**But What If There Are Children?**

When we teach what should be an obvious truth that repentance (Acts 2:38, II Peter 3:9) demands adulterous marriages (per Matthew 19:9) be terminated (<https://bibledebates.wordpress.com/2020/05/29/why-adulterous-marriages-must-be-terminated/> ), many will respond “but what if there are children”? Consider an Old Testament illustration: The Israelites were forbidden from marrying women from certain foreign nations (Deuteronomy 7:1-4). Evidently a number of Israelites had violated this prohibition and were told to “separate yourselves … from the strange wives” in Ezra 10:11. Did it make any difference that some of these unions had already produced children? Not according to verse 44, it didn’t.

What can we learn from this Old Testament incident? The reason the marriages were unscriptural was different than the reason Matthew 19:9 describes, but it still illustrates for us we have do what’s right even if it brings about uncomfortable consequences. In this case we learn that just because children may result, that doesn’t justify continuing to commit adultery by remaining in a marriage God does not approve of (per Mark 10:11). In the same vein, if Herod and Herodias’ marriage had already produced children, would that have changed John the Baptist’s instruction to Herod in Matt 14:4 “It is not lawful for thee to have her”? I think not.

Three parallels: Suppose a couple are married with no children, and the wife steps out of that marriage and has children by a second man who is not her husband. Would that justify the wife divorcing her innocent rightful husband (Luke 16:18), so she can marry the man she has been committing adultery with – in order to make things better for those children (Rom 7:2-3)? Suppose a married man with children takes on a second wife (polygamy), and has children by that second wife (I Cor 7:2). Would those children justify remaining married to both women at the same time? Suppose two lesbian women (Rom 1:26) married to each other adopt children. Would those children justify keeping that unscriptural marriage intact? Deep down we know the answer to the question raised by the title of this article, don’t we?