



Deuteronomy 24:1-4
A Certificate of Divorce
September 12, 2021

“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 uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, ²when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man’s wife, ³if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, ⁴then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after 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 is giving you as an inheritance.

A bit more than a year ago, a member of the congregation sent me the sermon, “God’s Divorce From Israel” given by Chuck Baldwin. I was asked to address it as Baldwin claims that the divorce of Israel means that the people in the land of Israel today are not God’s people, and that they are no longer a part of what God is doing in the world.

As his sermon is openly posted on YouTube for all the world to see, I will not be as gracious as I might otherwise have been. Unsound theology is to be called out – openly and publicly – as Paul reveals in Galatians 2.

To his credit, Baldwin does acknowledge that Jews are a part of the church, but that is as obvious as the nose on one’s face. Any person on the planet who trusts in Jesus is a part of the church, which is the Bride of Christ.

Other than this one sermon, I know nothing about the guy, but this sermon clearly reveals a faulty hermeneutic that completely misses what God is doing in and through Israel in redemptive history. I can’t hold back my disdain for his theology, nor will I.

Such doctrine as his reveals a God that is not faithful to His covenants, and His word is not to be taken at face value. We must remember that man’s unfaithfulness does not negate the faithfulness of God.

In his sermon, Baldwin cites the verses used in today’s passage – well, actually he miscites them – in order to come to an erroneous conclusion concerning Israel of today. He says that these verses in Deuteronomy 24 were as a protection for the women.

That has nothing to do with what Moses is saying. The entire basis for what is said is found only in verse 4, and it has nothing to do with that. He then says that the Lord through the prophets (Isaiah and Jeremiah) is basically saying –

“As you used divorce against your wives, I am using divorce against you. You and I are through. This marriage is over.” Chuck Baldwin

In saying that, he is then implying that the Lord is the wrongdoer because He has divorced His wife who is supposed to be protected as he is noted as saying earlier. The thought process is unclear and convoluted.

If the Lord is the Husband, and the purpose of the law is to protect the wife, then one could only conclude that the Lord failed to protect his wife by divorcing her.

This is the problem with not studying the law properly and, instead, relying on life application and topical sermons. There is no understanding of what the Lord is actually conveying in really important passages of Scripture.

The doctrinal statement on his church’s website says, “LF opposes Socialism, Neoconism and Zionism. Accordingly, we do not support the socialistic Welfare State or the Neocon Warfare State. Neither do we believe that the modern Zionist State of Israel represents either historical (Biblical) Israel or prophetic Israel. Accordingly, we reject Scofieldism and dispensational futurism.”

In other words, the prophetic words of Ezekiel, Daniel, Revelation, and etc. are not to be taken literally when they speak of Israel the people, and they have no part of God’s redemptive plans for the future. That means, 100% and for sure, that he does not believe our text verse for today...

Text Verse: *“I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; They shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. ¹⁵ I will plant them in their land, And no longer shall they be pulled up From the land I have given them,” Says the LORD your God.” Amos 9:14, 15*

There is no time in human history where this has been literally fulfilled. Israel was pulled up, twice, and so if you don’t believe that the people in the land today are who the Lord is speaking of, then you either don’t believe the word, or you must say that these words mean something other than what they say. Thus, with his theology, the Bible (the word of God) concerning these verses is 1) wrong, or 2) it must be spiritualized.

This is true with countless other Old Testament (and New Testament) verses which clearly indicate that God is not through with Israel, and that He has planted them back in the land of Israel for His sovereign purposes.

In one of his statements during the sermon, and speaking of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, he says that “the destruction of Jerusalem was God’s writ of divorcement from Israel.” I’d love to find where in Scripture he gets that idea. But... it’s not there, so he won’t.

He was saying this in relation to the words of Jeremiah 3 (which we will cite today). Jeremiah 3 is at a time prior to the first temple (along with Jerusalem) destruction, not only the second... oops.

So how can the “divorce,” that Baldwin is speaking of, be the Roman “divorce.” Obviously, the temple destruction does not mean – as he arbitrarily and incorrectly claims – a “divorce.” If it did, there would have been two divorces... oops.

Secondly, as you will see in our words today, the Lord never divorced Judah... oops. That is actually rather important because Judah is the land, and the people group, where the temple (and Jerusalem) is... oops. The Lord was speaking about a divorce with the northern ten tribes (Israel)... oops. But even they are called back by the Lord to Himself, as is clearly stated elsewhere in Scripture... oops.

There are lots and lots of oopsies in his 22 minute and 41 second sermon. So many that I am personally embarrassed for him. A little less golfing (or whatever) and a bit more study will help resolve this. A reliance on a literal interpretation of the word of God, when it calls for it, will help resolve this too. And, learning the context of what is being said is always a giant help.

In that sermon, his thoughts are confused, his handling of Scripture is appalling, and his conclusions make no sense at all. As this is the only sermon I have ever seen of his, I will chalk this up to a really bad week, no time to prepare for his sermon, and temporary loss of memory involving important Bible verses as he was speaking.

Otherwise, if this is indicative of his normal theology, those who sit under him are being instructed in a very poor manner by someone who probably should take an extended vacation and do nothing but read the word again and again until it sinks in.

Wonderful truths, such as pleasing God through sound doctrine and proper theology are to be found in His superior word. And so, let us turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. When a Man Takes a Wife (verses 1-4)

The first four verses comprise one sentence, the main subject of which is not found until the fourth verse. Everything before that is given to bring the reader to understand what is

forbidden there. Moses' words are stated precisely and with a logical purpose and intent. With that in mind, verse 1 now begins with...

¹“When a man takes a wife and marries her,

ki yiqah ish ishshah ubealah – “When takes man wife and has dominion over her.” The word *baal*, signifying to marry or rule over, is used. The idea of being a wife or being married has been seen many times since Genesis 2:4, but the verb *baal* has only been used twice so far, beginning in Genesis 20:3. In both instances, it referred to the authority of the man over the woman.

The noun form, *baal*, has been used a couple times in the same manner. Moses' use of it now shows that he is referring to rule of a man over a woman. In the use of this now, it implies an unequal footing. This is seemingly at odds with what Genesis 2 states –

“And Adam 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.’ ²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

Genesis 2:23, 24

In the words of Genesis 2, it can be argued that it implies an equalness displayed in mutual interaction. There may be differing roles, but they would seemingly work harmoniously together. Only in Genesis 3 does this appear to change –

“To the woman He said: ‘I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you.’” Genesis 3:16

Nothing was said of rule until that point, but from that point on it is taken as an axiom that the man will rule over his wife. Even if a oneness is still what occurs, it is a oneness with an authority and rule within the union. As for this rule of the man over the woman in marriage, in such a state, Moses' continues with...

^{1 (con't)} and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes

v'hayah im lo timsa khi b'enav – “and it shall be if no she finds grace in his eyes.” This is a conditional clause leading to the purpose stated in the main clause.

Further, Moses is not saying that such will ever happen, but he is simply noting that if it does happen, what actions can be taken, and what things are forbidden based on such action.

The man has assumed authority over a woman through marriage, and now she fails to find grace in his eyes. Grace is getting what one does not deserve. In other words, there is something wrong, and the husband is unwilling to overlook that thing. His favor does not extend to such a point. If this is the case...

¹ (con't) **because he has found some uncleanness in her,**

ki matsa bah ervat davar – “when he has found in her nakedness thing.” In other words, there is something in her that exposes her as unclean, blemished, having some shame, or so on.

The actual meaning is hard to pin down. As such, different sects within the nation arbitrarily decided what it meant, even extending it to any reason at all.

In this, they leaned more on the precept provided now than on the implication of Genesis 2:24, which was the binding of two as one. In other words, they took the union as one being made of two, rather than the union of two as being one. In this, Moses says...

¹ (con't) **and he writes her a certificate of divorce,**

v'katav lah sepher kerithuth – “and writes to her scroll divorce.” Here, the word *kerithuth*, or divorce, is introduced. It is from *karath*, to cut off or cut down. Thus, it is a cutting of the bonds of marriage.

The word will be seen just four times, twice in this chapter, and then in Isaiah 50:1 and Jeremiah 3:8. All four of these instances are to be cited as we continue in our words today. Divorce will be referred to in the New Testament as well. For now, he...

¹ (con't) **puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house,**

v'natan b'yadah v'shilekhah mibeito – “and gives in her hand, and sends her out from his house.” It is an obvious set of words. The man determined that the woman wasn't right for whatever reason the law tolerated. As the authority over her, the certificate is written, he then puts it in her hand and sends her away.

The woman, because of the bill of divorce, is “presumably” permitted to be married to another. As noted above, the idea of a certificate of divorce is also found in the New Testament. Jesus more perfectly explains this troubling matter –

“Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ 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 5:31, 32

Jesus, quoting Moses now, does not say that what Moses said is inappropriate. Rather, he shows that the result of what is written can lead to that which is inappropriate. In other words, He does not say that the divorce itself is sin, but a divorce can lead to sin. Paul further clarifies what this means, saying –

“Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. ¹¹ But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.”

1 Corinthians 7:10, 11

Paul shows that a departure means the woman is to remain unmarried or to be reconciled to her husband. And more, he says that in the New Covenant a believing husband is not to divorce his wife. He provides no exceptions to this.

He does, however, provide more guidelines and an exemption to one married to a nonbeliever-

“But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. ¹³ And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. ¹⁵ But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. ¹⁶ For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?” 1 Corinthians 7:12-16

In all cases, the onus to protect the marriage is placed upon the believer. As far as Jesus’ words, it is only later in Matthew that He explains the meaning of His earlier words –

³“The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?’

⁴ And He answered and said to them, ‘Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning “made them male and female,” ⁵ and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”?

⁶ So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” ⁷ They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?”

⁸ He said to them, ‘Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. 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.’” Matthew 19:3-9

Jesus shows that what the law permitted does not abrogate what the original intent for marriage is. Despite this, Moses has permitted divorce and the sending away of a woman. Thus...

² when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man’s wife,

v’yatseah mibeto v’haleka v’hayetah l’ish akher – “And she goes out from his house, and she has walked, and she becomes to man another.” This is still a conditional clause. Nothing has been mandated. There is simply a proposition set forth.

The woman has been given a bill of divorce, she has been sent out, and in her being sent out, she has become wife to another man (*ish*, not *baal* – man, not master). As such, a new dynamic has arisen for the man who sent her out which begins to be revealed next...

³ if the latter husband detests her

u-seneah ha’ish ha’akharon – “and hates her the man, the latter.” The woman has become a wife to another man (*ish*, not *baal* – man, not master), and he now hates her. As this is still a proposition set forth as a possibility, if such is the case...

^{3 (con’t)} and writes her a certificate of divorce,

v’katav lah sepher kerithuth – “and writes to her scroll divorce.” It is word for word and letter for letter exactly the same as what was said of the first husband. The latter husband has written her a scroll of divorce. It is still a proposition of possibility. If such is the case, and he then...

^{3 (con’t)} puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house,

v’natan b’yadah v’shilekhah mibeito – “and gives in her hand, and sends her out from his house.” Again, it is a word for word and letter for letter copy of what was said in verse 1. She has been given a scroll of divorce, it has been placed in her hand, and she has been sent out of his house. If such is the case...

^{3 (con’t)} or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife,

o ki yamut ha'akharon asher leqahah lo l'ishah – “or when dies the latter who took her his to wife.” A second possibility that ends the marriage is set forth. The latter husband (*ish*, not *baal* – man, not master) dies. If either of these occurs in this hypothetical situation...

⁴ then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife

lo yukal balah ha'rishon asher shalekha la'shuv leqakhtah lihyot lo l'ishah – “No is able her master the first, who sent her, to return to take to be to his to wife.” There is no allowance for the first husband (*baal*, not *ish* – master, not man) to retake the woman as his wife again.

This is the purpose of the entire set of verses. The conditional statements in the proposition set forth have been laid down in order to form a point of law. That is now stated, explicitly. But the reason is not yet given. That only comes in the next words...

⁴ (con't) after she has been defiled;

The Hebrew is precise here. It is a form of verb known as a *Hithpael*. It is a causative reflexive verb. In other words, there is causation (being defiled), but the action of the verb is both committed and received by the same entity. It says: *akhare asher hutamaah* – “after which she has allowed herself to be defiled.”

It is the woman who has gone astray. This is exactly in line with the words of both Jesus and Paul as seen earlier –

“Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ 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 5:31, 32

“Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. ¹¹ But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.”

1 Corinthians 7:10, 11

Jesus says that when the woman remarries, she has committed adultery. A man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery. In both cases, the woman is the cause of the adultery. Paul (speaking of believers) says the same thing.

This is why the term *baal* has been used of the first husband, but *ish* was used of the latter husband. The authority remains with the first husband, because she was one flesh with the husband as the head. In remarrying, she has caused herself to be defiled.

Of these verses, John Lange correctly states –

“The pointing in the original makes it clear that Moses does not institute or command divorce. The pointing in our version implies that he does so. He is merely prescribing limitations or regulations to a prevailing custom, which was not in accordance with the institution of marriage, and was only permitted there in this limited sense, and under these restrictions, ‘for the hardness of their hearts.’” John Lange

In fact, in following the words set forth by Moses, it is clear that the first husband was the head of that woman, even when she marries another. Her obligation remains to him, and in her having another man, she then is the one who brings defilement on herself. As she is defiled at that point, he cannot take her back...

4 (con’t) for that is an abomination before the LORD,

ki toevah hi liphne Yehovah – “for abomination she before Yehovah.” It is a feminine pronoun indicating “it” or “she.” Most translations say, “for it (meaning “that”) is an abomination before the Lord.” Only the Douay Rheims gets it right saying, “because she is defiled, and is become abominable before the Lord.”

The question for translators is, “Is this referring to the act of the man taking her back – ‘it is an abomination’ – or is it referring to the woman who has been defiled – ‘she is an abomination?’” The subject is the act, but the nearest antecedent is the woman. The answer is clearly, “she is an abomination.”

The unusual construction of the verse helps clue into the meaning. It says, “before Yehovah,” not “before Yehovah your God.” In her defiling of herself, she is an abomination before the Lord. Because of this, the action is still wrong because of her state. As such, it will be sin, as Moses next says...

4 (con’t) and you shall not bring sin on the land

v’lo takhti eth ha’arets – “and no shall you bring sin on the land.” By joining again to a woman who has allowed herself to be defiled, the guilt of sin will be brought upon the land. And with that in mind, Moses again reminds the people that it is the land...

***4 (fin) which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.**

The land is given to Israel. They are to remain pure, undefiled, and holy before the Lord. In sending away a wife, the woman can – in fact – marry another. However, in doing so, she brings defilement on herself. However, it is the man who allowed this to occur.

The law, through Moses, is not condoning divorce. Rather, it is speaking against it while still permitting it. That could not be any clearer from the context of Moses' words. He has shown that the original husband is the one to whom she is obligated, even when she goes to another man (baal as opposed to ish). If the first husband was to take her back after being defiled by another man, then guilt would be brought upon the land.

What is it that the Lord expects of us?
To marry and to stick it out through and through
Let us fix our eyes on the Lord Jesus
And in our times of trouble, He will carry us through

Just as the Lord is merciful and forgiving
So should we be to our own husband or wife
Together we should be united in holy living
And let offenses go; not living in strife

Just as the Lord has forgiven His people
When they turn and repent at His feet
Let us forgive the spouse we joined 'neath the steeple
And remain united in the bond of love so sweet

To the glory of the Lord who died for us
Let us live in harmony before the Lord Jesus

II. Pictures of Christ

To establish the relationship of the Lord to Israel, one must go back to the covenant made between them – the covenant at Sinai. In that covenant, Israel agreed to the terms – whatever they may be – that the Lord spoke forth.

In those terms as found in Leviticus 26, the Lord promised that Israel would be punished, even to the point of exile, for disobedience. Israel (the northern ten tribes) was exiled by the Assyrians. Eventually, Judah was exiled to Babylon.

Despite the northern ten tribes being exiled, none of those tribes can be considered as "lost." People from most of those tribes are mentioned later in Scripture, after the record of the exile of those tribes. As long as there are members of those tribes, the tribes cannot be considered as gone.

In fact, Jesus, Paul, and James refer to the twelve tribes of Israel. Both Paul and James refer to them in the present tense, clearly indicating that there were twelve tribes at their time. This is scripturally indisputable.

In Ezekiel 4, the Lord used Ezekiel as a living metaphor for what he would do in regard to the exile of the people. He tells the prophet to lie on his left side for 390 days, in order to bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. He then told him to lie on his right side for 40 days to bear the iniquity of the house of Judah.

It is to be noted that Ezekiel's prophecy is dated at or after the supposed "divorce" of Israel in Jeremiah 3:8. It is a huge and unexplained problem with Mr. Baldwin's theology.

Together, they total 430 days. In that state, the Lord tells Ezekiel what to do in order to mirror what He would do to Israel. In this, the Lord told Ezekiel that he would be a sign to the people. They would bear punishment a year for every day that Ezekiel lay on his side.

The exile of Judah (that included people of the twelve tribes), lasted for seventy years. In this, there would thus be 360 years (a day for a year) of punishment left. However, in Leviticus 26, the Lord said to the people, "And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins" (26:18).

The correction of exile and punishment did not change the people. In this, the remaining 360 were to be multiplied by 7, thus equaling 2520 years. The decree of King Cyrus, which allowed the people to return to Israel from the Babylonian exile, came in May 536BC.

Using the biblical calendar of 360 days per year and adding 2520 years (907,200 days) to that, one arrives at May 1948, the year Israel was reestablished as a nation. If one accepts this dating, it is obvious that there is yet a purpose for the reestablishment of Israel as a nation.

Countless other dates and events could be added to this list, but that alone is sufficient to demonstrate that the prophecy of Ezekiel has merit in relation to the people of Israel today.

Along with that, another prophecy from Daniel 9 has a bearing on the dating of the coming of Messiah, the second exile of Israel for rejecting the Messiah, and the reintroduction of the law by Israel for another seven years.

It is another study for another time. But it clearly demonstrates that both the dispensation of the law for seven more years, and then final establishment of Israel in the New Covenant, lie ahead for them. In fact, Leviticus 26 refers to exactly this as it closes out –

“But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, and that they also have walked contrary to Me, ⁴¹ and that I also have walked contrary to them and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt— ⁴² then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land.

⁴³ The land also shall be left empty by them, and will enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them; they will accept their guilt, because they despised My judgments and because their soul abhorred My statutes. ⁴⁴ Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, nor shall I abhor them, to utterly destroy them and break My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God.

⁴⁵ But for their sake I will remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the LORD.” Leviticus 26:40-45

The Lord first appeals to the covenant with Jacob, and Isaac, and Abraham (verse 42). It is a land covenant to the people of Israel. However, the Lord continues by appealing to the Mosaic Covenant in verse 45.

That covenant continues beyond Sinai (Horeb) to the words of Deuteronomy. In that covenant are words already seen that speak of a Prophet like Moses whom the people are to hear, lest the Lord cut them off. That Prophet like Moses was clearly seen to be Christ Jesus.

As that is a part of the Mosaic Covenant, and as the Mosaic Covenant is what the Lord appeals to, then it must be that in appealing to the Mosaic Covenant, the Lord is also referring to the acceptance of the Prophet like Moses – Christ Jesus.

Jesus, speaking to Jerusalem – the leaders of Israel and representative of the nation – even told them that this would be the case, stating that He would return to them when they acknowledge Him as this One Moses spoke of –

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! ³⁵ See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’” Luke 13:34-35

Christ will return only when they acknowledge Him as Lord (meaning Yehovah). Confusing though it may be, this needed to be laid out in order to understand what is being pictured in the passage today.

The Lord took Israel as a wife under the Old Covenant. That is explicitly stated in Jeremiah 31 –

“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— ³² not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.” Jeremiah 31:31, 32

In the sermon by Chuck Baldwin, and in an attempt to deny any connection of Israel today to the Lord as His people, he cites Isaiah 50, claiming it demonstrates that the Lord divorced Israel –

“Thus says the LORD: ‘Where is the certificate of your mother’s divorce, Whom I have put away? Or which of My creditors is it to whom I have sold you? For your iniquities you have sold yourselves, And for your transgressions your mother has been put away.
² Why, when I came, was there no man? Why, when I called, was there none to answer? Is My hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Indeed with My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness; Their fish stink because there is no water, And die of thirst. ³ I clothe the heavens with blackness, And I make sackcloth their covering.’” Isaiah 50:1-3

Unfortunately, Baldwin completely misunderstood what is being conveyed there. First, the Lord is speaking to Judah, not Israel, but more he never says that he divorced their mother. Isaiah is speaking to the people in the plural about the state of their mother, Judah, whom they issue from.

She had sold herself, putting herself away. The Lord – typologically the Male in the agreement – had not issued a certificate of divorce. That is evidenced in the words

“Where is the certificate of your mother’s divorce, Whom I have put away?”

It is a rhetorical question demanding a negative answer. Judah had put itself away, but that was not with the Lord’s direction, and thus it could not be binding. This is also what Israel did. The Lord says in Jeremiah 3:1 –

“They say, ‘If a man divorces his wife, And she goes from him And becomes another man’s, May he return to her again?’
Would not that land be greatly polluted? ‘But you have played the harlot with many lovers; Yet return to Me,” says the LORD.” Jeremiah 3:1

As Jeremiah 3 progresses, the Lord shows that Israel had, in fact, received her certificate of divorce for her transgressions –

⁸ Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also. ⁹ So it came to pass, through her casual harlotry, that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. ¹⁰ And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but in pretense,” says the LORD.

¹¹ Then the LORD said to me, “Backsliding Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah. ¹² Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say: ‘Return, backsliding Israel,’ says the LORD; ‘I will not cause My anger to fall on you. For I am merciful,’ says the LORD; ‘I will not remain angry forever. ¹³ Only acknowledge your iniquity, That you have transgressed against the LORD your God, And have scattered your charms To alien deities under every green tree, And you have not obeyed My voice,’ says the LORD. ¹⁴ “Return, O backsliding children,” says the LORD; “for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion. ¹⁵ And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. Jeremiah 3:8-15

The Lord speaks to the people individually (it is plural). Though Israel had received her certificate of divorce, this did not negate individuals returning to Him, which He clearly calls out for them to do, saying, “Return, O backsliding children,” says the LORD; “for I am married to you (plural).”

How would this come about? By bringing them to Zion. Thus, Israel would now fall under the umbrella of Judah. Not understanding this, and lumping Israel and Judah together as one, Baldwin said, “...and actually, we ought to say, ‘Israel divorced God’ because it was the sins of Israel that broke up the marriage.”

He is wrong. But more, there is no provision for this in the law. It is the man who issues the certificate. The law never says a woman could do so, and the typology must be maintained.

The entire point of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is based on the conclusion found in verse 4. But that did not occur between the Lord and Judah. This is why the alternating terms *baal* and *ish* are used. The use of *baal* is directed toward the first husband. He is the head of the woman.

Before getting to that, Baldwin makes a point of saying that the Lord placed upon the people of Israel the name *lo ami* (not my people). He then uses that to justify that Israel is no longer God’s people.

When saying that, he doesn't say where the term *lo ami* comes from, but it is from Hosea 1:9. Citing that as a stand-alone thought completely ignores the rest of Hosea, such as Hosea 2:13-23. It is there that the Lord makes a play on these words that Moses stresses in our sermon verses (*baal* and *ish*). First, he uses the term Baal when speaking of foreign gods, saying –

“I will punish her For the days of the Baals to which she burned incense. She decked herself with her earrings and jewelry,
And went after her lovers; But Me she forgot,” says the LORD.” Hosea 2:13

However, the Lord notes that after their punishment, they would be restored, using the name Baal (the false god) in 2:13 to make a pun on the word baal (Master, referring to the Lord) thus showing the intimate connection between the Lord and Israel –

“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, Will bring her into the wilderness, And speak comfort to her. ¹⁵ I will give her her vineyards from there, And the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; She shall sing there, As in the days of her youth,
As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt. ¹⁶ “And it shall be, in that day,” Says the LORD, “That you will call Me ‘My Husband (**ishi**),’ And no longer call Me ‘My Master (**baali**),’ ¹⁷ For I will take from her mouth the names of the Baals, And they shall be remembered by their name no more. ¹⁸ In that day I will make a covenant for them With the beasts of the field, With the birds of the air, And with the creeping things of the ground. Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, To make them lie down safely. ¹⁹ “I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me In righteousness and justice, In lovingkindness and mercy; ²⁰ I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, And you shall know the LORD.” Hosea 2:14-20

In this, He said –

“That you will call Me ‘My Husband (**ishi**),’ And no longer call Me ‘My Master (**baali**),’

He is returning to the state in Eden where the man and woman would be as one, no longer calling the Lord Master, but Man. As far as the term *lo ami*, or “not my people,” Baldwin completely missed the context of Hosea and of what is stated in the New Testament. In the next verses of Hosea, the Lord says –

“Yet the number of the children of Israel Shall be as the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass In the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ There it shall be said to them, ‘You are sons of the living God.’” Hosea 1:10

Anyone can make the Bible say anything if verses are arbitrarily picked out and cited. But when taken in context, they will inevitably bear a completely different meaning. As far as the New Testament, Paul first cites that verse as pertaining to the Gentiles in Romans 9 –

“As He says also in Hosea: ‘I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved.’²⁶ “And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ There they shall be called sons of the living God.” Romans 9:25, 26

However, Peter then uses that same thought when speaking to the Jews (meaning after the church age as is in accord with the dispensational model and the layout of the books of the Bible. Peter, the apostle to the Jews, has his epistles placed after Paul’s. Paul is the Apostle to the Gentiles). That is found in 1 Peter 2 –

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” 1 Peter 2:9, 10

Peter’s letter is addressed not to the Gentiles, but to “the pilgrims of the Dispersion,” meaning Jews. Even Hosea gives us this insight as is laid out in a chiasm –

Hosea 1:9-2:23 - “But Me she forgot,” says the LORD.

A Chiasm of Contrasts - Our Unfaithfulness and God's Unlimited Mercy (11/23/07)

a 1:9 You are not my people, I will not be your God.

----b 1:10 Jezreel (God will sow.)

-----c 2:3 Dry Land, thirst.

-----d 2:5 Wife departs from her husband.

-----e 2:7 Wife returns to her husband.

-----f 2:9 Take away the new wine.

-----g 2:10-12 God punishes Israel.

-----h 2:13 God will punish her.

-----x 2:13 “But Me she forgot,” says the LORD

-----h 2:14a God will allure her.

-----g 2:14b God comforts Israel.

-----f 2:15 Give vineyards.

-----e 2:16 LORD says, “That you will call me ‘My Husband.’”

-----d 2:19 Husband betroths wife.

-----c 2:21, 22 Grain, new wine, oil.

----b 2:22 Jezreel (God will sow.)

a 2:23 You are my people; You are my God.

While Israel was a people, the Gentiles were without the Lord. When Israel rejected their Messiah, the Gentiles – along with any believing Jews – became the people of God. When the church is raptured (yes, a pre-tribulation rapture is the proper doctrine of the church), the focus will again be on Israel.

The issue of Israel as a nation is separate, but it is still relevant. For Israel, there is individual salvation, and there is collective (national) salvation. Each Jew who is to be saved must come to Christ individually.

However, God made promises to Israel as a nation as well. For Israel as a nation to be saved, they must call on Christ nationally. That will happen when they (the leaders representing the people) call out, just as Jesus said they would and as was cited in Luke 13 earlier.

Who is the Lord's bride? The answer is not a simple "Here she is." The idea of being a bride of the Lord is not a literal Man with a woman next to Him dressed in white. It is a concept of being brought into a right covenant relationship with Him.

The idea of a single betrothal/marriage is not all there is in the redemptive narrative. Believers are individually betrothed to Christ when we believe the gospel.

The church will be presented as the Bride of Christ as stated in Ephesians 5. This will occur at the rapture of the church. Israel was united to the Lord as a bride under the Old Covenant, and they will nationally be again united to the Lord as a bride as is indicated in the many Old and New Testament passages referred to in our sermon today. Finally, there is the general thought of being united as a bride to Christ as is described in Revelation 21.

How is Israel who had (and still has) rejected the Lord brought into a right relationship with God? It is through the death of Christ on their behalf. They are the wife who made herself an abomination before the Lord.

According to the law (the Old Covenant), they could not be brought back to Him once they had been defiled as they were, but through Christ and the New Covenant, it is not only possible, it will come to pass. The New Covenant, the Christ Covenant, was established not with the church but with the House of Israel and the House of Judah.

That is stated, explicitly, in Jeremiah 31, and again in Hebrews 8. How could this come about when both Israel and Judah had been an unfaithful spouse? How could the Lord say to Israel, "Return to Me!" after they had been given a certificate of divorce?

It is because Christ Jesus, the Lord, died to pay their sin-debt. In His death, a New Covenant was established with them. The divorce of Israel by the Lord occurred under the Mosaic

Covenant. The renewing of the betrothal to Israel and Judah occurs under the New Covenant in His blood.

Gentiles are not what is going on here. Gentiles are grafted into what is going on here. We merely share in the commonwealth of what God has bestowed upon Israel. How preachers can stand in the pulpit and question the word of God, the promises of the Lord, and the integrity of His covenants is utterly astonishing.

When theology becomes about “us,” it is improper theology. When we reject what God has explicitly stated, we reject Him. His word is a reflection of who He is. For whatever perverse reason, the past two thousand years have been filled with a theology that essentially says, “God cannot be trusted because God has divorced these people and they are no longer His people.”

Yes, Hosea calls that out, but then Hosea turns around and says exactly the opposite only a moment later. God is not fickle, but we are lazy. We form our opinions, and we stop when they are formed, rejecting anything else that will stand in the way of what we have decided. But God has revealed to us what He is doing... and it is marvelous. Christ! It is all about Christ and what He had done for Israel, Judah, and indeed all of the world.

“Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. ²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰ For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, ³¹ even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. ³² For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! ³⁴ ‘For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?’ ³⁵ ‘Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?’ ³⁶ For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.” Romans 11:28-36

Closing Verse: *“But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” Jeremiah 31:33, 34*

Next Week: Deuteronomy 24:5-22 And don’t forget it, kid! (Remember what the Lord your God Did) (70th Deuteronomy Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. But He also has expectations of you as He prepares you for entrance into His Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

A Certificate of Divorce

“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 uncleanness in her

And he writes her a certificate of divorce, so to you I apprise

Puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house

When she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes

-----another man’s wife

If the latter husband detests her

And writes her a certificate of divorce, thus ending

-----their married life

Puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house

Or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife

Then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back

To be his wife after she has been defiled by her remarried life

For that is an abomination before the LORD

And you shall not bring sin on the land

Which the LORD your God is giving you

As an inheritance, so you shall understand

Lord God, turn our hearts to be obedient to Your word

Give us wisdom to be ever faithful to You

May we carefully heed each thing we have heard

Yes, Lord God may our hearts be faithful and true

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone

We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise

Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown

Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...