously are due to men’s contending that a legal divorce does not always dissolve a marriage.

The word “apoluo” is used 87 times in the NT and no Bible evidence (from the context) shows that the word ever refers to divorce.

Unfortunately Tom did not answer all of my questions. He particularly does not want to answer #4, but it will not go away.



## Thomas N. Thrasher’s Second Negative

Robert fails to state the issue correctly. He wrote: “Brother Thrasher states that he is happy to deny that divorced people are free to marry.” I actually said, “Thomas Thrasher is pleased to *deny* the Bible teaches” that “ALL divorced persons may marry” (Matthew 19:9; 5:32). I do not “deny that divorced people are free to marry,” since *some* of them are free (Matthew 19:9; Romans 7:2-3). I am again pleased to deny Robert’s *unscriptural* affirmation that “**all divorced persons may marry.**” He still has not found one verse proving his proposition.

In the absence of that proof, Robert *claims* to have two other proofs for his proposition:

1. “Part of my proof is the fact that Jesus promised that nothing about the Law would change before the cross.” However, Jesus taught that His law (the NT) would be different (“But **I say** to you ...”—Matthew 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 44), and He began teaching them about His law during His ministry (Matthew 4:17). Robert admitted this: “Indeed, Jesus did often do what Tom affirms.” Therefore, if we believe the Bible, we will recognize that NT law is different from OT law: “For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a **change** also **of the law**” (Hebrews 7:12). Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is OT law, *not* Jesus’ marriage law now!

2. “I showed the clear teaching of Paul regarding the ‘unmarried’. He said, ‘Let them marry.’” Robert seems to have 1 Corinthians 7:9 in mind. However, he fails to prove that the “unmarried” of this verse include **all** divorced people, especially when Paul in this context specifies only two options for some: “remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband” (verse 11). Furthermore, my opponent’s view contradicts Jesus’ teaching (Matthew 5:32; 19:9).

## Waters' Questions

In my initial article, I answered the first three of Robert's six questions. Misjudging my motives, he remarked, "Tom ... particularly does not want to answer #4." However, I had already explained that "because of space limitations, I will address three questions now and the remaining three in my next article." I will proceed to do that now.

4. Can one be "put away, sent out of the house, repudiated" yet not divorced?

*Answer:* One can be "put away" (1 Corinthians 5:13), "sent out" (Acts 7:12), or "repudiated" (Acts 3:13-14, NEB) without being divorced from a husband or wife. However, the Lord taught that marriages involving divorced people may involve adultery (Luke 16:18—**"Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery."**). According to the Lord, some "divorced" people may NOT scripturally marry!

5. How could Jesus have been speaking to Jews yet it not be applicable to them?

*Answer:* I explained this in my first article. Jesus' teaching often pointed people to a time beyond Moses' law to the arrival of His kingdom (Matthew 4:17— "From that time Jesus began to preach ... Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."). For example, He taught people about the **Lord's supper** (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20), the **new birth** (John 3:3-5), and **church discipline** (Matthew 18:17). Although He kept Moses' law perfectly while it was still in effect, He also prepared people for service to God according to the "**new testament**" (Hebrews 9:15; 12:24; 2 Corinthians 3:6-11). While His life was consistent with the law of Moses, Jesus proclaimed New Testament doctrines in anticipation of His kingdom. Consequently, what Jesus taught had application to all people under the NT.

However, Jesus' also explained truth that was relevant to the Pharisees at the time He spoke to them by pointing them to God's original intent on marriage and divorce (Matthew 19:4-6— "... **Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.**"). The Lord applied at least two points to them: God's intent concerning marriage goes back to "the beginning" (Genesis 2:24), and Moses' command (Deuteronomy 24:1-4) was given because of the hardness of their hearts. This answers Robert's false charge that "it is ludicrous to contend that Jesus' words did not apply to the people to whom He addressed – the Pharisees."

6. If *apoluo*, as used by Jesus, refers only to separation how would this fact affect the way you believe and practice relative to MDR, and how would it affect the church?

*Answer:* *Apoluo* does **not** refer "only to separation," according to a great number of lexicographers and translators, so I see no benefit in speculating. For some reason, Robert chooses to deny that "divorce" is one definition of *apoluo* (e.g., Thayer, 1967, p. 66; BAGD, 1979, p. 96).

In his second article, Robert asked five additional questions to which I will now respond.

1. What NT passage authorizes divorce?

*Answer:* Matthew 19:9 authorizes divorce "for sexual immorality." Jesus said, "... **Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery ...**" One who divorces a spouse for another reason "and marries another, commits adultery."

2. What NT passage defines a divorce?

*Answer:* To my knowledge, no NT passage *defines* divorce. However, the NT clearly teaches that *some* divorces involve sin:

**Matthew 5:32**—“But I say to you that whoever **divorces** his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever **marries** a woman who is **divorced** commits adultery.”

**Matthew 19:9**—“And I say to you, whoever **divorces** his wife, except for sexual immorality, and **marries** another, commits adultery; and whoever **marries** her who is **divorced** commits adultery.”

**Mark 10:11-12**—“So He said to them, ‘Whoever **divorces** his wife and **marries** another commits adultery against her. And if a woman **divorces** her husband and **marries** another, she commits adultery.’”

**Luke 16:18**—“Whoever **divorces** his wife and **marries** another commits adultery; and whoever **marries** her who is **divorced** from her husband commits adultery.”

**1 Corinthians 7:11**—“... a husband is not to **divorce** his wife.”

3. What NT passage shows that it is wrong for a man to simply send his wife away (without divorce papers, resulting in separation) and marry another?

*Answer:* To my knowledge, the only NT passage directly addressing “separation” (without divorce) of husband and wife is 1 Corinthians 7:5—“Do not deprive one another **except with consent for a time**, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer, and **come together again** so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.” Divorce and marriage to another have no approval in this authorized (temporary) separation.

4. Do you think you can understand and apply Matthew 19:9 without understanding and applying Deut. 24:1-4?

*Answer:* We can understand Jesus’ words pertaining to His NT law (“And **I say to you ...**” —Matthew 19:9) without understanding what Moses taught in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 (what Moses permitted, Matthew 19:8). Jesus’ teaching on divorce and remarriage is **different** from Moses’ teaching. However, understanding the entire context of Matthew 19:3-12 involves some understanding of Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Nevertheless, we can obey Jesus’ instructions (Matthew 19:9) without an understanding of Moses’ instructions (Deuteronomy 24:1-4).

5. Do you think one who uses God's definition of a divorce (the three essential parts), given in Deut., is seeking to be justified by the law?

*Answer:* I do not know what they are “seeking” to do. However, when the Pharisees posed the question about Moses’ divorce procedure in Deuteronomy 24:1-2, Jesus did *not* say, “That is what my disciples should do, too.” Instead He said, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but **from the beginning it was not so**. And **I say** to you, whoever divorces his wife, **except for sexual immorality**, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.” The precise details (including legal requirements) of the divorce procedure are not specified in the NT. However, if a municipality enacted Deuteronomy 24:1-4 as its legally recognized procedure for a person to obtain a divorce, it would be contrary to the Lord’s instructions: “

## Thrasher's Questions

Since Robert propounded 11 questions, I will return the favor.

1. Can a man scripturally divorce his wife today without following all three steps: writing her a certificate of divorce, putting the certificate in her hand, and sending her out of his house?
2. Alfred divorces Bertha for some reason other than sexual immorality by following the steps of Deuteronomy 24:1-2. Alfred remains unmarried; Bertha marries Calvin. After Calvin dies, can Bertha marry any unmarried man of her choosing, assuming he wants to marry her? If not, explain why.
3. If “all divorced persons may (scripturally) marry,” do you believe that “all married persons may (scripturally) divorce”? If not, which married persons may scripturally divorce and which may not?
4. Do you think Christians can practice what the Lord taught in Mark 14:22-25 without understanding Exodus 12:1-28?
5. Who may scripturally marry?
6. Who may scripturally divorce?
7. What is the difference between being “bound” to one man and being “married” to another (Romans 7:2-3)?
8. Is a woman who has been “divorced” by her husband a “put away” woman?
9. Did Jesus teach any NT doctrines before the cross? If so, name them.
10. Can being in an unscriptural marriage keep one from going to heaven?
11. What differences exist when contrasting God's marriage law in the beginning, under Moses' law, and under Christ's law?

## *Apoluo*

Robert identifies a major point at issue when he claims, “The word ‘*apoluo*’ is falsely translated and errantly believed to be the same as divorce” and “‘*apoluo*’ is used 87 times in the NT and no Bible evidence (from the context) shows that the word ever refers to divorce.” My opponent presumes to have a superior knowledge of Greek than a great host of Greek grammarians, lexicographers, and translators. Because of limited space, I will cite only a few examples in refutation of his claim about *apoluo*.

## Greek Lexicographers

*Greek-English New Testament Lexicon* (Berry, 1952): “... to release, let go, to send away ... **divorce** ...” (p. 12)

*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Thayer, 1967): “... to set free ... to let go, dismiss ... to let go free, to release ... used of **divorce** ... Mt. i.19; v. 31 sq; xix.3, 7-9; Mk. x.2, 4, 11; Lk. xvi.18 ... ” (p. 66)

*The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker, 1979): "... set free, release, pardon ...let go, send away, dismiss—a. **divorce** ... Mt 1:19; 5:31f; 19:3, 7-9; Mk 10:2, 4, 11 ... Lk 16:18 ..." (p. 96)

*Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Gingrich, 1975): "... release, set free, pardon ... let go, send away, dismiss ... **Divorce** ..." (p. 24)

*Index-Lexicon to the New Testament* (Young, n.d.): "...dismiss, **divorce**, forgive, let depart, let go, loose, put away, release, send away, set at liberty ..." (p. 61)

*A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament* (Strong, 1890): "... to free fully ... relieve, release, dismiss ... **divorce** ..." p. 14)

*The Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Zondervan, 1970): "... to loose ... to release ... to **divorce** to remit, forgive ... to liberate, discharge ... to dismiss ... to allow to depart, to send away ..." (p. 46)

*An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Vine, 1966): "... to let loose from, let go free ... it is further used of **divorce** in Matt. 1:19; 19:3, 7-9; Mark 10:2, 4, 11; Luke 16:18 ..." (vol. I, p. 329)

*The Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament* (Wigram, 1970): "... depart, dismiss, **divorce**, forgive, let depart, let go, loose, put away, release, send away, set at liberty" (p. 953)

### Greek Grammarians

*Learn To Read the Greek New Testament* (Powers, 1982): "release/send away/**divorce**/forgive" (p. 321)

*Teach Yourself New Testament Greek* (Macnair, 1995): "release, send away, **divorce**" (p. 462)

### Greek Translators (Matthew 5:32)

*New King James Version*: "But I say to you that whoever **divorces** his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is **divorced** commits adultery."

*New American Standard Version*: "But I say to you that everyone who **divorces** his wife, except for the cause of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a **divorced** woman commits adultery."

*New International Version*: "But I tell you that anyone who **divorces** his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to commit adultery, and anyone who marries a woman so **divorced** commits adultery."

*Revised Standard Version*: "But I say to you that every one who **divorces** his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a **divorced** woman commits adultery."

*New English Bible:* “But what I tell you is this: If a man **divorces** his wife for any cause other than unchastity he involves her in adultery; and anyone who marries a **divorced** woman commits adultery.”

*Today's English Version:* “But I tell you: if a man **divorces** his wife for any cause other than her unfaithfulness, then he is guilty of making her commit adultery if she marries again; and the man who marries her commits adultery also.”

*A New Translation:* “But I tell you, anyone who **divorces** his wife for any reason except unchastity makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a **divorced** woman commits adultery.”

*King James Version:* “But I say unto you, That whosoever **shall put away** his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is **divorced** committeth adultery.”

### Concluding Remarks

I have a little space to mention a few of Robert's remarks on my “relevant comments.” He admits that several passages cited in his first affirmative do *not* prove his proposition that “all divorced persons may marry.”

Robert says, “I presented Lev. 18:6-18 to support the fact that certain marriages were forbidden.” Therefore, this passage provides no proof of his proposition.

Robert admitted Leviticus 20:10, 21 “does not prove ... [his] position true.” Yet, he is supposed to be proving HIS PROPOSITION!

I asked Robert how his reference to Mark 6:18 offers “proof that it is lawful for all divorced persons to marry?” He responded, “Herod needed to ‘put away’ his ‘unlawful wife.’” I agree! John charged, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.” However, Robert still fails to find here the doctrine that “all divorced persons may marry.”

Concerning 1 Corinthians 5:1, Robert says, “This is another example supporting my point above.” However, it is *not* an example that proves “all divorced persons may marry.” Robert, how about giving a verse to prove your PROPOSITION?

Commenting upon my statements about Matthew 19:9, Robert says, “It indeed sets forth a scenario where adultery is committed due to an unlawful marriage.” Therefore, it also does *not* prove his proposition!

Robert states: “I do not know what evidence it would take to prove to my opponent that the Bible teaches that divorced persons may marry.” Just ONE BIBLE VERSE teaching “ALL divorced persons may marry” would suffice, Robert!



## **Robert Waters' Third Affirmative**

Tom begins his reply by stating, “I am again pleased to deny Robert's unscriptural affirmation that ‘all divorced persons may marry.’ He still has not found one verse proving his proposition.”

Tom also takes comfort in my having said a certain passage does not prove (by itself) my proposition. Well, the reader should properly view the evidence and not be influenced by Tom's denials of what is apparent in the texts I have presented.

The most important thing we can do in studying this issue, if we want the truth, is back off and look at the **WHOLE PICTURE** and **THEN** determine what is most reasonable to believe. Those who hold the traditional position start with Matt. 19:9 and go from there. But this is like finding one piece of a puzzle and drawing a conclusion as to what it is before putting any other pieces together. Imagine how foolish one would appear if he then remained determined to explain all the other pieces to harmonize with his initial conclusion.

For example: Paul said that the unmarried are to be allowed marry (1 Co 7:8, 9). Divorced people are “unmarried” and the text clearly says to let them marry. This text alone **PROVES** my proposition; but since it is not consistent with the piece of the puzzle that my opponent used to draw his conclusion, he cannot accept that it means what it says. And so he does not accept the evidence.

### **Most often used objections**

The second most misused text, by those who try to justify the traditional position on MDR, is the following: “Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.” But I am at a loss to see how this helps them. It only states **WHY** Moses suffered men to put away a wife. While it is true that Jesus pointed to God's ideal from the beginning He did not contradict Moses' Law, which allowed all divorced persons to marry another. What Moses “suffered” was not the complete divorce, as opposed to just sending away, because divorce was a command to those who would “put away” (Deut 24:1-4; Mark 10:3-5). Moses suffered the putting away, i.e., there was no immediate punishment for it, even though it was called treachery (Mal 2: 14-16) and adultery (Matt 19:9).

While Tom has stated that Jesus did not contradict Moses, his position clearly has Jesus doing just that. What Jesus actually said in Matt. 19:9 **MUST** be applied to those to whom it was spoken. This is a simple hermeneutical principle, and it is absurd to dismiss it with no better argument than Tom has offered: “Because Jesus taught regarding his kingdom”; and “...pointing them to God's original intent....”

The truth of the matter is, Jesus condemned the practice of putting away or sending out of the house, and stated that when men do such and marry another, they commit adultery against their wife (Mark 10:11). To use the word “divorce” (which if done according to the law of God, ends the marriage) in place of “put away” in the text is to **CHANGE** the entire meaning, and with consequences that are unacceptable.



I asked what it would take to prove my proposition. Tom said he needs one Bible verse that teaches all divorced persons may marry. The simplest way to arrive at truth is to use the process of elimination.

Here are the two views:

1) All divorced persons are unmarried and free to marry;

2) The only way one who is a party in divorce may marry another is that he/she has divorced the other for adultery.

Number two can be eliminated because it is contrary to Paul's clear statements in 1 Cor 7:8, 9, 27, 28, it has Jesus contradicting the Law, and it has Him breaking His own promise. That leaves #1 as being the only logical choice. But this is not proof to Tom because he is not looking at the whole picture. The scriptures I have presented and the reasoning I have offered contradict the doctrine he accepted at the time he looked at that first piece of the puzzle. I suppose it is comforting to him that many, including scholars, have done the same thing he has done. The human tradition on MDR is contrary to truth, but Jesus said, "The truth shall make you free." We must reject human tradition and stand up for Jesus, rather than accuse Him of teaching contrary to His promise and God's Law.

### **Dealing with the quibbles**

Quibble #1: Instead of admitting that the traditional view has Jesus contradicting Moses, Tom tries to MAKE his doctrine harmonize with the facts. He said, "However, Jesus taught that His law (the NT) would be different...."

Yes, the NT would be different, but in the traditional MDR proof texts Jesus obviously was talking about the PRESENT, rather than the future. The context proves my point. Observe the words in bold (below) and ask yourself if Tom is correct in not applying Jesus' teaching to the people that were present and to which it directly applied. If he cannot do so he has Jesus contradicting the Law, which he affirms Jesus did not do, and my number one argument to prove my proposition stands.

7 "They say unto him...."

8 "He saith unto them...."

9 "And I say unto you...."

10 "His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry." When would the case of "the man" be as Jesus stated? After the cross? Or was it already true, even before Jesus said it? The answer is obvious.

11 "But he said unto them...." Who could receive the saying? Jesus said, "They to whom it is given." To defeat my position, and defend his, Tom has the impossible task of showing that the words in bold do not apply to the people to whom they were spoken.

Quibble #2: I presented 1 Cor 7:8, 9 that give a command to let the unmarried marry. Tom replied: "However, he fails to prove that the 'unmarried' of this verse include all divorced people...."

Tom, if you were in a class in school and the professor said, "I want those of you who have been divorced to remain after class, I have something for you," would he be excluding those who were divorced by their spouse, but not for fornication? The answer is obvious. Yet when Paul says the same thing you say it does not apply to all the divorced.

Tom reasons that Paul's statement does not include ALL divorced people because "...this context specifies only two options for some: 'remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband' (verse 11)."

The problem with the above is that it is NOT in the context, as Tom asserted. In verse 8 Paul said, "I say unto the unmarried and the widows..." In verse 10, he begins by saying, "And unto the married I command..." So, it is evident that the context changed from dealing with the "unmarried" (which included the divorced) to dealing with problems among the "married." In verse 10, he uses the word "depart." He says, don't do it (don't leave) but if you do, remain in this "unmarried" state. Now, does "depart" mean divorce? Is one actually "divorced" just because one departs? In my first installment I presented the legal definition of a divorce and of a separation. Why, not even a legal separation is a divorce. Thus, those who are separated (because one of them departed) are STILL MARRIED, and so it is obvious why they commit adultery if they marry another.

But does the phrase "remain unmarried" indicate that Paul is talking about those who are divorced? Consider the translation by Weymouth: "Or if she has already left him, let her either remain as she is or be reconciled to him; and that a husband is not to send away his wife." Montgomery's translation is virtually identical.

Bloomfield [The Greek New Testament]: "From the use of ἄγαμος; ἄγαμος; ἄγαμος; ἄγαμος; ἄγαμος; and the air of the context it is plain that the apostle is not speaking of formal divorces, affected by law, but separations whether agreed on or not, arising from misunderstandings or otherwise."

Robertson makes a statement that indicates he believes depart in the text refers to separation.

To contend that in 1 Cor 7:10, 11 Paul is telling divorced persons they may not EVER marry another Tom has to disregard two important facts: 1) The present distress; and 2) Paul says not one word about any exception, which tells us he is not condemning marriage for the divorced. Indeed, he is dealing only with separations. A divorce ends a marriage, but a separation does not. It is reasonable to conclude that Paul merely taught that those who are separated were not to marry another, especially during the present distress. However, Paul clearly stated that the "unmarried" (divorced) may marry and commanded those who might object to "let them marry." Will you obey Paul, or follow human tradition?

Tom cited Rom 7:1-4 in his attempt to prove that some divorced persons may not marry. But he grossly misuses this text. This passage, as well as the one discussed above, says nothing about any exception. This text was not meant to teach us about divorce and remarriage. (see <http://www.totalhealth.bz/divorce-and-remarriage-romans-7-exegesis.htm>)

Tom concluded: "Furthermore, my opponent's view contradicts Jesus' teaching (Matthew 5:32; 19:9)."

No, I have demonstrated that it is Tom's view that not only contradicts Jesus' teaching in this text, but also makes Him a liar and transgressor. My view of Paul's teaching is in perfect harmony with Jesus' teaching, but it does contradict Tom's idea of what Jesus taught. In view of

his statement, that Jesus' teaching on divorce and remarriage is different from Moses' teaching, it seems apparent that Tom is not greatly concerned about contradictions.

### **Waters' Questions**

4. Can one be “put away, sent out of the house, repudiated” yet not divorced?

Tom replied in the affirmative, but then uses a faulty translation of Luke 16:18 to show “...Marriages involving divorced people may involve adultery (Luke 16:18-‘Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.’).”

Tom, where is the “exception” in Luke 16:18? Your proof text, as falsely translated, has Jesus condemning divorce under any circumstances. Remember, God is a divorcee.

Tom has admitted that it is possible for a man to send his wife out of the house without divorcing her. This is true because it takes a “bill of divorcement” to accomplish a divorce. The word “apoloio” in Matt 19:9 means “send away.” Thus, it is apparent that the thing Jesus condemned was sending away rather than a legal divorce.

5. How could Jesus have been speaking to Jews yet it not be applicable to them?

Tom states that Jesus taught people about His supper, the new birth and church discipline. We agree that this did not contradict the Law. But Tom continued: “However, Jesus' also explained truth that was relevant to the Pharisees at the time He spoke to them by pointing them to God's original intent....”

Jesus' pointing them to God's original intent was the logical and right thing to do, and that intent NEVER changed. If Tom's argument has any validity a Jew under the Law could have argued that Moses' law did not allow all divorced persons to marry because it was not God's “original intent.” To those who can see the whole picture, Moses allowed all the divorced to marry and Jesus could not have contradicted it without sinning, thus He did not. This means my proposition has to be true.

6. If apoloio, as used by Jesus, refers only to separation how would this fact affect the way you believe and practice relative to MDR, and how would it affect the church?

Tom evaded the question. Here is what should have been his straightforward answer: “Then it would be clear that Jesus was not condemning remarriage after divorce as being adultery, but was condemning the treacherous act of the men sending away their wives and marrying another.”

4. Do you think you can understand and apply Matthew 19:9 without understanding and applying Deut. 24:1-4?

Tom basically says, “Yes, we can,” but he does not use good hermeneutics in his study. This text is the hub of the issue.

Tom concluded by saying that if a municipality used Deut. 24:1-4 as a legal “procedure for a person to obtain a divorce, it would be contrary to the Lord's instructions.”

Our country, and most countries, require that divorce papers be presented, just as did Moses. Yet Tom says this is contrary to the Lord's instructions. So, Tom, first you tell us Jesus did not

contradict the Law, but now you are apparently saying the Lord DID in fact teach contrary to Moses. Here is more evidence (from your second denial) of you at odds with yourself:

“Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is OT law, not Jesus' marriage law now!” Tom, did He, or did He not, teach contrary to the Law? You can't have it both ways.

### **Tom's Questions**

Tom asked several questions. I'll use my remaining space to deal with the most relevant and challenging one:

8. Is a woman who has been “divorced” by her husband a “put away” woman?

The idea of a “put away” woman (or person) is not found in the scripture. That idea came about as a result of men's thinking “put away” means “divorced.” Nevertheless, “put away” is indeed PART of the divorce procedure authorized by God through Moses, but if a man does nothing more than “put away” his wife and marry another he commits adultery against her (Mark 10:11). Tom admitted previously (in answer to my question #4) that a woman may be put away (sent out of the house, repudiated) without being divorced. Thus, he gives much credit to my position. This mistreatment of wives is what the Jews were guilty of and what Jesus condemned. It was far worse because with a divorce they would then be free to marry another.

### **New Argument**

Jer. 3:8 “...I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce...” Some emphatically argue that “put away” means divorce. But such cannot be true because of how ridiculous the passage would read. They have God saying: I DIVORCED HER AND I DIVORCED HER. Nevertheless, the fact that God did TWO SEPARATE things (described with different words), to Israel, to accomplish the divorce, is positive proof that the sending away is NOT the divorce.

### **Conclusion**

Divorce ends a marriage and Paul said to let every man and every woman have a marriage so they can avoid fornication (1 Cor. 7:1, 2). Thus, if we deny them a marriage we put them in a vulnerable position to sin and cause many to turn from Christ. This has to be why denying marriage was included in the catalog of “doctrines of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1-4).



### **Thomas N. Thrasher's Third Negative**

Robert says, “I asked what it would take to prove my proposition. Tom said he needs one Bible verse that teaches all divorced persons may marry.” I thought that was reasonable, since Robert is affirming that proposition! However, instead of producing one verse teaching that “all divorced persons may marry,” Robert says, “The simplest way to arrive at truth is to use the process of elimination.” Actually, the simplest way is to cite a Bible verse! Suppose Robert were

affirming that water baptism is for the remission of sins. Would he “use the process of elimination” to prove that proposition? I suspect he would cite a verse (Acts 2:38) to prove it!

My brother claims there are two views (“Here are the two views”). Of course, he is wrong about this, too. There are views other than the two he states. For example, James O. Baird (*And I Say Unto You ...: A Study of Eight Positions on Divorce and Remarriage in View of Matthew 19:3-12*) discusses several additional views.

The “second view” is: “The **only way** [emphasis mine, TNT] one who is a party in divorce may marry another is that he/she has divorced the other for adultery.” It appears he thinks this is *my* position; however, it is not! Romans 7:2-3 states, “... if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.” One who has been divorced can scripturally remarry if the person to whom he/she is *bound* by God, and from whom he/she may have been unscripturally divorced, dies. A man commits adultery if he divorces his wife for any reason other than fornication and remarries another. Why? Because he is still bound/obligated to that first wife. He remains bound until she dies. The **marriage** and the **bond** are not the same! The woman is **married** to a second man while still **bound** to the first (:2-3). What many people fail to understand is that two people who marry are joined by more than their marriage covenant—they are “bound” by God. The word “bound” means “to be under obligation.” When a man and woman marry, they are under many obligations given by God (e.g., the wife is to submit to her husband and the husband is to love his wife). It is not a strange concept that two people can be divorced and yet be bound (i.e., obligated) to one another in some way. Our civil laws even recognize such bonds. For example, after a man divorces his wife, civil law may obligate him to support her with alimony. They are divorced, but they may still be “bound” (obligated) to each another.

Robert’s comment that no exception is stated in Romans 7 has no merit, for the exception is stated elsewhere (Matthew 5:32; 19:9). He reminds me of a Baptist preacher who quotes John 3:16 and concludes that baptism cannot be necessary because it is not mentioned in *that verse*.

Robert’s “first view” is: “All divorced persons are unmarried and free to marry.” He provides no verse that teaches this, although he evidently *thinks* 1 Corinthians 7:8-9 does. He declares, “This text alone PROVES my proposition.” Let us see if this passage proves that “all divorced persons may marry.” Paul wrote: “I say therefore to the **unmarried** and **widows**, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let **them** marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.” During the “present distress” (:26) it was good for the unmarried and widows to remain single (:8). Under different circumstances, Paul later instructs certain widows to marry (1 Timothy 5:14). Even during that “present distress,” it was better for one *who had a scriptural right to marry* to marry than to burn with passion. However, such marriages would have to conform to God’s requirements (e.g., Matthew 19:9).

Robert argues, “Paul said to let every man and every woman have a marriage so they can avoid fornication (1 Cor. 7:1-2).” Paul actually wrote: “Nevertheless, *to avoid* fornication, let every man have **his own wife**, and let every woman have **her own husband**.” Obviously, one ought not to interpret Paul’s statement so as to contradict other Bible statements. If a divorced person cannot contain, he/she is limited to marrying the former spouse (:11). He/she may not marry another because to do so is to commit the very thing Paul is seeking to avoid in these instructions—sexual immorality (Mark 10:11-12; Matthew 19:9).

Robert says, “Paul said that the unmarried are to be allowed to marry (1 Co 7:8-9). Divorced people are ‘unmarried’ and the text clearly says to let them marry.” Jesus said, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery” (Mark 10:11-12, NASB). Jesus makes it quite clear that those who disobey Paul’s instructions to “remain unmarried, or else be reconciled” sin when they marry another. The sin they commit is adultery. As long as that second (or subsequent) marriage is maintained and one’s former mate is living, he/she commits adultery with the second spouse.

Jesus said that Moses allowed men to put away their wives (a reference to Deuteronomy 24:1), but Robert correctly says that Deuteronomy 24:1 did not allow men to “put away” their wives without divorcing them. Therefore, “put away” in Matthew 19:8 must involve divorce, as that is what Moses allowed. In an exchange with another person, Robert admits, “Yes, my position falls if *apoluo* means divorce, as we understand it to mean as defined by Moses.” The American Standard Version concordance gives various topics and includes Matthew 19:9 and other disputed passages under the heading of “divorce.”

### Questions

Robert asked six questions in his first article. I explained, “Because of space limitations, I will address three questions now and the remaining three in my next article.” However, Robert chided me for not answering ALL six questions in my first article. He then asked me five more. I answered ALL of them in my second article, and I asked him the same number of questions he asked me. He attempted ONE out of ELEVEN! Robert should be ashamed of treating my questions this way, especially after claiming that I “evaded” ONE of his!

My brother addressed one of my questions: Is a woman who has been “divorced” by her husband a “put away” woman? He claimed, “The idea of a ‘put away’ woman (or person) is not found in the scripture.” Let’s see if “the idea of a ‘put away’ woman” is found in the Scriptures.

Leviticus 21:7—“They shall not take ... a woman **put away** from her husband”

Ezra 10:3—“... let us make a covenant with our God to **put away** all the wives...”

Ezra 10:19—“And they gave their hands that they would **put away** their wives...”

Jeremiah 3:1—“...If a man **put away** his wife...”

Matthew 5:31—“...Whosoever shall **put away** his wife...”

Several other passages refer to a woman’s being “put away.” For good measure, I will add

Mark 10:12—“And if a woman shall **put away** her husband...” I suppose he qualify as a “put away person”!

My opponent claims, “This mistreatment of wives is what the Jews were guilty of and what Jesus condemned.” Robert, in view of Mark 10:12, were Jewish husbands also being sent out of the house without being divorced? Was the mistreatment of husbands another practice of which the Jews were guilty?

Robert presents a “new argument” from Jeremiah 3:8, alleging that “the sending away is NOT the divorce”—“I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce.” He asserts, “Some emphatically argue that ‘put away’ means divorce. But such cannot be true because of how ridiculous the passage would read. They have God saying: I DIVORCED HER AND I DIVORCED HER.” However, this text actually makes perfect sense with my position. If “put her away” means divorce in this text, then the passage would read as follows: “I had **divorced** her, and given her a **bill of divorce**.” The divorce is accompanied by a written declaration.

Others have made Robert’s argument using Ephesians 5:19—“singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord.” They argue, “‘Making melody’ cannot involve singing, else Paul would be saying ‘singing and singing.’” They conclude, therefore, that “playing” is authorized. The truth is that ‘making melody with your heart’ refers to that inward component of singing the praise of God. It is not another kind of music; it is a necessary part of singing in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

Robert states that “denying marriage was included in the catalog of ‘doctrines of devils.’” However, 1 Timothy 4:3 obviously has *no* reference to our forbidding/condemning **unscriptural marriages**! Was John wrong for “forbidding” Herod’s marriage to Herodias (Mark 6:18)? Are we wrong for “forbidding” homosexual marriages (Romans 1:26-27)? Are we wrong for “forbidding” a married man from taking a second or third wife (1 Corinthians 7:2)? I answer “no” to all three questions. I don’t know how Robert answers. However, it is obvious that 1 Timothy 4:3 is teaching it is wrong to forbid **scriptural marriages**, not sinful ones!

Robert refuses to recognize the simple principle that Jesus could teach in preparation for His kingdom (during His ministry) without contradicting Moses’ law. He wrote, “While Tom has stated that Jesus did not contradict Moses, his position clearly has Jesus doing just that. What Jesus actually said in Matt. 19:9 **MUST** be applied to those to whom it was spoken.” I find it difficult to imagine that a person of Robert’s intelligence appears unable to grasp such a simple idea. I explained this in my first and second articles. Let me try a third time. Jesus’ teaching often pointed people to a time beyond Moses’ law to the arrival of His kingdom (Matthew 4:17— “From that time Jesus began to preach ... Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”). For example, He taught people about the **Lord’s supper** (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20), the **new birth** (John 3:3-5), and **church discipline** (Matthew 18:17). Although He kept Moses’ law perfectly while it was still in effect, He also prepared people for service to God according to the “**new testament**” (Hebrews 9:15; 12:24; 2 Corinthians 3:6-11). While His life was consistent with the law of Moses, Jesus proclaimed New Testament doctrines in anticipation of His kingdom. Consequently, what Jesus taught had application to all people under the NT.

However, Jesus’ also explained truth that was relevant to the Pharisees at the time He spoke to them by pointing them to God’s original intent on marriage and divorce (Matthew 19:4-6—“... **Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.**”). The Lord applied at least two points to them: God’s intent concerning marriage goes back to “the beginning” (Genesis 2:24), and Moses’ command (Deuteronomy 24:1-4) was given because of the hardness of their hearts. This answers Robert’s false charge that “it is ludicrous to contend that Jesus’ words did not apply to the people to whom He addressed – the Pharisees.”

Robert continues his oft-repeated assertion: “To use the word ‘divorce’ ... in place of ‘put away’ ... is to **CHANGE** the entire meaning, and with consequences that are unacceptable.” I will

agree that the “consequences” appear “unacceptable” to Robert and to many others who resist Bible teaching. However, I have previously demonstrated that “divorce” is in view in passages such as Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. Robert has not refuted this evidence.

### Greek Translators (Matthew 5:32)

*New King James Version*: “...whoever **divorces** his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is **divorced** commits adultery.”

*New American Standard Version*: “...everyone who **divorces** his wife, except for the cause of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a **divorced** woman commits adultery.”

*New International Version*: “...anyone who **divorces** his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to commit adultery, and anyone who marries a woman so **divorced** commits adultery.”

*Revised Standard Version*: “...every one who **divorces** his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a **divorced** woman commits adultery.”

*King James Version*: “...whosoever **shall put away** his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is **divorced** committeth adultery.”

### Greek Lexicographers and Grammarians

*Greek-English New Testament Lexicon* (Berry, 1952): “... to release, let go, to send away ... **divorce** ...” (p. 12)

*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Thayer, 1967): “... to set free ... to let go, dismiss ... to let go free, to release ... used of **divorce** ... Mt. i.19; v. 31 sq; xix.3, 7-9; Mk. x.2, 4, 11; Lk. xvi.18 ...” (p. 66)

*The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker, 1979): “... set free, release, pardon ... let go, send away, dismiss—a. **divorce** ... Mt 1:19; 5:31f; 19:3, 7-9; Mk 10:2, 4, 11 ... Lk 16:18 ...” (p. 96)

*Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Gingrich, 1975): “... release, set free, pardon ... let go, send away, dismiss ... **Divorce** ...” (p. 24)

*Index-Lexicon to the New Testament* (Young, n.d.): “...dismiss, **divorce**, forgive, let depart, let go, loose, put away, release, send away, set at liberty ...” (p. 61)

*A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament* (Strong, 1890): “... to free fully ... relieve, release, dismiss ... **divorce** ...” p. 14)

*The Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Zondervan, 1970): “... to loose ... to release ... to **divorce** to remit, forgive ... to liberate, discharge ... to dismiss ... to allow to depart, to send away ...” (p. 46)



*An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Vine, 1966): "... to let loose from, let go free ... it is further used of **divorce** in Matt. 1:19; 19:3, 7-9; Mark 10:2, 4, 11; Luke 16:18 ..." (vol. I, p. 329)

*The Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament* (Wigram, 1970): "... depart, dismiss, **divorce**, forgive, let depart, let go, loose, put away, release, send away, set at liberty" (p. 953)

### Summary

Robert, you still have not found a passage of scripture proving that "ALL divorced persons may marry." I have cited verses to prove SOME divorced persons may marry:

1. One who has divorced his/her spouse for sexual immorality: "...Whoever divorces his wife, **except for immorality**, and marries another commits adultery..." (Matthew 19:9, NASB).

2. One whose mate (the one to whom he/she is bound by God) has died: "...if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband **dies** ... she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man" (Romans 7:2-3). Robert says, "Divorce ends a marriage." However, divorce does not sever God's bond!



### Robert Waters' Fourth Affirmative

Brother Thrasher criticizes my suggestion for arriving at truth on MDR. Being a school teacher, with a doctor's degree, he should have understood this one. My friend knows that multiple choice tests are easier to pass if you use the process of elimination. For example, if you are given four choices and you do not know the answer, yet you do know for certain that three of the choices CANNOT be the answer, you then know the answer. As Tom pointed out, various views a bound on the subject of MDR, but we can narrow the field down to two categories or choices: 1) Jesus taught that divorced people commit adultery when they marry; and 2) Jesus taught that one "put away" (not fully divorced) commits adultery in marrying another. I showed that the first choice could not be true because it would require Jesus to break His promise (Matt 5:17-32) and contradict the Law by telling men they were committing adultery by marrying after a divorce, and that the person divorced would do the same. This, obviously, is contrary to the Law (Deut 24:1, 2). Thus, we simply must reject number one. This leaves number two as the ONLY logical answer, which, by the way, is supported by clear statements, which we can accept if we understand what Jesus did and did not say.

My friend has tried to get around this argument but he has failed, and will continue to fail, to come up with anything that makes sense. Thus, my position is affirmed.

I did not misunderstand Thomas' position. We all understand that death ends the marriage (Rom 7:2-4). Nevertheless, Tom does not fully understand that divorce ends a marriage. He thinks Jesus changed the Law to say a divorce must be because of adultery before it is really a divorce that FREES the parties, but he cannot explain why the Jews did not use this against Him. In previous installments I have explained what "except it be for fornication" means. He misuses

the Roman text to teach that the divorced person is still “bound.” Tom refuses to limit this text to its context or intended purpose. He says “He remains bound until she dies.” But this text does not mention any exception, thus it teaches too much for Tom.

“The marriage and the bond are not the same!” This is a straw man designed to get around Paul’s clear teachings in 1 Cor 7:8, 9. If a legal/scriptural marriage exists then a bond, i.e., marriage bond, exists. One who is “unmarried” is not obligated to faithfulness to another and is free to marry.

“...After a man divorces his wife, civil law may obligate him to support her with alimony. They are divorced, but they may still be ‘bound’ (obligated) to each other.” Tom, you should know better. Legal obligations, such as alimony, have no bearing on whether one is married or not. The idea that one can be divorced but still bound, and thus forbidden to actually marry another, has no scriptural foundation.

“Robert’s comment that no exception is stated in Romans 7 has no merit, for the exception is stated elsewhere (Matthew 5:32; 19:9).”

Tom uses circular reasoning here. My comment did have merit. His teaching in the text he noted is what is in question. I have shown that his idea of what Jesus taught cannot possibly be correct, yet he uses it to prove his exegesis of another text.

1 Cor 7:8, 9 “I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry....”

Tom says, “...Such marriages would have to conform to God’s requirements (e.g., Matthew 19:9).” But, once again, we see him using circular reasoning. He uses his view of Matt. 19:9 to try to explain away Paul’s clear teaching. In my previous installment I used a lot of space talking about the fact that brethren start with Jesus’ teaching and then seek to explain everything else to conform to what they think He said. But since what they think He said cannot be correct, unless Jesus lied and transgressed the Law, we really have no choice but to reject Tom’s idea of what Jesus said. We must believe and obey Paul.

1 Cor 7:1, 2 Thomas would have you believe that the above text cannot mean what it says because it contradicts verse 11. I showed in my previous installment that verse 11 is not directed to the divorced but to those merely separated (departed gk chorizo). Yet he stated, “...He/she is limited to marrying the former spouse (:11).” He then replied, “He/she may not marry another because to do so is to commit the very thing Paul is seeking to avoid in these instructions-sexual immorality (Mark 10:11-12; Matthew 19:9).” Once again, Tom references texts to support his point that amount to circular reasoning. Until Tom can show that Jesus did not break His promise or contradict the Law by changing it, which his position requires, his reply will be seen as circular reasoning. Question: doesn’t the text teach that marriage is designed to help one avoid fornication?

Unanswered question: “Is one actually divorced just because he/she departs?” What if the departed comes back and reconciles? In view of the fact that separations are common, we fully understand the need for a formal declaration of divorce. Of course we don’t even have to use our reasoning on that; all we need to do is hear, accept and obey what God has said (Deut 24:1-4).

Tom wrote, “As long as that second (or subsequent) marriage is maintained and one’s former mate is living, he/she commits adultery with the second spouse.”

First, note that Tom said the adultery is with the second spouse. That is NOT what the text says. Mark's account makes it clear that the adultery the man commits is "against her," i.e., the wife he "put away" unlawfully, causing her to commit adultery.

Tom wrote, "Jesus said that Moses allowed men to put away their wives (a reference to Deuteronomy 24:1), but Robert correctly says that Deuteronomy 24:1 did not allow men to 'put away' their wives without divorcing them. Therefore, 'put away' in Matthew 19:8 must involve divorce, as that is what Moses allowed."

My brother is slowly catching on. Indeed, the phrase "put away" can be involved in divorce, but it is not THE divorce (as defined by Moses) as some are now erroneously contending. But it cannot be that divorce itself was what Moses "suffered," because he gave a command to the men to actually divorce the women whom they evidently were going to simply "put away," which is what God hates (Mal 2:14-16). The text noted indicates that "putting away" is dealing treacherously. Because of such dealings God gave the divorce law through Moses (Deut 24:1-4). That Moses' decree was a "command" is affirmed by Jesus. He told Jews who were evidently "putting away" that "Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept" (Mark 10:3-5).

In previous installments I have noted the significance of the fact that the ASV, and other reliable trusted versions, NEVER translates *apoluo* as divorce. Tom notes that the ASV concordance puts the heading as "divorce" for Matt 19:9. Well, don't you suppose a different group of men, or maybe even one man, made that decision? The significant thing is how the group of language experts translated *apoluo* when they did the translation work. If they had understood the language to mean "divorce" that is how they would have rendered it in the text. Proponents of the traditional view, that contend that Jesus changed the Law on divorce, have to ignore the most trusted versions and rely on the new untrustworthy versions and scholars who were influenced by Catholicism.

I used Jeremiah 3:8 to show that the "put away equals divorce" doctrine makes no sense. God said, "I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce." Tom's doctrine has the passage saying, I DIVORCED HER AND I DIVORCED HER. But Tom thinks he has wiggle room. He stated: "If 'put her away' means divorce in this text, then the passage would read as follows: 'I had divorced her, and given her a bill of divorce.' The divorce is accompanied by a written declaration." It appears that Tom has taken the new position that a divorce occurs before the bill of divorce is written and presented. But such reasoning is absurd! The idea that one could treat a woman this way is what brought on the need for the divorce law given by Moses. (Obviously it is treachery "against her" because she would sin if she marries another.) God said "let not man put asunder." Isn't God the only one that can "put asunder" (divorce)? If man can do it without following the procedure God gave (just "put away") then isn't man also able to "put asunder"? Answer please?

My opponent has to try to change the definition of divorce to deal with my argument. Nevertheless, my argument stands.

"Robert states that 'denying marriage was included in the catalog of 'doctrines of devils.'" However, 1 Timothy 4:3 obviously has no reference to our forbidding/condemning unscriptural marriages!"

TRUE! But since you are condemning scriptural marriages, marriages that take place after a divorce as described by Moses that left the divorced “unmarried” and free to marry, according to Paul, you are doing what the text condemns!

Tom asks, “Was John wrong for ‘forbidding’ Herod’s marriage to Herodias (Mark 6:18)?”

No, but he did not forbid anyone to have a marriage at all, as does my opponent’s doctrine.

Tom notes that homosexual marriages and polygamous marriages are sinful marriages. No argument here. We can teach against such without being guilty of “forbidding to marry,” but if we disallow marriage for someone who has no marriage, being divorced as defined by Moses, we are guilty. We would also be disobeying Paul’s command to “let them marry.” Thus, we would take away God’s means for them to “avoid fornication” (1 Cor 7:1, 2, 28, 36).

Tom wrote: “Robert refuses to recognize the simple principle that Jesus could teach in preparation for His kingdom (during His ministry) without contradicting Moses’ law.” Previously I wrote, “What Jesus actually said in Matt 19:9 MUST be applied to those to whom it was spoken.” Tom evidently is unable to grasp this simple concept. Once again he makes note of some facts regarding God’s original intent on marriage and about pointing to the future, and says these facts are relevant to the Pharisees, but this does not help him with the conundrum. I proved, using passages from verses 7-11, that Jesus’ comments were directed to the people present – people who were looking for a reason to kill Jesus. Questions: 1) Why did no one charge Jesus with breaking the Law on MDR? 2) Were some of those listening to Jesus guilty of committing adultery? 3) Did they need to repent THEN or LATER? 4) If they were not guilty as charged did Jesus not lie to them by telling them their practice was sin?

Whether Jesus “proclaimed New Testament doctrines in anticipation of His kingdom” or not, is irrelevant. He could do that on certain subjects without flatly contradicting Moses’ Law on divorce, which is what Tom’s position on MDR has Him doing. Thus, my position is believable – Tom’s is not. While Tom says Jesus did not contradict Moses and that He kept the Law, his doctrine is false unless he can show how Jesus did make new law on MDR, while everyone listening to Him believed it was acceptable for Him to do so.

Tom seeks to solve the problem his doctrine faces by talking about some things Jesus said that were relevant to the Jews—namely their abuse of the divorce law. But this does not help him either—it is just more smoke. My friend is between a rock and a hard place and he needs to admit it instead of offering such quibbles.

In my previous article I stated that to use the word divorced in place of put away is to change the entire meaning, and with consequences that are unacceptable. Tom replied: “I will agree that the ‘consequences’ appear ‘unacceptable’ to Robert and to many others who resist Bible teaching.” Tom, it is the tradition that you teach that I resist because it makes Jesus a sinner and a liar. These are consequences that you evidently are either not willing to see or are willing to accept.

Tom says he has demonstrated that “divorce” is in view in passages such as Matt 5:32 and 19:9 and that I have not refuted this evidence. His “demonstration” (proof) was to quote from men and some new versions. The following are some versions that do not translate *apoluo* as divorce in Matt 5:32: ASV, BBE, Darby, DRB, LITV, MKJV, WE, WEB, WYC, YLT. Shouldn’t we make our own determination as to the meaning of *apoluo* by using good hermeneutists in our study?

“Robert, you still have not found a passage of scripture proving that ‘ALL divorced persons may marry.’ I have cited verses to prove SOME divorced persons may marry:”

Tom, are we not supposed to follow what the inspired apostle says? He did not say, “let some of the unmarried” marry,” did he? Speaking of ALL unmarried (which includes the divorced) he said, “LET THEM MARRY.” Your position has to SUPPLY the word “some” in place of “them,” whereas mine accepts what it says.

In his summary, Tom recites the traditional position. I have observed that to do so is a common practice and actually seems to be presented as an argument. But it is dogma and it proves nothing.

Divorce, as Tom defines it, does not sever God’s bond, but divorce as Moses defined it DOES sever the marriage bond. Thus, divorce ends a marriage and those divorced are free to marry another without sin (1 Cor 7:27, 28). Others simply must “let them marry.”

The traditional view on MDR that Tom holds allows one who has been divorced to marry again, but only the one to whom he/she is “bound.” (Supposedly, though they are not married in man’s eyes they are still married (bound) in God’s eyes.) It matters not that their previous spouse has married another and had children. The only hope of a “scriptural marriage” is to break up this “unscriptural marriage” and remarry the original spouse. But God condemned the practice. He said it is “abomination before the LORD” (Deut 24:4).

Answer to Questions:

1. Today, she gets the house.
2. No. Deut 24:4.
3. No. Col 3:19.
4. Usually this is the case, but there are cases where a man divorces his wife, but does not “put away” or “send out of the house.”
5. One who has no marriage and is of age.
6. One of the parties in a dead marriage.
7. Already discussed.
8. Divorced.
9. I have not denied the point.
10. It could.
11. Christ did not change the Law on MDR during His ministry.

Concluding Remarks: I have enjoyed studying the Bible with my brother in Christ, Dr. Thomas Thrasher. He is intelligent, respectful and polite. Unfortunately, we are not in agreement on MDR, but perhaps our efforts together will serve to help others to learn the truth on this most important issue.



## Thomas N. Thrasher's Fourth Negative

I thank brother Waters for his kindness and gentlemanliness during this discussion. In the midst of a pressing schedule that included adjusting to a new job as a school administrator, evangelistic work, completion of my doctoral dissertation, and numerous other responsibilities, I have attempted to submit articles for this debate. Robert's patience with my lack of expeditiousness is laudable.

Robert said that I criticized his "suggestion for arriving at truth on MDR" by eliminating possibilities. He attempted to defend his approach, saying, "We can narrow the field down to two ... choices: 1) Jesus taught that divorced people commit adultery when they marry; and 2) Jesus taught that one 'put away' (not fully divorced) commits adultery in marrying another." I have no problem with the procedure of "eliminating choices" providing all of the choices are represented correctly and some choices are truly eliminated.

However, once again, Robert has misrepresented my position in this first choice. I do not teach that **all** "divorced people commit adultery when they marry." In fact, I have specifically cited the **exception** given by Jesus in Matthew 19:9, "... whoever divorces his wife, **except for sexual immorality**, and marries another, **commits adultery**; and whoever marries her who is divorced **commits adultery**." **HOWEVER, other than the ONE EXCEPTION Jesus gave**, it is indeed the case that "**WHOEVER** divorces his wife ... and marries another, **commits adultery**"! That is what the Lord affirmed and, unfortunately, what Robert denies.

Robert said, "The first choice could not be true because it would require Jesus to break His promise (Matt 5:17-32)." This, of course, is untrue. Jesus said, "... till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law **TILL** all is fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18). The Old Testament law (cf. Hebrews 8:7-13) would end when it was fulfilled. The OT itself says it would end (Jeremiah 31:31-33). When that Old Law ended, Jesus' New Law would take effect (Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 9:15-17), including the provisions of Matthew 19:9.

Jesus' teaching was often NT teaching—instruction regarding requirements applicable to the New Covenant would be operable (Matthew 4:17— "From that time Jesus began to preach ... Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."). I have previously provided examples of His teaching regarding the **Lord's supper** (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20), the **new birth** (John 3:3-5), and **church discipline** (Matthew 18:17). The Lord kept Moses' law perfectly while it was still in effect; however, He also taught people what would be required according to the "**new testament**" (Hebrews 9:15; 12:24; 2 Corinthians 3:6-11). Despite brother Water's charge of "contradiction," it is quite easy to understand the principle involved in Jesus obeying the law currently in effect (Old Law) while providing instruction regarding the New Law that is soon to take effect. In Matthew 19:9 our Lord provides NT instruction: "whoever **divorces** his wife, **except for sexual immorality**, and marries another, **commits adultery**; and whoever marries her who is **divorced commits adultery**." Contrary to Robert's affirmation, not all divorced person may marry with God's approval. When some divorced persons marry, adultery results!

Robert thinks he eliminated choice one. He wrote, "This leaves number two as the **ONLY** logical answer." What was choice two? "Jesus taught that one '**put away**' (**not fully divorced**) commits adultery in marrying another" (emphasis TNT). Critical to Robert's position is that "put away" in Matthew 19:9 and Matthew 5:32 means "not fully divorced." However, evidence from

a variety of sources knowledgeable about the vocabulary of the Bible, give “divorce” as a definition of *apoluo*. Those who translated Matthew 19:9 and Matthew 5:32 often used the word “divorce.” This is such a fundamental and vital issue that I will again summarize the evidence that refutes Robert’s basic tenet.

### **Greek Translators (Matthew 19:9)**

According to Robert, ALL of these translators are WRONG.

*New King James Version*: “... whoever **divorces** his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is **divorced** commits adultery.”

*New International Version*: “... anyone who **divorces** his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

*New American Standard Bible*: “... whoever **divorces** his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

*New Living Translation*: “... whoever **divorces** his wife and marries someone else commits adultery—unless his wife has been unfaithful.”

*English Standard Version*: “... whoever **divorces** his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

*New Life Version*: “... whoever **divorces** his wife, except for sex sins, and marries another, is guilty of sex sins in marriage. Whoever marries her that is divorced is guilty of sex sins in marriage.”

*Holman Christian Standard Bible*: “... whoever **divorces** his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

*New International Reader’s Version*: “... Anyone who **divorces** his wife and gets married to another woman commits adultery. A man may **divorce** his wife only if she has not been faithful to him.”

*Today’s New International Version*: “... anyone who **divorces** his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

*Revised Standard Version*: “... whoever **divorces** his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery.”

*New Revised Standard Version*: “... whoever **divorces** his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another commits adultery.”

*Complete Jewish Bible*: “... whoever **divorces** his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery!”

*Weymouth New Testament*: “... whoever **divorces** his wife for any reason except her unfaithfulness, and marries another woman, commits adultery.”

### Greek Translators (Matthew 5:32)

*New King James Version*: "... whoever **divorces** his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is **divorced** commits adultery."

*New American Standard Version*: "... everyone who **divorces** his wife, except for the cause of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a **divorced** woman commits adultery."

*New International Version*: "... anyone who **divorces** his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to commit adultery, and anyone who marries a woman so **divorced** commits adultery."

*Revised Standard Version*: "... every one who **divorces** his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a **divorced** woman commits adultery."

*King James Version*: "... whosoever **shall put away** his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is **divorced** committeth adultery."

### Greek Lexicographers and Grammarians

According to Robert, ALL of these lexicographers and grammarians are also WRONG.

*Greek-English New Testament Lexicon* (Berry, 1952): "... to release, let go, to send away ... **divorce** ..." (p. 12)

*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Thayer, 1967): "... to set free ... to let go, dismiss ... to let go free, to release ... used of **divorce** ... Mt. i.19; v. 31 sq; xix.3, 7-9; Mk. x.2, 4, 11; Lk. xvi.18 ..." (p. 66)

*The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker, 1979): "... set free, release, pardon ... let go, send away, dismiss—a. **divorce** ... Mt 1:19; 5:31f; 19:3, 7-9; Mk 10:2, 4, 11 ... Lk 16:18 ..." (p. 96)

*Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Gingrich, 1975): "... release, set free, pardon ... let go, send away, dismiss ... **Divorce**..." (p. 24)

*Index-Lexicon to the New Testament* (Young, n.d.): "... dismiss, **divorce**, forgive, let depart, let go, loose, put away, release, send away, set at liberty ..." (p. 61)

*A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament* (Strong, 1890): "... to free fully ... relieve, release, dismiss ... **divorce** ..." p. 14)

*The Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Zondervan, 1970): "... to loose ... to release ... to **divorce** to remit, forgive ... to liberate, discharge ... to dismiss ... to allow to depart, to send away ..." (p. 46)

*An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Vine, 1966): "... to let loose from, let go free ... it is further used of **divorce** in Matt. 1:19; 19:3, 7-9; Mark 10:2, 4, 11; Luke 16:18 ..." (vol. I, p. 329)



*The Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament* (Wigram, 1970): "... depart, dismiss, **divorce**, forgive, let depart, let go, loose, put away, release, send away, set at liberty" (p. 953)

### Hebrew Lexicographers and Grammarians

*Student's Hebrew Lexicon* (Davies & Mitchell, 1960: "a cutting off; then separation, **divorce** Deut. 24,1" (p. 306).

*Old Testament Word Studies* (Wilson, 1870): "... **divorce** ... divorcement" (p. 519). This is the meaning given for Deuteronomy 24. He lists this passage under the heading "**divorce**"!

Now, you can choose to believe Robert ("put away" is not "divorce" in passages such as Matthew 19:9 and 5:32), but numerous lexicographers and translators (whom, I suspect, know more about the original languages than brother Waters) say that the "putting away" is divorce in these passages. For example, once more, look at Matthew 5:32—"... whosoever shall **PUT AWAY** his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is **DIVORCED** committeth adultery." The "put away" woman is the "divorced" woman! Therefore, Robert's fundamental premise is simply **WRONG**. Consequently, his whole argument crumbles.

My friend comments, "Tom does not fully understand that divorce ends a marriage." Wrong again, Robert. Divorce does end a marriage, but it does not free a person to marry someone else with God's approval. Since my opponent cited Weymouth's translation, I will cite it on this matter: "'And I tell you that **whoever DIVORCES** his wife **for any reason except her unfaithfulness**, and **MARRIES** another woman, **commits adultery**.'"

Robert contends that Romans 7 "does not mention any exception, thus it teaches too much for Tom." I am disappointed that Robert seems not to understand the basic principle of taking ALL that the Bible says on a subject. His thinking is no better than that of the people who read John 3:16 and conclude that baptism is not necessary (ignoring other passages such as Acts 2:38, 22:16, Mark 16:16, and 1 Peter 3:21). Robert's comment that Romans 7 gives no exception still has no merit, because the exception is stated in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9).

Robert responds to my observation that "the marriage and the bond are not the same" by saying, "This is a straw man." Why did Robert not reply to my scriptural argument from Romans 7:2-3? I explained, "The woman is **married** to a second man while still **bound** to the first (:2-3). What many people fail to understand is that two people who marry are joined by more than their marriage covenant—they are 'bound' by God." The **bond** existed after the **marriage** ended in divorce. This is why the woman who "**marries** another man ... will be called an **adulteress**"—she is still "bound" to her first husband by God!

Robert asks, "Is one actually divorced just because he/she departs?" No. However, the "putting away" of Matthew 19:9 and Matthew 5:32 **IS** "divorce," according to the evidence from lexicographers and translators already cited. My friend proceeds to comment, "All we need to do is hear, accept and obey what God has said (Deut 24:1-4)." Brethren, why is it necessary to point out repeatedly to Robert that Deuteronomy 24 is OLD TESTAMENT teaching? Just look at the context:

Verse 5: “When a man has taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war or be charged with any business; **he shall be free at home one year**, and bring happiness to his wife whom he has taken.” Is this teaching applicable today?

Verses 10-11: “When you lend your brother anything, **you shall not go into his house** to get his pledge. You shall stand outside, and the man to whom you lend shall bring the pledge out to you.” Is this command applicable today?

Verse 18: “But you shall remember that **you were a slave in Egypt**, and the LORD your God redeemed you from there.” When were you a slave in Egypt, Robert? How many people today whom you encourage to violate Matthew 19:9 were ever slaves in Egypt?

Verse 22: “And you shall remember that **you were a slave in the land of Egypt**; THEREFORE I command you to do this thing.” The law of which these verses were a part is the same law of which verses 1-4 are a part!

Commenting on 1 Timothy 4:3, Robert alleges, “You are condemning scriptural marriages.” No. I accept Jesus’ condemnation of marriages in violation of Matthew 19:9. God says, “... whoever **divorces** his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, **COMMITS ADULTERY**; and whoever marries her who is **divorced** **COMMITS ADULTERY**”! The truth is that brother Waters approves some marriages in which adultery is involved.

My brother says, “Speaking of ALL unmarried (which includes the divorced) he [Paul] said, ‘LET THEM MARRY.’” The issue in this context (1 Corinthians 7:1-7) is marriage versus celibacy. Paul recommends celibacy in some instances, while not discrediting marriage. Nothing about marriage itself would prevent unmarried people from marrying. However, some are not scripturally eligible to marry another because to do so results in their committing adultery (Matthew 19:9; 5:32). We must take ALL that God says about marriage and divorce, not just three words (“let them marry”) out of context.

Robert complains about the Lord’s teaching (Matthew 19:9; 5:32), saying, “The only hope of a ‘scriptural marriage’ is to break up this ‘unscriptural marriage’ and remarry the original spouse.” It is NOT an “abomination before the LORD” to quit committing adultery! Remember that God’s people in Ezra’s day “broke up” marriages, some in which children were involved, in order to please God: “We have trespassed against our God, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land ... let us make a covenant with our God to **put away** all these wives and those who have been born to them” (Ezra 10:2-3).

Although my remaining space is limited, I want to comment on Robert’s “answers” to some of my questions. Robert evaded several questions and only partially answered others.

Question: Who may scripturally marry?

Robert’s answer: “One who has no marriage and is of age.”

Therefore, Robert thinks that a person who has been divorced “for the cause of fornication” can “scripturally marry” another person, although the Lord said that involved committing adultery (Matthew 5:32; 19:9).

Question: Who may scripturally divorce?

Robert’s answer: “One of the parties in a dead marriage.”

I wish Robert had explained what he means by a “dead marriage” and cited Scripture for his answer!

Question: What is the difference between being “bound” to one man and being “married” to another (Romans 7:2-3)?

Robert’s answer: “Already discussed.”

Perhaps he “discussed” it, but he never explained a difference, according to his view. Paul wrote that a woman could be **married** to a second man while still **bound** to the first (Romans 7:2-3). Being “bound” and being “married” are not the same.

Question: Is a woman who has been “divorced” by her husband a “put away” woman?

Robert’s answer: “Divorced.”

I asked if she is a “PUT AWAY” woman, but Robert evaded my question! Of course, I can understand why he did not choose to tell us if she is “put away.” He assumes that a “put away” woman is NOT the same as a “divorced” woman.

Question: Can being in an unscriptural marriage keep one from going to heaven?

Robert’s answer: “It could.”

Robert knows there is such a thing as an “unscriptural marriage.” However, he thinks a man can divorce his wife **for a reason other than sexual immorality** and marry another woman (an unscriptural marriage—Matthew 5:32; 19:9) and still go to heaven. Jesus referred to such a situation as “adultery.” The Bible teaches adulterers will be lost (Galatians 5:19-21; Revelation 22:15; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss with Robert the subject of divorce and remarriage. I urge each reader to “search the Scriptures” to learn what God has revealed on this, and every, subject. Truth makes us free (John 8:32). Error never does!



**END OF THE DEBATE**

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**Thrasher—Welch Debate** on the formula of words used in baptism

D. L. Welch (Pentecostal) and Thomas N. Thrasher (Christian)

**Warnock—Williams Discussion** on weddings and funerals in the meetinghouse

Weldon E. Warnock (Christian) and Ralph D. Williams (Christian)

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