

WHAT
CONSTITUTES
A
MARRIAGE?

WHEN IS MARRIAGE ESTABLISHED IN THE SIGHT OF GOD

The divine purpose in the relationship between Adam and Eve was complete spiritual and natural affinity, expressed in the words "a help meet for him," and, "shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh." One in purpose, love, hope and self -sacrificing determination to help each other to reach the Kingdom of God. The bringing into existence of a Godly seed was also an element of marriage, but an element not necessarily entering into all marriages. Marriage without the spiritual elements referred to is a mockery and reduces man to the level of the beasts. Fulfilling the natural sex instinct of man and woman does not constitute marriage, but is something that marriage will control and keep within its lawful sphere. Outside this lawful sphere such exercise is unchastity. Marriage therefore, is a composite state embracing many privileges and obligations as set forth clearly in Scripture; a notable example of which occurs in Ephesians chapter five..

It is of vital importance for us to know what constitutes marriage in the sight of God, as it affects us in this Christian dispensation. The position we, as Christadelphians, have always acted upon and upheld is well expressed by Brother Roberts:-

Marriage is the earliest institution to be found in the Bible. It is met with so soon as Gen. 2 : 24. It consists, as there defined, of a man leaving his father and mother and uniting himself with the woman of his choice, after which they are "one flesh". Jesus refers and Paul re-echoes it in Eph. 5 : 31. Therefore Gen. 2 : 24 is made binding on all who seek to be subject to Christ. The "leaving of father and mother," shows the formality, openness and publicity that have been essential to marriage, from the very earliest. The open assumption of marital responsibility and the open profession of the marriage covenant are part of the act of marriage. Without it, there is an absence of the thing ex-

pressed by the word "marriage." The principle element of marriage is the recognition of the community and the power to enforce the compact in the case of the faithless. All Bible cases of marriage illustrate the point. Licentious sophistry, the slave of lust, would limit the institution to private agreement between the two parties concerned, by which diabolical gloss, innocence has often been corrupted by scoundrels, and the saying of the apostle illustrated that "destruction and misery are in their ways." Marriage being the open, public and avowed union of man and woman, the answer given last month follows as a matter of course.

The Scriptures never contemplate the admissibility of intercourse till after marriage (1 Cor.7 : 9; Gen. 29 : 21). Before then it is fornication (1 Cor. 7 : 2.). Men and women are not husbands and wives till after marriage, whatever their intentions may be.

Christadelphian, 1880, P : 185.

Again, Brother Roberts writes:-

"Marriage is a matter recognised and provided for in the law of nations. Therefore in this, the Christadelphians, like their brethren in the first century, submit to the powers that be."

In our days we are married by the Registrar (or his representative). An opportunity is given to the public for lawful objection before the marriage takes place. The Registrar then marries the couple in the presence of witnesses. The marriage is then recorded in the Register which is signed by the contracting parties and witnesses.

However sincere may be the intentions of man and woman, they are not married in the sight of God until this public ceremony is completed, to quote Brother Roberts again "The Scriptures never contemplate the admissibility of intercourse till after marriage (1 Cor. 7 : 9; Gen.29 : 21). Before then it is fornication. (1 Cor.7 : 2).

Men and women are not husbands and wives till after marriage, whatever their intentions may be." A private agreement between two parties to live as husband and wife does not constitute marriage, in the sight of God, but is an act of fornication.

Many years ago a case occurred in a large ecclesia. A young brother and sister thought that their private agreement to be husband and wife was marriage in the sight of God. When the sister was about to become a mother, the brethren heard of it, and in due course the couple were withdrawn from for fornication. Subsequently they came to see the true teaching of the Word, and were married by the Registrar, and received back into fellowship.

Any views which make room for immorality of this kind should be exposed without compromise, that young brethren and sisters be not deceived, and that the holiness of marriage be upheld. Marriage is pre-eminently one of those things in which God requires us to submit to the law of the land-to the minister "ordained" by Him for the purpose.

To suggest that a private agreement by a couple constitutes marriage, and that the Registrar only records the fact, is untrue and opens the door to immorality.

Brother A.H.Jannaway

CHRISTS ENDORSEMENT OF THE LEGALITY OF MARRIAGE AS DICTATED BY CIVIL AUTHORITY

Some have argued that because the Bible does not specify any legal requirements to make a marriage contract valid that a private agreement between two parties is therefore acceptable to God and have argued that co-habiting is therefore a marriage in Gods sight.

It can be demonstrated from scripture that Jesus gave Divine recognition to the civil contract of marriage in force in his day.

First we will take a brief glimpse of the marriage arrangements at the time of Christ as presented by Edersheim:- “According to Rabbinical law certain formalities were requisite to make a betrothal legally valid. These consisted either in handing to a woman, directly or through messengers, a piece of money, however small, or else a letter*, provided it were in each case expressly stated *before witnesses*, that the man thereby intended to espouse the woman as his wife. The marriage followed after a longer or shorter interval, the limits of which, however, were fixed by law. The ceremony itself consisted of leading the bride into the house of the bridegroom, with certain formalities, mostly dating from very ancient times.-----

* “There was also a third mode of espousal —simply by cohabitation, but this was very strongly disapproved by the Rabbis.” (Sketches of Jewish Social Life Alfred Edersheim Page 139)

When Jesus came to the woman at the well at Samaria He tested her integrity by asking her to call her husband. She had five previous marriages and the man she was now living with was not her husband, as she admitted. Christ confirmed her status by his rejoinder. In so doing he provided Divine recognition (not approval) of the five marriages legally established according to the civil administration of that society and that her present status was not recognised as marriage either under Divine or human law.

*Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.
The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:
For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.* John 4:16-18.

Brother M.A. Pilbeam

Scripture passages showing that the physical union only is not a marriage.

EXOD 22:

16: And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed, and lie with her, he shall surely endow her to be his wife.

17: If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins.

DEUT 22

28: If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found;

29: Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days.

GEN 34. Dinah and Shechem

1: And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land.

2: And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her.

4: And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife.

2 SAM 13. Tamar and Amnon

13: And I, whither shall I cause my shame to go? and as for thee, thou shalt be as one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, I pray thee, speak unto the king; for he will not withhold me from thee.

14: Howbeit he would not hearken unto her voice: but, being stronger than she, forced her, and lay with her.

JOHN 4. Woman at Samaria

16: Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

17: The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:

18: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

Passages showing procedures for marriage require :-

- 1. The public declaration of intent to marry (often witnessed by a period of *betrothal*).**
- 2. The leaving of father and mother.**
- 3. A marriage feast and or supper.**
- 4. The taking of his wife into his house/tent.**
- 5. Lastly -the physical union.**

GEN 2. Adam and Eve

22: And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man

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24: Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

GEN 16. Abram Sarai Hagar

2: And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

3: And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.

Wife here is (Strong's 802) the same as Gen 2:24

GEN 24 Isaac and Rebecca

4: But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.

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67: And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

GEN 29 Jacob, Leah, Rachel

21: And Jacob said unto Laban, , Give me my wife for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her.

23: And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her.

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28: And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also.

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30: And he went in also unto Rachel,

DEUT 22.

16: And the damsel's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her;

Betrothal

23: If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her;

24: Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you.

Note as a mans betrothed she is deemed his wife.

MATT 25

1: Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

10: And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

JOHN 2.

1: And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there:

9: When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom.

Passages which show that a binding marriage contract was in force under the Law of Moses which required a written “Bill of Divorce” for it to be broken.

MAL 2:14:

Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the **wife of thy covenant.**

DEUT 22:

13: If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her,

14: And give occasions of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid:

15: Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate:

16: And the damsel's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her;

17: And, lo, he hath given occasions of speech against her, saying, I found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city.

18: And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him;

19: And they shall amerce him in an hundred shekels of silver, and give them unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; **he may not put her away all his days.**

28: If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found;

29: Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, **he may not put her away all his days.**

DEUT. 24

1: When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: **then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.**

2: And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.