



The Remains of Shattered Lives

Some suggest that “things are just different today!” A papyrus divorce certificate dating to 13 B.C. reveals little has changed. Although the document says nothing about the pain

and betrayal that led two people to separate, it does reveal hearts as cold and materialistic as those in modern divorce courts. It declares “Zois acknowledges that she has received from Antipater by hand from his house the material which he received for dowry, clothes in the value of 120 drachmae and a pair of gold earrings” (H & E 6). What a sad epitaph of a failed marriage.



Ancient Divorce Certificate



4700 Andrews Ave.
Amarillo TX 79106
806-352-2809
www.olsenpark.com

Faithful Sayings Issue 12.42 October 17, 2010

Welcome Visitors

We are so glad that you joined us today.
Please come again.

● Let us know if you have any questions.

ISSUE

12.42

BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

October 17
2010

Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM
10:20 AM
6:00 PM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Bill Davis
Steve Dixon
Pat Goguen
Jack Langley
Neil Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott

Evangelists:

Kyle Pope
Jason Garcia



Divorce and Remarriage in Ancient Times

By Kyle Pope

Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 19:9 that fornication is the sole cause for an innocent spouse to divorce the guilty and remarry, was not produced in a moral vacuum, but in a real world of people facing the same challenges that exist today. Many of the loose values of today are merely echoes of ancient times.

Customs of the Pagans

In the Greek world divorce was allowed for many reasons. In Athens while a woman seeking a divorce had to go before the Archon, a man could simply send a wife from his house (Plutarch, *Alcibiades*, 8). Among the Spartans it was believed that a barren woman should be put away (Herodotus, 5.39).



According to tradition Romulus the legendary founder of Rome established marriage laws which allowed a man to put away his wife only for poisoning the children, counterfeiting the keys to the house, and adultery (Plutarch, *Romulus*,22). By the first century such laws were disregarded. Caesar Augustus pushed through legislation intended to strengthen marriage and limit divorce, yet mostly



Olsen Park church of Christ

it concerned financial penalties for unjustly divorcing a wife (Seutonium, *Augustus*,34). Sadly, the dowry women brought into marriage was the only thing that preserved many ancient unions.

Not all ancients were so tolerant of divorce. Tacitus claimed that the Germans maintained very strict marriage codes. Adultery was severely punished and a woman was said to take “one husband, just as she has one body for life” (*Germania*,18,19).

Personal Behavior

To the rulers of the lands in which the gospel was first preached the Lord’s teachings on marriage and divorce were in direct opposition to their own lifestyles. The governor Felix, to whom Paul spoke of “righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come” (Acts 24:25) persuaded Drusilla to forsake her lawful husband the king of Emesa and unlawfully marry him (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*,20.7.2). Cicero, governor of Cilicia, the province of Paul’s birth, a century earlier divorced Terentia, his wife of thirty years for squandering his assets, then married a younger wealthy woman to pay his debts (Plutarch, *Cicero*,41).

All the emperors mentioned in Scripture lived in violation of Christ’s teaching. Augustus (Luke 2:1) divorced his first wife Claudia before the marriage was consummated. His second wife, Scribonia, previously married to two former consuls, he divorced claiming “I could not bear the way she nagged at me.” His true love Livia, he stole away



Caesar Augustus

from her husband, although she was pregnant at the time (Seutonium, *Augustus*,62).

Livia’s child, Tiberius, the second emperor (Luke 3:1), divorced his first wife Vipsania when she became pregnant again shortly after the birth of their son. Tiberius married Julia the daughter of Augustus, whom he eventually divorced for sexual immorality. Although he had passed laws banishing noble women who had enrolled as prostitutes, he maintained a palace on the island of Capri where he indulged his own immoral desires (Seutonium, *Tiberius*,7; 35; 43).

Claudius, the third emperor mentioned in Scripture (Acts 11:28) divorced his first wife for “scandalous behavior” and suspicion of murder. His second wife he divorced for less serious reasons. His third wife actually signed a formal marriage contract with another man while maintaining a marriage with him. His most scandalous marriage was made with Agrippina, his niece. Claudius actually had a law passed which allowed uncles to marry their nieces so that he would not be charged with incest (Seutonium, *Claudius*,26).

In the second century our Lord’s teaching found no nobler audience. The religious writer Justin in a letter to the emperor Antoninus Pius defending the Lord’s teachings claimed—“those who make second marriages according to human law are sinners in the sight of our Teacher” (*First Apology*,15). Antoninus was the adopted son of Hadrian, the emperor widely known for his adulterous homosexual relationship with a young man named Antinous (Spartianus, *Hadrian*,12,14).



Claudius Caesar