

Book Review (updated, October 2018)

By Dr. Bob Young

Jerry Jones. *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage: Seen Through the Character of God and the Mind of Jesus*. College Press: Joplin, MO; 2016, 270 pp. softcover.

Jerry Jones has advanced the study of marriage, divorce, and remarriage in his book of the same title in three ways. First, Jones carefully works through the relevant biblical texts with a strong commitment to objectivity and shows us his research. He presents various interpretive options and explains which is preferred and why. Second, he points out the problems of some of the traditional ways of reading the texts, thus raising doubts about traditional interpretations. He shows when and why the literal interpretation of the passages studied must be rejected, or at least must not be allowed to be the last word. Third, he suggests an alternative paradigm through which to view the subject—reading the New Testament through the eyes and heart of God and Christ. The book has three principal sections: the study of 1 Corinthians 7 (40 pages), study of the gospel passages (55 pages), and a conclusion (10 pages). The remaining 140 pages are bibliography, charts, and 740 footnotes.

The in-depth academic study of the text of 1 Corinthians 7 is understandable even to those who have not studied the biblical text so deeply. He considers the occasional and situational nature of the Corinthian teaching as Paul's response to a question from the Corinthians.

The comparative study of the gospel texts is well done. Jones looks at the texts taking into account historical, cultural, linguistic, and grammatical factors. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jones does an intensive study of hyperbole as a literary technique, showing that much of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon cannot be taken literally. In comparing the Gospel teachings, Jones shows the importance of considering the intended audience, the context, and the historical roots, going back frequently to the Old Testament. He explains the nature of occasional, situational literature, a concept that is too seldom applied to the Gospels and the gospel passages related to the subject.

One could wish for more detail in the brief conclusion, but Jones has cast enough doubt on the traditional understandings of 1 Corinthians 7 and the gospel texts to cause the reader to want to seek an alternative. That alternative, calling us to God's nature, character, desire and purpose, gives a fresh perspective, not only the texts related to the study, but to many other texts where we struggle with literal readings when God is trying to show us something more profound, something with more impact and more hope for changing lives.

Any student interested in studying the topic will want to read this book. The book is a valuable resource because of how well it is documented, thus pointing the reader to primary sources.