

Thursday Bible Class

15th September 2022

Why No Polygamy

The Divine Ideal

There can be many claims and recourse to argument justifying polygamy by referring to Jacob and his wives, David and his wives, and God being married to Judah and Israel and so on. However those arrangements were for the time then present, and do not prove God's intention from the beginning. The first marriage as divinely ordained by God took place before the fall, and was a covenant made between three persons. Man, Woman and God. Gen 2:21-25. Jesus referred to this passage when demonstrating God's intention and ideal for marriage, and it is His definition. Matthew 19:3-6 *The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.* Jesus shows here that it is a Divine institution, and that two will become one flesh. He endorses the ideal that it is not good for man to dwell alone, and that it is God who has provided a woman to be a help meet for him, to compliment him, and that it is a Divine partnership, that cannot be annulled by man.

The corruption of Marriage and introduction of Polygamy

However since that time, the ideal of marriage and its lessons has been corrupted by sin. The first evidence of polygamy seems to be

actually by the seed of the serpent in the line of Cain, in Lamech boasting of murdering another. - Hardly an auspicious start to examples of polygamy. A little further on Gen. 6:2. *That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.* Implying perhaps multiple wives, and certainly that they took them whom they chose, not God doing the joining now, but everyman doing that which is right in his own eyes. The nation of Israel, a product from Egypt, was given the law of Moses to bring them as a schoolmaster unto Christ. It was necessary for them to be given the law, for the purpose given and also to sanctify them from the nations, to provide a structured alternative to the wicked practices and sins of the world. Thus polygamy was tolerated under the law of Moses, but not commanded, endorsed or condoned. Indeed warnings and commands are given under the law to compensate for the ills of polygamy inherited from the practices of Egypt, and the nations. Exodus 20:17 *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife* (singular – not wives).... This infers that it was expected that neighbours would only have one wife not multiple wives. There was no provision or command for men to have more than one wife under the law. Indeed the leaders of the nation were charged not to take more than one wife: Deut. 17:17: *Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away:* the family feuds which developed in Jacob's family, the same in the struggles between David's heirs resulted from a departure from the established family unit God designed, additionally: 1 Kings 11:1-4 *1 But king Solomon loved many strange women ... Of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three*

hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. And again Nehemiah 13:26 Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? ... nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin. The nation of Israel were taught of the foolishness of polygamy practiced by the nations, in this way. However even in the law given to them, the implications that polygamy was not God's design can be seen by the provisions made in the same law: Exodus 21:10 -11: If he take him another wife; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish. And if he do not these three unto her, then shall she go out free without money. The law commanded that responsibilities be fully lived up, and the consequences of the burden of taking extra wives must not be evaded. This in itself can be seen as discouragement of polygamy and a warning of the attached responsibilities, and indeed resultant problems as seen in: Deut. 21: 15-17 . If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the firstborn son be hers that was hated: Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, which is indeed the firstborn: But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his. Was it God's intention for wives to be hated, or preferred above another, or to be shunned, or for the children of multiple wives to be dismissed, ignored and denied inheritance? Far from it, all are vices of corrupt society, and the opposite of God's intention. This is seen plainly in Malachi 2:15. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.

The Teaching of Jesus and the Apostles

Jesus took the law of Moses, and showed how it was but a shadow of things to come, a *paidag gos* (Greek - a slave who led a child to school- see Galatians 3:24) to teach of true union in Christ. Whilst acknowledging the law, he showed the teaching behind it *Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.* And Jesus added that *Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.* From the beginning, it was not so with polygamy, and also for the hardness of hearts was this also tolerated, but from Jesus' words it can be seen that he made it clear, that it would no longer be tolerated. The Divine institution was but a shadow of greater things to come, as seen in Ephesians 5:23.-33 *For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.* (Note: not wives but wife).....27. *That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife (singular) loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife (singular) even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband. As one*

man and one woman are bound together for life in covenanted marriage, so the one bride is married to Christ for ever. They two, to be as one. This spiritual marriage is also taught by the Apostle in 2 Corinthians 11:2 *For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.* If the natural cannot be appreciated, or understood, then how can the spiritual? It is the false church, the broad church that teaches of multiple brides for Christ. The Apostle warns of this: 1 Corinthians 6:15-19 *Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?* Thus there is no example of natural or spiritual polygamy being practiced or condoned by the disciples and apostles, and all adopt his teaching an example of betrothal to one bride:

New Testament Examples

Acts 18:2 *And found a certain Jew named Aquila, ..., with his wife Priscilla;*

Acts 5:1. *But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, ...*

1 Corinthians 7: 2 *... let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.*

1 Corinthians 7:10-11 *And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband let not the husband put away his wife.*

1 Corinthians 7:14 *For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, ...*

1 Corinthians 7:27. *Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.*

1 Corinthians 9:5 *Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, ...*

1 Peter 3:7 *Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife,*

Revelation 19:7 *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.*

Indeed, the Apostle Paul makes it a condition of being a shepherd: 1 Tim3:2 *A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, ...* As all disciples though sheep, should aspire to be like Christ, should aspire to be carers of the flock, to be shepherds, then having many wives precludes from such aspirations.

NOTE Some people suggest that this phrase husband of one wife, proves that there were other people in the congregation who had more than one wife, but who were therefore not suitable to be a bishop. But this logic does not follow, for another stipulation is that a bishop should not be given to much wine. Does that mean that the rest of the congregation can be drunk? Instead this can be referring to people who in ignorance married a second time after divorcing their first wife. These are not to be given positions of responsibility within the ecclesia.

Practical Outworking

It is not generally disputed what the mind of Christ is regarding polygamy, but the difficulty to some arises, when someone who is in a polygamous relationship comes to the knowledge and understanding of the Gospel, and seeks to be baptised. What are they to do, to be in harmony with the teachings of Jesus in this respect? If they are married to more than one wife, or a wife married to a man with more than one wife, should they carry on this relationship, despite the fact that Jesus forbids it? How do they extract themselves from such a relationship? Should they if they wanted to? Realising their domestic situation is contrary to the mind of Christ, how can they go forward, how is it possible to be saved?

They believe that they are married to a partner alongside others as well. This is clearly against the commandments of Christ, and the realisation will come that it is a sinful arrangement. How to extract from this, when the only possible route is divorce? Divorce is also forbidden.

This needs to be looked at from God's point of view. Jesus has made this very clear, and his teachings have been around for 2000 years, and these things were not done in a corner. Ignorance is no justification, the whole world lieth in wickedness, and it practices all sorts of customs which though sanctioned by man are only fit for the wrath of God and certain destruction. As such the world has many perverse notions, and this is no different when it comes to defining marriage. Many modern liberals have sought to change the definition of marriage. Marriage has recently been redefined by the UK government to be permissible for same sex unions. Under French law it is possible to have a posthumous marriage even. Is marrying a dead person marriage in God's eyes, is it marriage at all? Is a same

sex marriage, or a polygamous marriage actually marriage? The definition of marriage is important. Just because different cultures permit different unions, it does not mean it is marriage as defined by Christ. Marriage defined by Christ and the Apostles is one man, one woman, for life.

Those who would be Christians, Christ's followers must conform to the Apostolic, and Christian definition. Polygamy does not conform to Christ's definition. Therefore it is not marriage. It is simply fornication. I Cor 6: ... *for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. ... Flee fornication.* It is noteworthy that the Gentiles who practiced polygamy were specifically told when becoming Christians: Acts 15:20,29 and Acts 21:25 *That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.*

Just because they committed fornication "in good faith" didn't make it right, and it had to stop.

Some may suggest that as such commitments were made in good faith, they must continue, since divorce is wrong. But from Christ's viewpoint, polygamy is not marriage, thus divorce is not required. It is not enough to acknowledge a situation as being untenable, if it is the mind of Christ that polygamy is wrong, it is not possible to "continue in sin that grace may abound" (Romans 6:1-2) Indeed all who come to a knowledge of the gospel make life changing decisions. 1 Cor 6:9-11: *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were*

some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Such were some of you... but there has to be a change. So what must be done? As polygamy is an invention of man, guidance on extracting oneself from such a situation is not outlined in scripture, however principles and doctrines of Christ's teaching must be adopted when dealing with the consequences of our sins., whilst practically seeking the only options possible.

The polygamous relationship must stop

The man must choose which partner he wishes to continue with, (1 Cor. 7:2) ideally one who shares the same faith (2 Cor. 6:14), ideally the first wife (Prov. 5:17), he must marry her in a public ceremony, to witness the covenant made (Ezekiel 16:8; Malachi 2:14) He must have no conjugal relationship with his old partners going forward (1 Cor. 7:2). If any of them have children through him, he must continue to support them, and maintain all his responsibilities to all his children (Exodus 21:10; 1 Tim 5:8). He must not see his former partners in difficulties either, as he is responsible for their demise (James 1:27).

If they continue to live in a compound in an arrangement, where the former partners become a part of the household in an employed function, then there must absolutely be no conjugal relationships. If there is, it means that fornication is taking place, and if this is not repented of, the man will be sanctioned in accordance to Matthew 18, and ultimately to keep no company with him. (1 Cor 5:9)

If homosexuals come to a knowledge of the Truth, and one or both of married partners want to be baptised, they must recognise, that their marriage is not marriage in God's eyes, but an abomination.

There is no need to go to law before man to dissolve the marriage, as it was not marriage anyway. They must avoid any appearance of evil, and the relationship going forward is that of brothers in Christ only.

It is no different to any other sins that we commit before baptism. If we have through ignorance become tied to the world, and placed ourselves in direct opposition to the teachings of Christ, when we come to the knowledge of the word, we must seek to become in harmony with his teachings. All past sins are forgiven, but as the Apostle says Romans 6:1 *Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?* And Romans 6:15 *What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.*

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