

## THE MEANING OF MARRIAGE - Part two - Teaching #1346

Sunday, February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010, 6:00 p.m.

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### DID ADAM AND EVE HAVE A MARRIAGE LICENCE? (continued)

**John 4:7-19** - "There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." [8] (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) [9] The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) [10] Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." [11] The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? [12] Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." [13] Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, [14] but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." [15] The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water." [16] Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." [17] The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; [18] for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." [19] The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet."

We're going to come back to this important text at the end of this message. But first we need to remember the sequence of ideas we initiated last Sunday:

**First**, we went over some of the reasons this kind of study is *increasingly necessary in today's church*. The relativistic climate of our age seeps into the body of Christ. And, on top of that, our own fallenness causes us to hear God's Word differently when we have something at stake in our lives that we want to cling to that's at variance with God's revealed will.

**Second**, we went over some of the bedrock truths established in the creation account of Adam and Eve and their interpretation in the teaching of Jesus Christ. What I mean is, we are to take the **same** points of application from the account of Adam and Eve that **Jesus** took from that account.

Today I want to continue with another key point when it comes to interpreting the Creation account of Adam and Eve in its relationship to marriage and the will of God. It is our **third point** if you continue from last week's teaching:

### 3) IF YOU'RE GOING TO SITE OLD TESTAMENT TEXTS ABOUT MARRIAGE, IT'S IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT THOSE TEXTS ARE DEALING WITH A THEOCRACY UNDER GOD, NOT CITIZENS UNDER A GOVERNMENT.

There is a basic understanding of the Old Testament that all Christians must have if they are to interpret the Bible correctly and make good sense of its teaching. **While all Scripture is God's Word, it all must be rightly divided and understood.** And a big part of interpreting it correctly is **understanding the purpose of God at the time each part of His revelation was given.**

Most of the Old Testament was written to describe the calling out of a particular people - **the Jews**. Most of it was given to regulate how they should worship and live together as God's people. They had no police. They had no president or prime minister. They had no courts. God hand-picked leaders to give His own instructions directly to the people. There were no elections. There were no referendums.

**Everything** God did in the Old Testament with His chosen people was directed to achieve **two primary goals**. Through the Jewish people would come **the Scriptures** and **the Redeemer**. In a nutshell, that's why God did everything He did in the Old Testament. He was bringing the world His **Word**, and He was bringing the world His **Son**. And, in His mercy, Father God wants the genealogy of His Son to be a **traceable** genealogy. He wants the birth of Jesus Christ to be the most **verifiable** birth in the history of this planet.

I know that's a bit oversimplified. But just remembering those two facts will explain much of what people find troubling in the Old Testament. Why weren't Jewish men allowed to marry Canaanite women? Is God a racist? No. God had nothing against Canaanite women. But the identity of the Jewish nation had to be kept in tact. Through the Jewish nation the Savior would be born.

Many times God commanded the stoning of those who committed adultery. Should we still do that today? Why don't we? It's commanded in the Bible. We don't do that today because we know that in the Old Testament God was preserving the identity of His called out people. This was to preserve both the **content of His revelation** (given through His own prophets, unmixed by the false religions of surrounding nations) and the **birth of the Savior** (the long prophesied Lion from the Tribe of Judah). Both these goals **required** the sustained separate identity of the Jewish people.

Now, all of this relates to the Old Testament teaching regarding marriage. Is it wrong for a Christian to marry someone of another ethnic background today? Can an Irish man not marry a Polish woman? Of course he can. **Unlike those in the Old Testament, you don't have to marry a person of your own ethnic background.**

But **why not?** Why don't those particular regulations relate to the church today? **Because the Scripture is complete and the Savior has come.** The **need** for those kinds of regulations is past. Those commands and prohibitions, while they certainly are as much God's Word as any other part of the Bible, **have served and fulfilled their purpose.**

"Well, what about it, Pastor Don? Did they have marriage licences and marriage certificates in the Old Testament?"

As a matter of fact, for most of the Old Testament age, yes, they did. Even the engagement period, which was viewed as legally binding as the marriage itself, was a covenant, usually drafted by the bride and grooms' parents. A price was paid to the bride's father. A covenant was made a matter of public confession with witnesses.

All of which was to show that, even in very primitive times, while there was no **legal system** to process the marriage ceremony as we do today, **marriage was not left to the passing whims of a man and a woman.** **Other people** had a stake in that marriage. And God wanted a genuine, binding, official, witnessed covenant of marriage.

Now, anyone who has read the Old Testament carefully knows that the whole idea of a marriage and a wedding receives **different treatment** with **different requirements** depending on what portion of history and revelation with which you are dealing.

In **pre-Mosaic times** the bride's parents would arrange a betrothal covenant. Upon payment of the price for the bride, the bridegroom could take the bride immediately to his own house (see **Isaac and Rebekah in Genesis 24**). He could no more break that "betrothal" than he could break the marriage itself.

Later on in the Old Testament you would find that marriage was generally a public celebration in the house of the bride's parents. We start to move closer to the kind of public acknowledgment of marriage that is more similar to what we would have today.

But the main point I want to make is this. Whenever someone wants to argue with you about the nature of Christian marriage, and the first thing they want to do is take you to a verse in Deuteronomy or Leviticus, you know immediately they're likely on the wrong track. And it's **not** because we don't think those books of the Bible are God's inspired truth. We do. But it's because they deal with a Jewish theocracy under God, void of human government, and a time we have seen fulfilled in God's intent and purpose.

#### 4) THE ABIDING PATTERN FOR MARRIAGE IN THE CHURCH AGE DEALS WITH BOTH GOD'S WILL AND THE LAWS OF HUMAN GOVERNMENT

**Romans 13:1-7** - "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. [2] Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. [3] For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, [4] for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. [5] Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. [6] For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. [7] Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to

**whom honor is owed.”**

We almost take those words for granted, but they are words you would never see in the Old Testament. The only king the Old Testament talked much about would be in the Psalms. Usually that was either King David, or, prophetically, the future coming King of Glory, the Messiah. Again, that’s because the goals of the Old Testament revolve exclusively around one people - the Jews. God’s goal was to give the whole world the **Scriptures** and the **Savior**. Those goals would only be reached through the Jewish people. There was no focused account of the nations or governments of the world in general.

Then, with the New Testament age, something very important happens. And it’s a huge transition that changes everything. With the coming of the Savior, Jesus Christ, the New Testament Church **incorporates peoples and nations of the whole earth**. This was a brand new thing. The Savior comes to the whole world. And all those people, once saved, lived in **nations**, not **theocracies**. That means they were not only **Christians**. They were also **citizens**. And God wanted them to be **good** citizens.

That’s where this very important teaching from **Romans 13** comes in. What should be the relationship between those Christians and the legal and political structures governing them? What does **God** command those relationships to be like? That’s the question Paul answers in Romans chapter 13. God’s will for Christians as citizens is spelled out in the very first two verses of this chapter:

**Romans 13:1-2** - “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. [2] Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.”

Do you want to know God’s will for the regulating and witnessing of the marriage covenant? You must be **subject to the statutes of the land**. And this raises an important question - one that must be thought through by careful disciples of Christ. What if the laws of the land **go against** the laws of God with regard to marriage? What if the state **allows**, or even **promotes** same-sex weddings? How should the Christian respond when the duties of **disciple** and **citizen** collide?

We’ve already dealt with that issue. Jesus said the absolute standard for the charter of marriage is already permanently nailed down in the creation account. **As long as the laws of the land encourage and enforce those principles, Christians must obey those laws**. Not to do so, Paul says, is actually **disobeying God, Himself**.

“Well, what if our leaders pass laws regarding same sex marriages, or pass laws allowing divorce for any reason?”

Again, Paul makes the ruling principle very clear - **Romans 13:6-7** - “For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. [7] Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.”

When the laws of the land and the customs of the church **protect** the laws of God - such as the public, witnessed, legal protection of the marriage vows - **Christians have no option but to fully endorse and obey them**. When those laws **go against** the principles of God’s Word, the Christian must put loyalty to God’s Kingdom first and quietly pay the penalty for disobeying the laws of the land.

Let me wrap up with the opening text of this message:

**John 4:7-19** - “There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” [8] (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) [9] The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?” (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) [10] Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” [11] The woman said to him, “Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? [12] Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock. [13] Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, [14] but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” [15] The woman said to him, “Sir,

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Note quickly, Jesus recognized the difference between *having a legal husband* and *living with a person you love*. "You have had *five husbands* - The one you are with now is *not your husband*." She may or may not have loved the man she was presently with. But *love was not what authenticated marriage in Jesus' eyes*. She may or may not have had sexual relations with the man she was now with. But *sex was not what authenticated marriage in Jesus' eyes*.

Also, Jesus recognized the reality of *each marriage this woman had entered into*. This is also a very important point. There are some Christians who try to teach that *only the first marriage counts*, that somehow all marriages but the first one are only *adulterous relationships*.

We'll deal with this and other issues at length later on in this series. But, for now, just take note that Jesus didn't say that this woman had been in *one* marriage and *five adulterous relationships*. Certainly she should have stayed married to her first husband. Jesus wasn't encouraging reckless attitudes regarding either marriage or divorce. But, having said all that, while she *shouldn't* have married all those men, Jesus clearly stated that *each of those marriages was real and valid*. Each should have been her *last*. But each was equally *valid*.

Only with her *present* partner did Jesus recognize something different. And the only difference was a *legal* difference, and nothing else. She had taken the time to *marry* each of the others - even if foolishly. But with her last partner, she just *moved in*. There was no legal marriage. And that's the sin Jesus confronted her with *before* she was ready to drink of the new water of life and forgiveness He had come to offer.

The attitude of Jesus toward this subject is still the same. I know there are lots of difficult questions regarding the legal aspects of marriage in the Bible. But given all the light and revelation we have, I want to close with this statement: *Given the light and revelation we have in the New Testament age, an individual or a couple will never get to first base in their relationship with Jesus Christ if they take lightly, or explain away, the sacred, legal definition of marriage. To fool with this is to poke your own eyes out and destroy your life.*

Keep a repentant heart. Never become so foolishly clever that you grieve and repel the Spirit of God.