

The Mystery of Marriage

I: Introduction

Mystery? What could be so mysterious about something that is as universal as marriage? Surely there can be no new insight into this institution. Well we will see in the course of this teaching that there is much to learn about the biblical notion of marriage. As a matter of fact it is because we have, in general, taken our clues about marriage from the devil that most marriages are dysfunctional, and the divorce rate is so high. In this essay I will first discuss the fundamentals of marriage from a biblical perspective, and then I will expound upon the mystery of marriage, knowledge of which will be an enormous source of encouragement for all couples who are married in the Lord.

II: Foundation Scripture

For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh”. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Ephesians 5:25 -32.

III: The History of Marriage

According to the Bible, marriage has been around as long as mankind has. As a matter of fact the very first interaction between God and man was for Him to ordain the institution of marriage by producing for Adam a help mate that was comparable to himself, namely Eve. According to Gen. 2:18-25, we see that the Lord after forming man from the dust of the earth, decided that it was not good for him to be alone. So He decided to make a companion for him. He then paraded all of His living creation past him to see if there would be a helper that was comparable to himself, but none was found. The Lord then took one of Adam’s ribs and from that He fashioned a female who, when presented to him, he called woman. Adam then said something very profound. “*This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man*” v.23. In the next verse we see the first mention of the notion of marriage in the use of the word “wife”. So then it is safe to conclude that marriage was something that was ordained by God from the beginning of man’s history. It was not some sort of social convention born out of evolution.

IV: The Purpose of Marriage

Now that we have established that marriage was ordained by God from the beginning, just what purpose does it serve, and how does it benefit us? There are a couple of simple facts that we can conclude from the Scriptures.

1. In the beginning the Lord said “ Let Us make man in our image, according to our likeness”. Then He blessed them and said to them “ be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it”. Gen. 1:26-28
2. After God created Adam, He found that it was not good for him to be alone, so He created a companion for him in the form of woman.
3. The Lord had a desire for someone to be His people, so that He could also be their God. Jer. 31:33
4. He desires godly offspring in order to facilitate the above mentioned goals.

Marriage then provides the framework or institution by which these desires are fulfilled, and moreover it is only within this context that these goals can be achieved.

V: The Constituents of Marriage

This teaching will now digress into what may seem like the incredibly obvious, but in light of how much we as a society have fallen away from the perfect will of God, it becomes necessary to establish the foundation upon which the institution of marriage is based. So then, what exactly does constitute a godly marriage arrangement? First of all a marriage consists of two and **only** two parties. One of them must be a man, and the other must be a woman. There is currently, under this dispensation, no other lawful combination of unions recognized by God as valid for marriage.

A brief note on polygamy: We find in the old testament that many of the patriarchs had more than one wife, and in some cases they had many wives as well as concubines. Although this may seem like a tidy arrangement from a man’s point of view, we must be careful to realize that this was not in the plan of God for the concept of family. But it was tolerated by way of concession to the hard heart of man. This is also the reason that He tolerated divorce. Polygamy rarely resulted in a more healthy family unit, but most often led to division within the family due to jealousies, ambitions, intrigues and the like. Now when God developed a way to penetrate the hard heart of man through the gospel, He mandated that both men and women be husband and wife of one spouse respectively. The characteristics and attributes of each constituent will now be discussed individually.

A: The Husband

- must be a man! (women need not apply)

- is characterized by God as the **head** of the marriage 1st Cor. 11:3. Now this headship is not only spiritual but also administrative.

1. **Spiritual:**

The husband is responsible for leading and guiding his family in the ways of righteousness, as well as bearing the guilt for failing to do so.

Gen. 18:19

Mal. 4:4-6

1st Tim. 3: 1-5

Jer. 32:18

Deut. 5:8-10

2. **Administratively**

The husband is also responsible for the day to day issues of running a successful household. These consist of providing for the family(1st Tim. 5:8), taking care of discipline issues with the children, and making decisions about things which affect the family. These things will be discussed in more detail later on.

B: The Wife

- must be a woman
- is characterized by God as the **body** of the marriage (Eph. 5:28).
- Is charged by God to be a helpmate to her husband, not to rule over him.

VI: The Marriage Model

- the garden of Eden instructions Gen 3:16-19
- Abraham and Sarah as examples
- The man should be manlike, and the woman should be womanlike.
- The man **leaves** his father and mother and joins to his wife thus forming a new and spiritually independent family unit. He then speaks for his family and their destiny becomes tied to him.

- The woman may or may not be **given** by her father in marriage

VII: The Marriage Bed

This is by definition the only place where lawful sexual activity can occur, meaning that any kind of sexual congress outside of the realm of husband and wife is considered to be either fornication or adultery. Many in religious circles would try to give the impression that God is against sex, and as a result have caused many a good marriage to founder in sexual dysfunction. On the contrary, the Lord has recognized the need for man to cohabit physically, and moreover it was He that built it into us in the first place. His only requirement is that it be expressed in the manner that He has designated, which is between a man and his wife, for unbeknownst to them, they are exhibiting a form of communion, symbolizing in an earthly way, something that is very precious in the Spirit. This is why He is very jealous for the sex act and loath to see it corrupted by the evil one.

Now it is also important to realize that it is important for both spouses to yield to the sexual desire of the other, in other words, we are not allowed to become too “spiritual” for sex. According to the Scriptures, neither the husband nor the wife has authority over their own bodies but the spouse does, and we are commanded not to defraud the other the use of the body except under extraordinary circumstances of prayer and fasting, and that only by mutual consent. Consider the following references to show you just how seriously the Lord takes this matter of sex. Heb. 13:4

The conjugal right

Exod. 21:10 (Heb.5772) *ownah: to dwell together, sexual cohabitation, the duty of marriage*

Prov. 5:15-20 (rejoice with the wife of your youth)

1st Cor. 7:3-5 (Do not deprive one another the use of the body)

VIII: The Role of the Husband

- First and foremost to be the head of the family. He must not abdicate to his wife.
- Dwell with your wives with understanding. 1st Pet. 3:7 Discern your wives, recognizing that they are easily overwhelmed by the affairs of life, being subject to depression. In other words you should not be more emotionally needy than your wife. Recognize that a woman’s grip on spiritual matters is dependent on the presence of a strong husbandly headship. Since they are gullible and easily deceived, they are susceptible to being led astray into spiritual error.

Handle all of the financial matters, especially the exercising of financial self control.

- A man should recognize that his companion is his wife, not his mother, and that she should be the preeminent woman in his life.
- Beware of overloading your working wife with the responsibility of full time homemaking.
- The wife is the glory of the husband. (1st Cor. 11:7) She should look like it. Do not despise her desire to look her best. (nails, hairdresser, new clothes etc.)
- If a man wants his wife to be Sarah, he must **first** be Abraham.
- Do not neglect your wife emotionally or physically. Keep the romance alive.
- Do not fall for the deception of the “midlife crisis”. This usually stems from discontentment in the marriage, resulting from boredom, insecurity, or a sense of unfulfilled destiny.
- Beware the physical mutilation of vasectomy. (Deut. 23:1)

A Test for Manhood:

The following set of twenty questions are designed to test the manhood quotient of any male. These are difficult questions and hard to fulfill, however they are obtainable to the man who is steadfast in his desire to serve the Lord. Any man that can answer in the affirmative to these questions will be someone who is very useful to God. So are you ready? Well let's begin.

1. Is your unmarried daughter a virgin?
2. Can you make your wife shut-up?
3. Are you filled with the Holy Spirit?
4. Is your son a gang banger or in jail?
5. Whose church do you go to, yours or your wife's?
6. In whose name are the bills and credit cards?
7. Does everyone in the house have the same last name?
8. Is your mother or mother-in-law a thorn in your flesh?
9. Are you bound up with drugs or alcohol?

10. Do you smoke?
11. Are you or your wife overweight?
12. Are you the husband of one wife?
13. Is your wife stressed out and on Prozac, etc.?
14. Is your sex life robust, or are you on viagra?
15. Do you bounce checks?
16. Do you ask your wife's permission for **anything**?
17. Do you and your wife argue and contend?
18. Are you heavily laden with debt?
19. Do you discipline the kids or does your wife?
20. Do you have additional sets of children?

IX: The Role of the Wife

- Be submissive

Eph 5:22

Col. 3:18

Tit. 2:1-5

1st Pet. 3:1-6

- Be discreet (Tit. 2:5) def. Gr. 4998, *sophron safe, sound in mind ,i.e. Self controlled, moderate as to opinion or passion discreet, sober temperate*

1. Stay off the phone with your mama
2. Don't talk about your husband's faults with your "girlfriends", or especially your children.
3. Beware of men "friends" especially those who have a willing ear to listen, and a shoulder to cry on.

- Be chaste. gr. 53, *hagnos; clean, innocent, modest, perfect*

- Be keepers of the house.
- MYOB (mind your own business) 1st Tim. 5:13, 2nd Thes. 3:11, 1st Pet 4:15
- Remember that you are the glory of your husband. You should look like it.

Endeavor to keep up your appearance. Preserve your beauty by keeping your weight down, eating well and exercising, stay out of the sun. Note that the admonition of the Scriptures is to not let your physical appearance be the thing that makes you beautiful, but let it be the hidden woman of the heart. The Lord is not opposed to women looking and dressing their best.

1st Pet. 3:1-4

1st Tim. 2:8-10

- You no longer have a separate destiny, but yours has been subsumed into your husbands.
- A wife is loyal to her own husband above all others.
- Recognize that when you are married, your husband is your lord and your primary concern. You are not in the will of God to ignore your husband in favor of what you think are spiritual pursuits.

1st Pet. 3:4-6

1st Cor. 7:32-3 - Beware of becoming lifted up in pride because you may have a job and contribute to the family finances, even if you make more than your husband.

- Do not, under any circumstances, carry more than **two** names. After your father gives you to your husband, he has no further dominion over you and your name should reflect that fact. If you want to honor your father, then be the best wife that you can be. That will be honor indeed.
- Beware the “Madonna” complex: meaning that a new mother will have a tendency to become wrapped up in her own little world revolving around her child, and as such she will neglect her husband, both emotionally and physically.
- Remember that the wedding is inconsequential, it is the marriage that counts. While I’m on this subject, let me point out that the white wedding dress is supposed to represent the purity of the virgin bride that results from the chaste lifestyle that she has lived. If this is not the case then she who wears white lies and does despite to the ones who have kept themselves from falling short, thus rendering the symbolism invalid.

X. Divorce:

One of the most frequent inquiries that I receive from people is related to matters of divorce and its aftermath. Many Christians have suffered through a divorce and then found out what the Bible says about it. Then they are filled with guilt and condemnation. Now in some cases these feelings are entirely justified since the party was guilty of disobedience to the word of God. In other cases however, the poor

soul is heavily laden with condemnation, and rendered spiritually impotent. So then it becomes necessary to teach on divorce from a biblical perspective.

What then can we say about divorce? The first thing is this: God hates it. (Mal. 2:13-16). We must also learn to distinguish between the way that God dealt with divorce under the Old Covenant, from the way that He deals with it under the new. The Lord has never been a proponent of divorce, but has in times past allowed for it under certain circumstances such as adultery. However, it was never His intent for two, who have become one in marriage, to ever again become two in divorce. (The reasons for this will become clear when I discuss the mystery of marriage) But as a concession to the hardness of man's heart, He allowed for the possibility of "lawful" divorce. But when the New Covenant came and the mediator of that covenant was revealed to be Christ Jesus, His relationship with His bride, namely the church, served as a model of marriage. So now that we have both a model and are no longer saddled with a stony heart, we should be well able to keep our marriages intact. Consequently God is much less tolerant of divorce. To those in the church, He expects them to stay married as long as both of them live. This is clearly pointed out in (1st Cor. 7:39-40, Rom 7:2).

XI. Adultery

Notice the similarity between the word adultery and the word adulterate which means to corrupt, to debase, to make impure by adding a poor or improper substance. In Scripture, adultery can have several connotations but is most frequently used to describe the state of a married man or woman engaging in sexual intercourse with someone who is not their spouse. Notice how closely the effect that this has on the marriage corresponds to the meaning of the word adulterate. For that is exactly what adultery does to the marriage covenant. It debases it and makes it impure by adding this outside party to the sanctity of the marriage bed, which is where the communion of marriage is engaged in.

Luke 16:18

Prov 6:32-35

The adultery "exemption" Matt 19:9

1. Unequal Yoking Together

The magnitude of this transgression depends on whether it was done with malice aforethought or not. Meaning, did the one who married a daughter of Belial, or the father who gave his daughter to a son of darkness, know that they were acting in direct rebellion against the word of God? This is an important distinction since the way that it should be handled is different depending on whether or not ignorance was involved.

2nd Cor. 6:14-7:1 ---- The command is given not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

Mal. 2: 11-12 ---- The distinction is made on being *awake* and *aware*

(Ezra 9:1-10:44)

(Neh 13: 23-31) Biblical examples of unequal yoking and its aftermath.

What if you were not awake and aware or were a child of Belial yourself when you got married but now you are born again, should you divorce your unbelieving spouse?

1st Cor. 7:10-14

What if my spouse dies?

1st Cor. 7:39

XIII Other Issues of Marriage

Polygamy:

Real Weddings:

Spiritual Eunuchs

Matt 19: 11-12—Some are eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom.

1st Cor 7:1-9 --- The better part is to remain unmarried, and being a eunuch for the sake of the kingdom is a gift from God.

1st Cor 7 :32-35 --- Those who are unmarried are not distracted by the cares of the world.

1st Tim. 4:1-5 --- Do not forbid to marry.

The example of the marriage of the shepherd:

1st Tim. 3:1-5, 11-12

Titus 1:5-6

Common Law Marriage:

XIV: The Pastoral Marriage

Before moving on to discuss the great mystery of marriage, I think it is wise to first speak on a lesser mystery of marriage, and that is the marriage analog exemplified between the pastor and the congregation. I would consider this as an intermediary level covenant in the model of marriage, placed strategically between the individual man /woman marriage and the Great marriage of the Lamb. Within this level of marriage the system of hierarchy is the same as in the others. In this case the pastor serves as the role of the “husband” and the congregation that of the “wife”. All of the administrative instructions that apply to the wife, and to the church as wife,

also apply to the congregation as wife. This is why it is so important for the man who would be shepherd to have first proven himself faithful in the lesser which is his marriage to his wife, before he can be trusted with the marriage that is greater, which is the sheep (see 1st Tim 3:1-7).

Notice some of the other analogs of the marriage model. In Ephesians 5: 25-28, the husbands are admonished to love their wives and to lay down their lives for them even as Christ Jesus laid down His life for His bride. Well the same admonition is given to the shepherd in Heb. 13:7, where the man of God is instructed to watch out for the souls of those over whom he has been given charge. Moreover those who would be sheep are required to be submissive to their shepherds, even as those who are called wife are required to be obedient to their heads. One of the reasons that this concept of relationship between shepherd and sheep has been lost on the church today is because the pulpits are by and large filled with hirelings and not shepherds. In the Scriptures those who are called shepherd are given specific instructions on the necessity of leading the congregation

(Acts 20: 28-32, 1st Pet 5: 1-4). They are to do so with the uttermost commitment to the safety and the growth and development of the precious lambs of the Lord Jesus. Any real man of God will recognize that he must account to the Lord Jesus in the day of judgement, so he would be a fool to run his ministry as a democracy. Knowing that the fleshly desires of the sheep are not necessarily beneficial to them spiritually, he must be prepared to exercise strong leadership based on the principles of the Word, and to do so without compromise. This is exactly the same instruction given to husbands by the Lord in warning them not esteem their wives or children or lands or families above the kingdom of God.

Now there are many such parallels on marriage that are given in the Scriptures, but these few are sufficient to give you understanding of the fact that the marriage model is a very powerful structure in serving the cause of unity amongst multiple parties. The Lord has made quite efficient use of this model throughout His creation. We would do well to defer to His wisdom and live our lives within the bounds of whatever station of this model that we happen to find ourselves. In other words, if you are the wife, then be the wife to the uttermost, and if you are the husband, then be him to the fullest even as Christ Jesus has provided the model upon which the very essence of husbanding is based.

XV: The Mystery of Marriage

I have deliberately left this section for last since in order to understand the mystery of marriage, it is first necessary to comprehend that which is easily discernible concerning it. Now that it is clear what marriage is, and how the Lord has instructed us concerning our roles in it, we can safely explore some of the more powerful hidden spiritual implications of marriage. The first key in unlocking the mystery is to realize that from God's perspective there is more to marriage than simply a covenant between an individual man and woman. There is a much higher symbolism to marriage in that it represents a terrestrial model for understanding the nature of the celestial marriage. In this marriage there is a Bridegroom, and there is a bride, and all of the tenants of the marriage bond are established and exemplified there. The role of the Bridegroom is of course played by Jesus, and the part of the bride is filled by the church.

The Celestial Marriage: At this time some digression is needed so that you may understand the marriage of substance. In the Bible there are several symbolisms used to both depict the church, and its relationship to Jesus. For example those who are appointed unto life are represented as a harvest of wheat, as sheep, as a great assembly, as a building, and as a betrothed wife. From the context of all the relevant Scriptures, it is clear that the church is being referred to in all of these examples. The symbolism under consideration is of course the one about us being the betrothed of the Lord Jesus. In the course of His parables concerning the kingdom of God, the Lord used the bridegroom imagery several times.

Matt. 22: 1-14

Matt. 25: 1-13

When taken in context with the other references related to His relationship to us expressed in the form of marriage imagery, it then becomes clear that these allusions are more than just merely symbolic, but rather prophetic. Moreover, the analog of God-Man marriage had already been established in the Old Covenant with the Lord and the children of Israel. (Jer. 3:1-18). Now this symbolism is culminated in the book of Revelation when the Apostle John is given a divine vision of the fully prepared bride who is clearly described as the Lamb's wife. Now just who was it that he was shown; The new Jerusalem, a magnificent city gloriously appointed with all manner of precious things. Now the spiritually dull will say, well isn't the bride of Christ the city? What they don't realize is that the city or the tabernacle of God, is the church. Consider the following references that clearly show the depiction of the church as an edifice.

The Foundation:

Heb 11: 8-10

Rom 15:20

Eph 2:19-22

The Building:

1st Cor 3: 9-17

1st Pet. 2: 4-10

Now with all of this in mind return to Revelation and read chapter 21: 1-27. You can clearly see that the bride of Christ can only be the church.

We find that related to the church, the Lord Jesus fulfills all of the responsibilities of the role of husband that we have been studying, therefore we are not left without example. Moreover there is extreme symmetry between the behavior and commitment expected of the church, and that which is required of the wife. The way that it works is this. Whenever there is a marriage between two believers, it serves as an earthly copy of the great heavenly marriage. In much the same way the tabernacle in the wilderness served as a copy and shadow of the great throne room of God who is the substance and is

eternal in the heavens. In other words, our marriages are a way that the glory of God is revealed from heaven, and declared throughout the whole earth in those whom He has chosen. In this way the world is not left without a witness of the immense gift of God that was bestowed upon the sons of men in the person of the great Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now of course this” witnessing” only works when the witness is true. If our marriages are dysfunctional then they are certainly not valid to show the love of Christ Jesus in operation. Now we can understand why all of the shortcomings of marriage that we have been discussing, are so injurious to our witness as Christians. For example, why does God hate divorce? Because it would be unconscionable for His Son to divorce His wife, and since we are the earthly model of that very marriage, then it should be equally as unlawful for us to divorce ours. What’s wrong with a little extra sex on the side you might ask? Well what you don’t realize is that the physical union that occurs on the marriage bed is a fleshly analog to that which we share with Christ Jesus in the Spirit. And in the same way that He does not defile or “adulterate” that “koinonia” or fellowship by sharing it with another, neither should we take that which is holy before God and pollute it through adultery. Consider the following Scriptures.

John3:22-29

Matt. 9:15

Rev. 21:1-2

Rev. 21:9-11

Let us now return to our foundation Scripture found in Eph. 5:25-32 and understand. Notice how the command is given in verse 25 for the husbands to love their wives **just as** Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it. The Lord then reminds us of the fact that our wives are bone of our bones and flesh of our flesh, by admonishing us that we ought to love our wives **just as** we love our own bodies, for in marriage they are considered to be one flesh with us. Now in like manner to this, we are also considered to be one body with the Lord Jesus, in other words bone of His bones, and flesh of His flesh. The loop is closed in that the complete fulfillment of the original command of the Lord in the beginning regarding a man leaving his father and mother and becoming one with his wife, is now found in the church being joined with Christ Jesus, thus becoming members of His body. Because of this fact, every marriage that occurs in the Lord is then indicative of this glorious union, serving as a microcosmic tangible example of a spiritual transaction.

Consequent to this, God has provided every instruction necessary to ensure that every marriage can serve as a true witness to the glory of Christ’s body. Any time we, who would serve as the shadow of good things to come, fall short in our example, then we do despite to the witness of the gospel that is contained in every godly marriage. The biggest affront of all is divorce, between two Christians. Since that would be impossible between Jesus and His bride, it should never, ever occur amongst those who would serve to exemplify that marriage. Ultimately when one becomes aware of the awesome implications of marriage, they would do well to not enter into it lightly, or with reservations, for the consequences of failure are much higher than you might have heretofore imagined. On the other hand if one applies the principles that have been elucidated here, then they can be assured of a successful union that will bring much glory to the kingdom of God, as well as providing for a life full of joy and peace.

Amen