



Peniel Maiaweng's View on Divorce and Remarriage: An Exegetical Review From Matthew 19:9

Chandra Wahyuni Irawati

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Moriah, Tangerang, Indonesia

Email: chandrawahyuni@gmail.com

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Abstract

There are different views on divorce and remarriage. First, agree to divorce and remarriage. Second, agreeing to divorce and not agreeing to remarriage. Third, do not approve of divorce and remarriage. One of the writers who also gave his views on this topic is Peniel Maiaweng. This paper will discuss the concept of divorce and remarriage through a theological exegetical approach, especially in the text of Matthew 19:9. Through these exegetical results, the author will also present a response to Peniel Maiaweng's views.

Keywords: divorce, remarriage, matthew 19:9, adultery

INTRODUCTION

The reality of social change and the rapid development of technology today has shown the fact of increasing divorce in people's lives, including among Christians. In response to this, the church has an important role in providing understanding and guidance to congregation members. However, in the end, it is not uncommon for congregations to be faced with different views with various debates, which actually creates confusion. There are at least three views on divorce and remarriage. First, agreeing to divorce and remarriage. Second, agreeing to divorce and not agreeing to remarriage. Third, disapproving of divorce and remarriage. The Bible verse that pretty much forms the basis of the debate is Matthew 19:9, which is in the phrase "except for adultery."¹

In 1990, the Trinity Journal published three articles on the subject of divorce and remarriage to sharpen historical and exegetical thinking about this critical pastoral concern. One author looks at the understanding of the early church fathers, through John

¹ Peniel C. D. Maiaweng, "Perceraian dan Pernikahan Kembali," *Jurnal Jaffray* 15, no. 1 (2017): 97.

Wesley among others, another provides an explanation of the phrase in Matthew 19:3-12, and William A. Heth makes a contribution that focuses on the history of the Protestant exegetical tradition. Since then, significant studies have provided new insights from the exegetical, historical-cultural, sociological, theological, literary, ethical, and pastoral paradigms that clarify the meaning of Jesus' words about divorce.²

Along with the development of thought in church history up to the reformation period, earlier in 1984, Heth together with Gordon Wenham also offered some careful research to challenge widely held viewpoints regarding Jesus' teachings on divorce and remarriage. They argue that the exclusion clause in Matthew's Gospel provides for the right or justice to divorce the guilty spouse in marriage, but not the right to remarry. In fact they believe that the exclusion of Matthew (19:9) and Paul (1 Cor. 7:15) is directed at the innocent parties and serves to absolve them of responsibility for the breakup of the marriage.³

In the development of this research, Craig S. Keener responded to Heth and Wenham's writings by drawing implications from the hermeneutic approach that Jesus' teaching on the subject was a general principle meant to recognize exceptions (as shown by Matthew and Paul), and acknowledged the possibility that his teaching was hyperbolic, which may allow for some exceptions that are not addressed by Matthew or Paul because they are not specifically relevant to the situation to which these authors are addressing.⁴

Various writings and debates related to research and interpretation of the topic of divorce and remarriage certainly do not stop and it is interesting to continue to follow its developments.⁵ In 2017, Peniel C. D. Maiaweng⁶ also attempted to write exegetical research on divorce and remarriage. Maiaweng believes that divorce and remarriage are

³ Heth, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 63-100.

⁴ See Strauss, *Remarriage after Divorce in Today's Church*, 19-100; Craig S. Keener, *And Marries Another: Divorce and Remarriage in the Teaching of the New Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991).

⁵ In addition to the several authors mentioned earlier, several other figures also investigated the interpretation of divorce and remarriage, including Craig L. Blomberg, Andrew Cornes, R. H. Stein, Kenneth R. Himes and James A. Coriden, and etc. Craig L. Blomberg, "Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage, and Celibacy: An Exegesis of Matthew 19:3-12," *Trinity Journal*, no. 11 (1990): 161-196; Andrew Cornes, *Divorce and Remarriage: Biblical Principles and Pastoral Practice*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); R. H. Stein, Divorce in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. J. B. Green and S. McKnight (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992), 99-192; Kenneth R. Himes and James A. Coriden, "The Indissolubility of Marriage: Reasons to Reconsider," *Theological Studies*, no. 65 (2004): 453-99.

⁶ Peniel is a doctoral program lecturer from Indonesia from the Jaffray Theological Seminary. See Maiaweng, *Perceraian dan Pernikahan Kembali*, 97-114.

the same as adultery, because Jesus does not allow divorce and remarriage. In Christianity, no one is given the right to enforce the divorce of a married couple.⁷

The author sees that the reality of marriage that has been built and designed by God for the good of human beings is not all that can be maintained. Divorce in marriage, as a result of human sin and depravity, has caused discrepancies and non-fulfillment of God's original purpose for the household. Divorce has never been justified and is not desired by God, but the reality of divorce is one of the thorniest problems that humans are still facing today. This paper will provide a response to Maiaweng's argument regarding the discussion of the concept of divorce and remarriage, by looking at it from a theological exegetical point of view. The research will pay attention to the meaning and application of Jesus' teaching text regarding divorce in remarriage, especially the phrases at Matthew 19:9.

The method that will be used in this research is qualitative literature. This paper will discuss the concept of divorce and remarriage through a theological exegetical approach, especially in the text of Matthew 19:9. First, the author will present the thoughts of several post-reform figures, including Heth, Wenham, and Keener, and will be followed by a presentation of the thoughts of Maiaweng. Second, divorce and remarriage will be explained, including exegesis studies on Matthew 19:9, Jesus' response to the sin of adultery in several other passages in the context of the New Testament, and theological perspectives regarding the reality of God's sovereignty and grace over human sinfulness, especially in marriage. This paper will end with a critical analysis and response to Maiaweng's views and a conclusion section.

DISCUSSION

Views of Several Post-Reform Figures

With regard to divorce and remarriage, Keener argues that adultery, separation, physical abuse, and other forms of gross immorality condone divorce and remarriage.⁸ Even most conservative Christian writers admit that in some cases divorce and remarriage are permitted (such as James Dobson and Jay E. Adams).⁹

⁷ Maiaweng, *Perceraian dan Pernikahan Kembali*, 97.

⁸ Maiaweng, *Perceraian dan Pernikahan Kembali*, 97.

⁹ Craig S. Keener, *Matthew* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997 (The IVP New Testament Commentary Series 1), Mat. 19.

In Matthew 19:9, in the phrase "except for adultery" (mh. evpi. pornei,a), Keener argues:

This mirrors the language of Deuteronomy 24:1: "If a man takes a woman and be his husband, and if afterward he does not like her anymore, because he finds something that is immoral in her,... In other words, Matthew saw that Jesus explained the meaning of law in Deuteronomy.¹⁰

Keener interprets uncleanness as immorality. Matthew describes Jesus interpreting "something that is indecent" in Deuteronomy 24:1 as "immoral". Thus determining at least one ground for a lawful divorce. Keener says:

I believe that most other views of porneia in this text fail to treat Matthew's specific cultural setting adequately (taking into account the "charge") beyond their own proposal. Most of these views also give porneia ("immorality," "infidelity") a more restricted meaning than it normally bears unless explicitly qualified, which it is not here (as noted by many commentators, such as Hagner 1993:124). They also miss how such a term (used in its unqualified, general sense) would function in a usual legal context (see above). Most views other than the infidelity view imply that Matthew permits divorce only when the original marriage is not valid, but divorce was unnecessary in the case of invalid marriages; further, such marriages were not common enough to warrant Matthew's mention.¹¹

The phrase "except for adultery" could modify Jesus' statement about divorce rather than remarriage, but if so, Jesus' statement is the validity of divorce in question. Nothing permits remarriage if the divorce is not legal, but legal divorce includes determining the right to remarry. It is important to clearly underline the sanctity of marriage and the serious responsibility to maintain marriage in all possible circumstances.¹²

Briefly, Keener says: (1) the exception in Matthew, applied by way of a law or qualification of Jesus' prophetic statements and points to legal divorce.¹³ Deuteronomy 24:1 is a "commandment" that Matthew correctly interprets for his readers, not permission that Jesus transcends and is replaced by a greater truth; (2) first-century

¹⁰ See juga Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 465. And if related to verse 7, regarding Moses who ordered to give divorce papers if someone divorces his wife, Keener says that: Jesus responds that Moses permitted this merely as a concession to Israel's hard hearts, implying that his questioners who exploit this concession also have hard hearts.

¹¹ Keener, *Matthew*, Mat. 19.

¹² Keener, *Matthew*, 469.

¹³ Keener, *Matthew*, 466.

Jewish readers saw that legal divorce always included the right to remarry; and (3) Mark and Luke also assume that infidelity in marriage destroys unity.¹⁴

In contrast to Keener, Heth and Wenham argue that morally, separation or divorce is permissible on the basis of adultery for the right party, but remarriage is not permissible. Regarding the phrase "except for adultery", Heth and Wenham try to see the same phrase, but in the context of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:32. Heth says:

I readily agree that the exception clause is adding some kind of qualification to Jesus' teaching. However, Matt 5:32 occurs in the context of the antitheses, where Jesus is substituting the perfect standard of the loving character of God (Matt 5:48) for the standard recognized by the Jews of his day. But if the exception clause sanctions remarriage, then Matthew nearly makes Jesus agree with Shammai's¹⁵ reading of Deut 24:1.1 also find this difficult to reconcile with the disciples' later incredulous reaction in Matt 19:10: "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."¹⁶

Heth sees that Keener gives an authoritative interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1, in the sense that Jesus chose this one instance when He allowed the disciples to divorce and remarry. Heth and Wenham more agree that the exceptions in Matthew's Gospel only confer the right or justice to divorce the guilty spouse and absolve the innocent from responsibility for the breakup of the marriage, but not the right to remarry.¹⁷

From the explanation above, both Keener and Heth and Wenham, the three agreed to divorce based on immorality and adultery for the right party. But Heth and Wenham did not agree to remarriage. In this case, it is different from Maiaweng, who actually does not approve of either divorce or remarriage.

Peniel Maiaweng's Views on Divorce and Remarriage

According to Maiaweng, in Christianity, no one is given the right to carry out the divorce of a married couple. Divorce and remarriage are the same as adultery (Matt. 5:32, Matt. 19:9, Mark 10:11-12, Luke 16:18). Only death can separate a person from his spouse

¹⁴ Heth, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 63-100. Lihat juga Keener, *Matthew*, Mat. 19.

¹⁵ See B. Ward Powers, *Divorce and Remarriage*, trans. Sadrak Kurang (Petersham: IMPACT, 2011), 49. At that time there were three different interpretations of the reasons for divorce which are described in the Talmud Mishnah Gittin 9:10 (Leo Auerbach's translation): The Council of Shammai says: one should not divorce his wife unless he finds her unfaithful. As already said (Deut. 24:1): "because he found something obscene in her." Council Hillel said: "a husband may divorce his wife if the wife makes spoiled food for the husband because it has been said: "impurity is a serious matter." Rabbi Akiba said: "a husband may divorce his wife if he finds another woman more beautiful than his wife, for he has been said (Deut. 24:1): "then he will no longer like her."

¹⁶ Heth, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 72-73.

¹⁷ Strauss, *Remarriage after Divorce in Today's Church*, 103-137.

and remarry (Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:39). Jesus remained consistent with the words He mentioned to confirm God's attitude in the first marriage, "And His Word: For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no man separate" (emphasis added, Matt. 19:5-6; cf. Gen. 2:24).¹⁸

In Matthew it is stated that divorce is permitted, "except for adultery" and "committing adultery" (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). The exceptional case in Matthew can only be explained by Matthew. The meaning of the word *porneia* is a sexual violation committed by a couple who is carrying out an engagement, namely having sex with someone who is not their fiancé or with another person who is not yet their legal husband or wife. *Porneia* means the habit of sexual misconduct committed by one of the spouses who is in a state of engagement and no change occurs until they are about to get married. *Porneia* also means a sexual offense committed by a single person, or a widow, or a widower before marriage.¹⁹

Thus, Jesus actually did not recommend divorce and remarriage for married people, because divorce and remarriage are the same as adultery.²⁰ Marriage is binding, whether the couple is a believer or an unbeliever. It is the responsibility of the congregation as a whole to get back those who have separated from their spouse due to marital problems. If there is someone who does not want to be helped to change his attitude in order to unite with his lover, then he is considered as someone who does not know God. What separates a person from his spouse is not divorce, but death.²¹

Divorce and Remarriage based on the Exegetical of Matthew 19:9

Matthew 19:1-12 is a passage about the Pharisees who tried to trap Jesus with the question of divorce. And Jesus used that opportunity to explain the nature of God's plan and purpose in this regard.²² By not directly answering the question about divorce, Jesus first gave the answer that in God's plan for marriage, divorce absolutely has no place at all (verses 5-6).

¹⁸ Maiaweng, *Perceraian dan Pernikahan Kembali*, 104.

¹⁹ Maiaweng, *Perceraian dan Pernikahan Kembali*, 104.

²⁰ Maiaweng, *Perceraian dan Pernikahan Kembali*, 104.

²¹ Maiaweng, *Perceraian dan Pernikahan Kembali*, 97.

²² Powers, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 12.

Exegesis of the Phrase "Except for Adultery" in Matthew 19:9

Referring to the law of Moses regarding the command to give a divorce certificate if a man divorces his wife (Deut. 24:1-24), the Pharisees raised a rebuttal question which is actually a statement that ignores the mention of specific reasons in the exposition of the law of Moses, to try and demanded that Jesus respond to it. Jesus began to respond with the statement in verse 8, that Moses allowed divorce because of human hardness, even though it was not the case at first. Matthew 19:9 is in the situation that Jesus was discussing when someone did not divorce his wife on the basis of her actions in terms of sexual uncleanness (this was allowed by Moses in Deut. 24:1). On the other hand, Jesus said that marrying another woman (meaning turning away from your wife for another woman), is adultery.²³

Jesus' response in Matthew 19:9, which refers to Deuteronomy 24, uses a simple negative phrase, starting with mh. which means "no". The word "except" as translated by many interpreters, does not state an exception, but a strictly negative phrase, "not for porneia, adultery."²⁴

While the Pharisees did not state any reason for a divorce, they did not consider the need for a reason, as long as there was an official divorce paper.²⁵ And it can be possible if someone divorces a wife and then marries another woman who is more attractive. But Jesus' words confronted the Pharisees with this: they allow divorce not because the wife commits an immoral act (as in Deut. 24:1), but divorces the wife so that she can take another woman as a wife. It is a movement from one woman to another, and Jesus identified it for what it is: it is adultery. Thus Jesus specifically refers to the situation of the wife who is morally innocent, but because the husband wants a divorce in order to marry another woman.²⁶

Powers noted that while there were differences in interpretation among Jewish scholars at the time about the nature and meaning of the grounds for divorce contained in the law of Moses (Deut. 24:1), there were no differences of opinion on the question of remarriage. There is no doubt that this was permitted after the divorce. Of course, the

²³ Powers, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 51.

²⁴ Powers, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 52.

²⁵ It is very clear that the Pharisees actually shared Rabbi Akiba's views: it is appropriate to divorce one's wife and then marry another, more attractive woman.

²⁶ Powers, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 53-54.

official divorce papers given to the wife require an unequivocal statement that the woman is now free to remarry.²⁷

Apart from Jesus, who not only forbade remarriage, in fact there are no Bible writers who wrote that remarriage is a sin or prohibited by God. In fact, while the NT contains many "lists of sins" which include sexual sins and other categories of sins, remarriage is never included in one of these lists. However, if you look at the context of Matthew 19:9 which was presented earlier, it is clear that not all remarriage is permitted. And Jesus did not teach that all remarriage constitutes adultery.²⁸

Jesus has set before mankind a very high standard for marriage.²⁹ Even though at that time it was generally a wife, in this case women were included in the marginal group, and it seemed that they were not very important, they could even be used by men and thrown away when they were no longer needed, but Jesus showed that this was not God's plan from the beginning. God created woman to be man's partner and helper and intended for the two to unite so closely that they became one flesh (Gen. 2:28, 24). It was in this case that the disciples realized how difficult it was to reach this standard. If that was the meaning of marriage, wouldn't it be better for them not to do it? So Jesus' answer is correct that marriage is not for everyone, but only for those who are able to live it (to those who are blessed with it).³⁰

Jesus' Response to the Sin of Adultery in the NT Context

God from the beginning did not want a divorce for the couple who had been united. Likewise sex is bestowed by God for partners in marriage. But in reality, there are various sins from the abuse of marriage and sex, such as adultery, which are unavoidable and occur in human life. Not only in today's reality, but from the OT to the NT times.

Jesus was several times confronted with various cases of similar sins. John 4:1-42 records Jesus' conversation with a Samaritan woman who had many husbands and gave

²⁷ Powers, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 55.

²⁸ John Piper. "Divorce & Remarriage: A Position Paper." *desiringGod*, July 21, 1986.
<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/divorce-and-remarriage-a-position-paper>.

²⁹ Powers, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 59; David W. Jones and Andreas J. Köstenberger. "What Did Jesus Teach about Divorce and Remarriage?" *Crossway*, March 15, 2020.
<https://www.crossway.org/articles/what-did-jesus-teach-about-divorce-and-remarriage/>.

³⁰ Powers, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 59; David W. Jones and Andreas J. Köstenberger. "What Did Jesus Teach about Divorce and Remarriage?"; Richard M. Davidson. "Divorce and Remarriage in the Old Testament." *Perpsective Digest* 16, Iss.4 (2011): article 1.
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pd/vol16/iss4/1>.

him living water. To a woman who committed adultery, He said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and from now on do not sin again (John 8:11)." Jesus anointed a woman who was known as a sinner (Luke 7:37). She is called a friend of tax collectors and sinners or harlots (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34). In fact, there are several prostitutes mentioned, both in the OT and the NT, who actually received grace and believed in God. It seems that the forgiveness of sins and grace is far more prominent than the judgment for those sins.³¹

In Jesus' long discussion with the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-42), this is what happened:

"Go, call your husband and come here."

"I don't have a husband."

"You are right in saying that you don't have a husband, because you already have five husbands and the one you have now is not your husband. In this you have spoken the truth."

"Sir, it is evident to me now that You are a prophet."

The woman's answer confirmed the accuracy of Jesus' knowledge of her. There are several aspects of Jesus' view of marriage, divorce, and remarriage that emerge clearly from this passage.

First, when Jesus said that the woman had five husbands, it totally contradicted the opinion of some experts who said that Jesus held to marriage as something that could not be dissolved except by death. Because if so, then Jesus would only refer to the first husband and consider any other relationship as an act of adultery. Although Jesus correctly pointed out a moral problem in the woman's life, He accepted the reality that divorce and remarriage could occur. Even though it shouldn't be.³²

Second, the explanation specifically distinguishes between legal marriage and the de facto relationship of "living together", "the one you have now, is not your husband," shows that He carefully distinguished remarriage from adultery outside of marriage. Jesus did not teach that remarriage after divorce is adultery.³³

The Reality of God's Sovereignty and Grace in Human Sinfulness

The world created by God, including marriage, was perfect and beautiful, but everything was destroyed when humans rebelled and became selfish. God said to Adam

³¹ Joel Hamuli Songela. "Divorce and remarriage in scripture." *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 32, no.2 (2013): 91-106. https://www.academia.edu/64304813/Divorce_and_remarriage_in_scripture.

³² Powers, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 61.

³³ Powers, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 62.

and Eve, as a result of their sin, growing food would become scarce and there would be problems in the relationship between a man and a woman. Many crops fail, and it is also possible that marriages will also fail. In failed marriages, women are vulnerable to circumstances and usually suffer the most. The Law of Moses limited the damage caused by divorce by forcing the divorced person to provide his ex-wife with a certificate that would enable her to remarry.³⁴

Jesus' words in Matthew 19:8: "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so", also shows that divorce was never a commandment or will of God. Jesus corrected the Pharisees by pointing out that Moses did not command divorce, but rather reasoned that even if it were "permitted" because of human hardness. Keener also said that:

God sometimes allowed what was less than ideal because people's hard hearts made the ideal unattainable (for example, Ex 13:17; 1 Sam 12:12-13). To be able to exercise some restraint over human injustice, Moses' civil laws regulated some institutions rather than seeking to abolish them altogether: divorce, polygyny, the avengers of blood, and slavery. Jewish lawyers themselves recognized that God had allowed some behavior as a concession to human weakness.³⁵

The sentence of Jesus that: "what God has joined together, no man may separate," also does not mean that this is impossible to separate. This means it's possible to divorce, but it shouldn't be. David Instone says that: "The phrase can't be translated "it is impossible for you to separate" or "you are not able to separate" or "you can not separate." What it actually means, therefore, is that separation is certainly possible but that it is wrong or, at least, undesirable.³⁶

Every divorce is the result of a selfish human decision that grieves God.³⁷ Whatever the case, marriage breakdown is always a failure of a husband and wife in obeying God's will. However, separation and divorce between husband and wife could be a better choice between two bad choices. Under certain circumstances, which are clearly stated in the NT, divorced persons are advised to remarry. In fact, remarrying is not a sin. There is nowhere in the Bible that remarriage is wrong.

³⁴ David Instone Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Church* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2003), 31.

³⁵ Keener, *Matthew*, 465; see also Daube 1959.

³⁶ Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Church*, 17.

³⁷ Ken Stewart, *Divorce and Remarriage* (Tulsa: Harrison House, 1962), 43.

Analysis and Responses to Peniel Maiaweng's Views

Deuteronomy 24:1 is the subject of discussion between Jesus and the Pharisees in Matthew 19:3-9. Maiaweng tries to interpret the conversation but gets stuck in the view that divorce is absolutely not permissible and is not desired by Allah under any circumstances, and sees that both divorce and remarriage are adultery. The result of the interpretation of the phrase "except for adultery" in relation to sin before God, also seems to be an immature consideration by looking at only part of what Jesus said, and ignoring other parts of the Bible which certainly need to be seen more broadly.

The interpretation of Matthew 19:9 is the interpretation of what is not written. The word "except (porneia)" is a mistranslation. There is no word "except" in the Greek text for this passage. *mh said.* is the usual word for "no." According to the notes "Greek to English Index Lexicon" in The NIV Exhaustive Concordance, *mh.* occurs more than a thousand times in the NT, and is not once translated with the word "except", except in this verse. And regarding its use in Matthew, the phrase "not because of adultery" is precisely because Jesus spoke of the grounds for divorce³⁸ that Moses mentioned in Deuteronomy 24:1 which the Pharisees ignored.³⁹

To say that divorce and remarriage is a sin unless a spouse first commits adultery is like saying that there is only one loophole in a marriage that allows a person to commit acts that are not in accordance with God's will in marriage, namely adultery. And it is the same as saying that committing one sin (adultery) will make other actions not become sins.⁴⁰

The phrase "what God has joined together let no man separate," is an absolute prohibition against any separation in marriage. And if Jesus' words in Matthew 19:9 are translated as "except", it seems that Jesus will be seen as providing an exception that allows this. So even a somewhat contradictory interpretation is inevitable, as if Christ were inconsistent with God's Word in other parts of the Bible. Certain church interpretations and views of Matthew 19:9 which view remarriage as adultery for anyone who has been divorced except for adultery without any other justification for this in the

³⁸ Regarding the interpretation of the word "divorce" in Matt. 19:9, the author disagrees with Maiaweng if the interpretation of the verse and the conclusion that married couples are not allowed to divorce are focused only on the similarity of the word "divorce" found in Matthew 19:9 with Matthew 1:19, namely divorce for couples who newly engaged, unmarried or currently not married.³⁸ The author sees the word "divorce" in this context as a divorce in a marriage relationship.

³⁹ Powers, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 132.

⁴⁰ Powers, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 133.

Bible would result in no path being consistent with this interpretation by which their remarriage divorced on other grounds can never be accepted.⁴¹

Divorce and remarriage are not unforgivable sins. It is thus no coincidence that Jesus' teaching in Matthew about the marital commitment follows directly from the teaching on forgiveness (18:21-35).⁴² Divorce and remarriage that occur in the sinfulness of humans who are unable to control themselves, of course, are not much different from the reality of other sins which also require God's forgiveness and grace.⁴³

Divorce and remarriage can also occur due to several factors, such as cases of domestic violence, infidelity, and other problems that no longer allow certain couples to continue their marriage relationship. And it is not impossible that divorce is a vessel available for marriages that have been destroyed by the hardness of the heart and human sin. Additionally, nothing permits remarriage if the divorce is not legal, but legal divorce includes specifying the right to remarry. It is important to clearly underline the sanctity of marriage and the serious responsibility to maintain marriage in all possible circumstances.⁴⁴

Reflection on Maiaweng's Arguments Regarding Divorce and Remarriage

Maiaweng's argument regarding divorce and remarriage points to the absence of the right to carry out a divorce for all married couples on the grounds that divorce and remarriage are the same as adultery. However, the authors found several points as follows: First, the interpretation of Matthew 19:9 is an interpretation of what is not written. The word "unless" is a mistranslation which is actually the word "no". Taking the word "no" that Jesus used as an "exception" to His teaching in Matthew 19:9 is an interpretation that runs aground in the midst of many problems.

Second, God has set a very high standard for marriage before man, but divorce occurs in the sinfulness of man who is unable to control himself and is unable to carry out God's will, purpose and plan from the beginning for marriage. God hates divorce. But God loves individuals who are going through divorce. God hates sin, but loves sinners. Divorce

⁴¹ Powers, *Divorce and Remarriage*, 106-107; Herman Hanko. "Matthew 19:9 on Divorce & Remarriage." *Protestant Reformed Churches in America*, 10, Iss.12 (March 27, 2013). <http://www.prc.org/resources/publications/cr-news/item/1412-matthew-19-9-on-divorce-remarriage>.

⁴² Keener, *Matthew*, 462.

⁴³ David G Lowe, *Matthew 19: 9 - A Deadly Exception*, (Kalamunda, WA: Showknowmercy, 2021).

⁴⁴ Keener, *Matthew*, 469.

and remarriage are not unforgivable sins. By the grace of Jesus Christ, all sins that cause marriage damage can be forgiven.⁴⁵ Third, Jesus did not teach that remarriage after divorce is adultery. No Bible writer writes that remarriage is a sin or that it was forbidden by God. However, nothing permits remarriage if the divorce is not legal, but legal divorce includes determining the right to remarry.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions of this study are first, the interpretation of Matthew 19:9 is an interpretation of what is not written. Second, God set very high standards for marriage and divorce because of human sinfulness. Third, Jesus did not teach that remarriage after divorce is adultery. In all that, every Christian must still have the concept that divorce and remarriage are not something that God wants at all. God still wants marriage without divorce as God created it from the beginning. The marriage of the two parties who become one flesh reflects the relationship between God and man, as Christ and the church.

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⁴⁵ Powers, *Perceraian dan Perkawinan Kembali*, 11.

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