

**1160 What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate - Mark(10)1-12
(Verses refer to those in NASB95 unless otherwise specified, and by Whirlwind.)**

To look at this controversial issue, we must start from the fundamentals, that is, from the fact that Christians all believe that "both the Old and New Testaments are inspired by God." Because God is not an ambiguous God, "What God tells us through the Bible is consistent." Also because of inspiration, we "will not discount the words of the Bible." Based on these two principles, when the Triune God opens our eyes, we will see things that we normally would not see. In this article, we will give such examples to illustrate this point.

First, let us look at the text that contains the phrase, "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate," and suggest that we examine what the Bible says from the perspective of "What God tells us through the Bible is consistent." Second, to achieve this goal, let's consider what this passage mentions. The Mosaic Law permitted unilateral divorce, but Jesus clearly stated, "...Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment."(Mark 10:5). God's original design was, as Jesus said, "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."(Mark 10:9). Third, we know that David was a man after God's own heart, but the Bible records that God still allowed Satan to tempt him and force him to face his true self. One of these temptations led David to commit adultery and, through concealment of the truth, to murder Uriah the Hittite with the sword of the sons of Ammon. Although God sovereignly pardoned his death penalty, punishment was inevitable, and we will briefly mention this. From God's pardon of his death penalty, we know that David's case was a special case from the judgment of the Law. Therefore, when reading the Bible, we must distinguish special cases from general principles. This is related to our main theme, "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."(Mark 10:9). Fourth, to illustrate the difference between exceptions and the general case, we move on to the story of the prostitute Rahab. The Bible clearly records her lying but only praises her faith. Since the Bible explicitly prohibits lying which claims Satan as one's father, we can see this as an exception since there is only one consistent explanation for this, that is, God has absolute sovereignty to forgive David's death sentence and He also forgave Rahab's lying. Therefore, the Bible only mentions her as an example of faith. Finally, let's examine where the traditional concept of absolute prohibition of divorce originates and where it is inconsistent with Scripture. In short, forbidding divorce is the general rule, and when it is an exception, divorce should be done in obedience to God.

1. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate

"Getting up, He went from there to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan; crowds gathered around Him again, and, according to His custom, He once more began to teach them. Some Pharisees came up to Jesus, testing Him, and began to question Him whether it was lawful for a man to divorce a wife. And He answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?" They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and the two shall become one flesh; so they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man

separate.” In the house the disciples began questioning Him about this again. And He said to them, “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 10:1-12)

The same incident is recorded in Matthew 19:3-9, which then adds, "The disciples said to Him, “If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry.” But He said to them, “Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given. For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother’s womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it.””(Matthew 19:10-12) Indeed, only those who can accept it will choose not to marry for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Paul clearly stated, "Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?"(1 Corinthians 9:5). Therefore, Paul was definitely not married at that time.

This is a controversial passage, especially since our view differs greatly from traditional beliefs. Therefore, we need to examine the Bible's teaching in detail, because "What God tells us through the Bible is consistent."

2. The Law of Moses and God's arrangement

First, let's look at what the Law of Moses says: "“When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house, and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man’s wife, and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.””(Deuteronomy 24:1-4)

The text states that divorce was unilateral by man. The divorce by woman was not permitted in Jewish society at the time, and the subsequent regulations are also clearly stated. But Jesus made it clear, "...Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment."(Mark 10:5). This is different from God's original design, for "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."(Mark 10:9).

God's original design is clearly stated in the book of Genesis: "The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib (H6763) which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said, “This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.” For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”(Genesis 2:22-24). Yes, Adam knew that Eve was taken from him, and that only after the two became one flesh could the complete Adam of creation be formed. As for how to translate the word H6763, I don't know, but it definitely cannot be translated as "rib" because this word has never been

translated as "rib" in other contexts. Previously, in "3. The reason why Eve was not made from the rib and the couple became one" under "1146 Adam's creation and making Eve and their becoming one – Genesis(2)4-25," we have discussed this in detail by quoting scriptures. Please go to the website "<https://a-christian-voice.com/>" and click on "On spiritual understanding about life" to find this article.

3. David committed adultery and murder and was spared death penalty with punishment

First, let's look at David. He was a man after God's own heart. The Old Testament says, "...The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, ..." (1 Samuel 13:14). Soon after, Samuel anointed David. The New Testament explicitly states, "After He had removed him (Saul), He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My heart, who will do all My will.'" (Acts 13:22)

From the Bible, we see that David's life was frequently marked by God's supernatural providence. For example, "Now the Philistines came up once again and spread themselves out in the valley of Rephaim. When David inquired of the LORD, He said, "You shall not go directly up; circle around behind them and come at them in front of the balsam trees. It shall be, when you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then you shall act promptly, for then the LORD will have gone out before you to strike the army of the Philistines." Then David did so, just as the LORD had commanded him, and struck down the Philistines from Geba as far as Gezer." (2 Samuel 5:22-25). Yet, God still allowed Satan to tempt him, forcing him to face his true self.

For example, in his later years, regarding the counting of the people, "Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel." (1 Chronicles 21:1). So God still allowed Satan to tempt him. Some might refer to this verse: "Now again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and it incited David against them to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah."" (2 Samuel 24:1). So who provoked David? It was Satan, and it was Jehovah who allowed him to do so, just as the book of Job says, "Then the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." ..." (Job 1:12). Satan could never do anything beyond what God allowed. And each time he had to ask God for permission, "Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face." So the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life."" (Job 2:4-6)

Other temptations included: "Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance. So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her; and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house. The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, "I am pregnant."" (2 Samuel 11:2-5) David committed adultery.

Notice that she had just become cleansed from her menstrual period, so how could she possibly have gotten pregnant? Satan couldn't do that; it was God's work. David, apparently unaware of this at the time, sought to conceal the matter, to the point "Why have you despised the word of the LORD by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon."(2 Samuel 12:9). Under normal circumstances, this would have been a capital offense in the eyes of Jehovah.

But "...Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die.""(2 Samuel 12:13) God used His absolute sovereignty to pardon David's death sentence, but God was fair, and he also received punishment: "However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die."(2 Samuel 12:14) Furthermore, "...the sword shall never depart from your house, ..." (2 Samuel 12:10) And "Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes and give them to your companion, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.'"(2 Samuel 12:11-12) His punishment was very severe.

He first acted in accordance with God's will, and then God allowed him to be tempted. He also suffered punishment in this life for the incidents with counting the people and Bathsheba. God is fair and will not remember past punishments for past mistakes. Therefore, the Bible's evaluation of David is, "because David did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the case of Uriah the Hittite."(1 Kings 15:5)

Does David's example mean that adultery is permissible? No, absolutely not. This is a special case, while the general principle is clearly stated in the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament: "'You shall not commit adultery.'"(Exodus 20:14) The New Testament also consistently states: "Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge."(Hebrews 13:4).

The Bible generally states general principles, but there are exceptions, and we must distinguish those that are special. Therefore, Jehovah "...made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the sons of Israel."(Psalm 103:7). Let's examine the story of the prostitute Rahab from the perspective of "What God tells us through Bible is consistent," and we can see how her lying was forgiven.

4. The prostitute Rahab's faith and the forgiveness of her lies

First, "And the king of Jericho sent word to Rahab, saying, "Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the land." But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them, and she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. It came about when it was time to shut the gate at dark, that the men went out; I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you

will overtake them." But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them in the stalks of flax which she had laid in order on the roof."(Joshua 2:3-6)

"Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. When we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath."(Joshua 2:8-11) We know that "For just as the body without the spirit (G4151) is dead, so also faith without works is dead."(James 2:26). The faith and actions that accompanied the prostitute Rahab were essentially lying at the cost of her life.

Therefore, some Christians, based on Rahab's example, ridiculously claim that lying is acceptable and can be practiced. The Bible clearly states that "...Whenever he (Satan) speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."(John 8:44). How could the Triune God require us to acknowledge Satan as our father? If we accidentally tell a lie, we must confess it once we discover it. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."(1 John 1:9).

So how do we explain the story of the prostitute Rahab consistently? She only heard what Jehovah did, then she had a great faith and was willing to lie without concerning she could be killed. However, the Bible only praises Rahab's faith, as stated in the book of Hebrews: "By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace."(Hebrews 11:31). Based on the principle that "What God tells through Bible is consistent," we can see that this is a special case. There is only one consistent explanation: God has absolute sovereignty to pardon David's death sentence, and He also forgave Rahab for lying. Therefore, the Bible only mentions her as an example of faith. Therefore, when reading the Bible, it is important to distinguish special cases from general principles. This is related to our main topic: "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."(Mark 10:9)

5. The traditional concept of absolutely forbidding divorce and its biblical inconsistency

The traditional concept is fundamentally based on the verse, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."(Genesis 2:24). Therefore, the traditional concept holds that divorce is absolutely forbidden once married. This is certainly not what Moses said, nor is it God's original will, for Jesus clearly stated, "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."(Mark 10:9). How many people truly understand that their marriages are God's? As far as I know, many believe this, but few truly understand it. When one knows that a marriage is God's joining together, they naturally wouldn't consider divorce. Many people use the words of Genesis 2:24 to restrain godly wives from divorce and obey the verse literally, "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord."(Ephesians 5:22). However, they forget the husband's responsibility: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church

and gave Himself up for her."(Ephesians 5:25) Although husbands may not encounter the situation to give up their physical lives in their lifetime, they must have this determination.

This is not to encourage divorce; quite the contrary. God created man and woman in a certain order: "For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve."(1 Timothy 2:13). We must understand that husband and wife have different roles, as "Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.""(Genesis 2:18). Men and women are equal before salvation. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."(John 3:16). Gender has nothing to do with this. As we mentioned earlier, only after two people become one flesh can they form the complete Adam of creation. Especially when the wife is right, how can we be not "subject to one another in the fear of Christ."(Ephesians 5:21)? Therefore, not being able to divorce is just a general rule. There are exceptions that clearly demonstrate that some marriages are definitely not arranged by God.

Let's take a more extreme, but possible, example: a husband and wife are both non-believers to start with. After marriage, the wife converts, while the husband remains an unbeliever and engages in domestic violence. In this situation, some might say that this is God's gift to the wife, reminding her to remember the verse, "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord."(Ephesians 5:22). Let us view that fact that a husband who commits domestic violence is definitely not fulfilling his responsibilities. A godly wife knows, "Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."(Romans 12:17-18). If you should live in peace with everyone, how much more so with your husband?

Usually, even in cases of domestic violence, a wife won't immediately seek a divorce. Instead, she might view it as punishment for a wrong decision. She only considers divorce when she is absolutely certain that the marriage is not God's will. We know the Bible clearly states, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it."(1 Corinthians 10:13). How can we be sure that her husband's ultimate consent to divorce wasn't God's best solution for her? In short, not divorcing is the general rule, and when there are exceptions, we should obey God and divorce.

Let's finally look at this passage: "And He said to them, "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) This is a general principle, not addressing exceptions. God sometimes facilitates a marriage in ways we can hardly imagine. Didn't we previously mention that God's work facilitated David and Bathsheba's marriage? And "Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and went in to her and lay with her; and she gave birth to a son, and he named him Solomon. Now the LORD loved him and sent word through Nathan the prophet, and he named him Jedidiah for the LORD'S sake."(2 Samuel 12:24-25)