

GOD'S INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE

by Elder Bob Allgood

When a Primitive Baptist minister performs a marriage ceremony the Bride and Groom and the witnesses will usually hear him say these words, “We are gathered together in the sight of God, and in the presence of these witnesses, to join this man and this woman in holy matrimony. May we be reminded that the ordinance of marriage is an institution of God. Our Heavenly Father, yonder in the Garden of Eden, saw that it was not good for man to be alone. He created for him a helpmate, and established the rite of marriage, saying, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh”.

God is both the author and designer of the institution of marriage, just as is “Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”. In order for one to understand any of the sub-subjects of marriage, such as divorce and remarriage, one must first understand what God says about marriage itself. God’s word provides us with all the information we need about the subject of marriage if we are willing to “rightly divide the word of truth” and believe “Thus saith the Lord”. God gives us all the instructions we need on how to have a joyful and happy marriage that is pleasing to God in this lifetime.

In order to understand the precept of marriage we must go back “to the beginning” when God first instituted it and gave his law concerning the marriage covenant. When Jesus was questioned by the Pharisees, being tempted of them, they asked, “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?” Jesus 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?” (Matt 19:3-5). God does not change. His precepts do not change. Are we to believe that Jesus changed the precepts of God which he spoke in the beginning? I think not.

Following the creation of man from the dust of the earth and the giving of the law of sin and death we read in Genesis 2:18, and the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him". Notice it was God, not Adam, who said, "It is not good that the man should be alone". It was God who said, "I will make him an help meet for him". In verses 19-20 we find that God brought every beast of the field and every fowl of the air to Adam, and he named them, "and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him". Let not man say that a dog or a cat or a bird is his best friend – for among these there was "not found an help meet for him".

So we find in verses 21 and 22 that it was "the LORD God" who "caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man". It was God who performed this operation and fashioned a woman from one of the ribs of Adam. It was God who brought the woman to man to be named by him. And so he did in verse 23, for it was Adam who said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man".

BUT it was God who declared the first law of marriage as a lifetime covenant between man and woman. And this he did in verse 24, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh". We know from what Jesus said in Matthew 19:4-5 that it was God who spoke this law of marriage, for he said to the Pharisees, "'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?'" I call this "the first law of marriage" because the law of sin and death was already given, and the Law of Moses (which would include the law of marriage) would not be given for about 2,600 years in 1533 BC. I call marriage a "lifetime covenant between man and woman" because that is what is taught by the words, "man --- shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh".

When Primitive Baptist Elders perform a marriage ceremony they have both the man and the woman VOW a vow before God. That vow goes something like this. "I (groom) take thee (fiancé), to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, For better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, and forsaking all others, cleave only to thee, according to God's holy ordinance, UNTIL DEATH DO US PART (caps for emphasis). And then the vow is taken by the Fiancé and the same words are spoken ending in UNTIL DEATH DO US PART. If Primitive Baptists Elders or any other ministers who require this VOW to be spoken believe that there is anything but death that can end a marriage then they are LIARS for not letting it be known ahead of time. For instance, if simple incompatibility is a basis for divorce and remarriage then this VOW is a farce. If the man or the woman can put away the other before death and remarry, then the VOW is a farce and the minister of God ought

not to allow them to take the Vow before God or they should change the Vow before it is taken.

Paul understood the law of marriage to be a lifetime covenant for he wrote in Romans 7:1-3, “Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man”. Do we believe the precepts of God change? I don’t know about you, but I don’t.

The word “cleave” means to cling to, stick close to, stay close, keep close, stick to, stick with, and to be joined to. Thus Jesus said to the Pharisees “Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder”. The record by Mark records it this way, >> And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. <<

Marriage is not only a lifetime covenant between man and woman to which God is a witness being the author of the institution of marriage, but it is the creation of a new blood line or a new family line. The words “one flesh” is used to describe a blood relationship created between the married man and woman. Adam had declared of Eve, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man”. We find several examples of this in the Bible but one should suffice. Jacob was Rebecca’s son. Rebecca was Laban’s sister. We read in Genesis 28:13-14, “And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister’s son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things. And Laban said to him, Surely thou art my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month”.

Paul established this same “blood relationship” between ALL of God’s elect that will make up the Bride of Christ with Christ himself. In Ephesians 5:25-32 we read, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 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 loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth 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”.

Marriage is a lifetime covenant and blood line established between man and woman and witnessed by God. Only death is given as a Biblical basis for one to marry another. Paul wrote to the Corinthians “The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord”. Does God change his precepts? I think not.

The union, the bonding and cleaving, between Adam and Eve, as ordained by God, standardizes God’s intent and purpose in marriage. The union of Adam and Eve, as ordained by God, typifies God’s eternal purpose concerning Christ and his (eternal) church. What was taught in the beginning sets forth the basic principals for marriage and divorce which we should follow today. Jesus taught and upheld these principals; as did Paul the Apostles. It was the Pharisees who had departed from God's Ordinance and allowed "divorce for every cause". Jesus said to them “Because of the hardness of your hearts” Moses allowed divorce. (Moses allowed divorce only in the case where premarital sex or "some uncleanness" was discovered. Read Deut. 24:1-4 and compare it to Hebrews 13:4. Then, Jesus said, "But from the beginning it was not so”.

What was taught “in the beginning” also typifies the compelling action by a husband who "loved his wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it". If men truly "loved their wives as Christ loved the church", the wife, as the church, would have no desire to depart from the bridegroom. Marital problems would be resolved in the spirit of Love and Submission. Today, husbands and wives are putting away their spouses for every cause, simply because the world’s legal system allows it. Children of God are to obey the laws of the land, but when those laws conflict with the Word of God, we “ought to obey God rather than man”. The law of the land allows Idol Worship. Are God's children then to practice Idolatry, simply because it is allowed by the law of the land ? God forbid !

Regardless of what we say, or how much truth we publish, there will always be many who continue to flout God’s law of marriage. Some will try to justify their action based on social trends. Some will even try to pervert the teachings of Scripture and try to make the sins adultery or fornication the just cause of divorce and multiple marriages. But I do not believe Jesus changed the precepts of God which he declared “in the beginning” – for God does not change.