

Josephs putting Mary away

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Assertions/conclusions of this article

We will show a couple points in this writing.

One is that putting away a wife is not always because of hardheartedness but even a 'just' man might put away his wife given the proper circumstances.

Two, that Joseph's putting Mary away, when he was going to, was actually an act of mercy and not hardheartedness at all.

Supporting Evidence

Some use Joseph putting away Mary as a proof text, as an example of what is permissible for "divorce"

Jesus had not been yet born to teach, so we KNOW that His teachings on the matter aren't yet the case

Joseph and Mary were under Mosaic Law and thus Deut 24:1-4 was still in force.

Under Mosaic law Joe could have put Mary away for any number of reasons ("some uncleanness" as shown in Deut 24) and as such their example would be irrelevant to this topic regardless of the situation involved.

Divorce 'for every cause' was permitted for the Jews hardness of heart ("for every cause"/"some uncleanness"). But we look at Jews like Joseph who is deemed a 'just' (Matt 1:19) man in Gods word who was going to put his wife away for 'fornication' that he believed she had committed.

Joseph could hardly be 'just' (Matt 1:19) and hardhearted at the same time. No, he was not hardhearted, he was showing Mary mercy by putting her away privately for what he thought she had done instead of having her exposed publically.

Joseph was actually showing mercy to Mary (if she had committed fornication) in putting her away quietly, not presenting hardheartedness towards her at all as he could have if he had made a public display of her. See Deut 22:13-21 for the punishment the law inflicted in the betrothed wife who committed sexual sin. Of course, Roman permission would have to have been sought to inflict this punishment, in most cases.

How can one Jew be 'just' when he is divorcing and another be hardhearted when he is doing the same?

Was God hardhearted when He gave Israel a bill of divorcement ?

Matt 19 shows Christ saying that this 'for every cause' divorce had been permitted because of the hardness of hearts of the Jews. They wanted to put their wives away many times just to marry another. Some might be willing to even harm their wives to be rid of her, so Moses had to allow them to divorce without just cause to prevent an even greater evil. The context of this hardness of heart is this 'for every cause' divorce...putting her away for no just cause at all, as we see with Herod and Herodias.

Another point is that some try to assert that Joseph was invoking some law that said he could put Mary away for sexual sins as his betrothed wife. This is incorrect as far as Mosaic law was concerned. The law prescribed her death if she had committed sexual sin against her husband, not divorce.

This mythical 'allowance' for divorce for sexual sins supposedly comes from Deut 24:1-4, but this passage is not relevant to sexual sins already covered just two chapters prior in Deut 22, but instead is a regulation to this divorce for 'some uncleanness' (frivolous divorce) Moses had been permitting and was now trying to regulate.