

CHAPTER 2: A SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE

We want to state before we go any further that while we believe that a sexual relationship between a man and a woman establishes a covenant relationship between them that binds upon them the scriptural obligation to live together before God as husband and wife, we do not believe that a marriage is nothing more than a sexual relationship. We will be accused by some of downgrading the Biblical institution of marriage. The problem is one of perception. Most people just do not see adultery and fornication as the vile and wicked acts that they are. Most people just do not understand the institution of marriage as it is presented in the Scriptures because they have not been taught properly. Another major part of the issue is that wicked men and women have made a mockery of fornication and adultery. Most men and women today cannot even blush because their conscience has been seared by the constant diet of sexual promiscuity and sexual perversion that they are fed through their televisions and movie theaters. The Devil has conned them into believing that fornication and adultery are casual sexual acts to be freely partook of. God does not view fornication and adultery as a mere sexual act. It is a very serious thing with God. God's perspective on adultery and fornication is that it is an attack upon the institution of marriage. That is why God established the death penalty for fornication and adultery under the Old Testament law. Adultery and fornication are also a picture of Satan's attack upon the Bride Of Christ. Fornication and adultery are Satan's counterpart to God's institution of marriage. The bride of Satan is a whore. The Bride Of Christ is a chaste virgin. If Christian men and women lived with the perception that sex is an equivalent act to marriage, we would have a whole lot less fornicating pastors and preachers in our pulpits.

You will hear this stated many times throughout this book. Scriptural marriage is intended to be one man with one woman for a lifetime. God hates divorce. The Bible says that a man and a woman marry when they become one flesh. The concept of one flesh can be summarized as follows: "No man or woman ever becomes separated from their own flesh until they die". That is why we can state that God intended that marriage be an "until death do us part" event. Put another way, when you become one flesh with the opposite sex God intends for that relationship to be permanent until it is put asunder by death. That is why fornication and adultery is so wicked in the eyes of God.

Contrary to what many fundamentalist and Baptist preachers and pastors preach and teach, God does not put most marriages together. For anyone to teach such a doctrine is a wicked slap in the face of God the Holy Ghost Who authored the Scriptures. When God sets forth the standards for two people being allowed to become one flesh and those standards are violated, then it is obvious that God did not put those marriages together. While God in his permissive will allows unscriptural marriages, he does not put them together. God does not put a believer and an unbeliever together. The scriptures do not say: "what therefore God has allowed to be joined together, let not man put asunder. The scripture is emphatic that God joined it together. The only marriages that can possibly be described as having been put together by God are those involving either two Jews or two Bible believing Christians. We believe that God intends marriage to be a high and holy picture of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Bride, The Church of the redeemed. For that reason, we are totally opposed to any form of polygamy because the Bride of Christ is one body both spiritually and physically with the Lord Jesus Christ. Hallelujah! The Lord Jesus Christ has but one Bride and Wife in Revelation

THE MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND “HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” CONTROVERSY

19 and that is the church of the living God. By stating we are opposed to any form of polygamy we mean that we are opposed to any form of polygyny that puts one man with multiple wives at the same time, or any form of polyandry that puts one woman with multiple husbands at one time. We are opposed to a man keeping concubines for the same reason. Most of you are in for a real shock as we go forward in our discussion just as we have been in preparing this book! We better read and study our Bibles very carefully because if we do not, we will end up ignorantly hurting some of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We have seen many divorced people abused from our pulpits over the years. We have seen many once married peacocks kick a divorced man when he is down. Many of the once married peacocks carry a razor and a shaker of salt around to keep those wannabe “double married” preachers in their proper place of pain and eternal punishment.

Proverbs 30:12-14

¹² There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness. ¹³ There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up. ¹⁴ There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.

Just because we quote an individual here and then document why we disagree with them doctrinally does not mean that we do not think they are a brother in the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor does it mean that we think they are our enemies. Nor does it mean we would break fellowship with them because they disagree with us over the content of this book.

From the Scriptures we can state that God had at least a five-fold purpose in ordaining a husband and wife relationship: (1) To populate the earth; (2) To subdue the earth; (3) To have dominion over every living thing; (4) To provide Adam with companionship; (5) To provide Adam with an help meet. We can find this five-fold purpose stated in Genesis 1:27-28 and 2:18 where we see:

Genesis 1:27-28

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. ²⁸ And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Genesis 2:18

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.

The first three purposes are contained in Genesis 1:28 with Genesis 2:18 containing the last two purposes. God did not create woman that man might have an adversary or a robot (slave). That is the

A SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE

way the Devil would have it. Neither did God create a man that God might have an adversary or a robot. God intended that a man might be submitted to him in the same manner as a woman is to be submitted to her husband. It is a chain of command that was created in love. God created woman that the man might have companionship and a help meet for carrying out God's purpose. It is in fulfillment of three of those purposes that God created the institution we call marriage. Marriage was the first institution that God ordained followed by the family. God's first commandment to mankind was to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28). That commandment was obeyed in the act of becoming one flesh and God producing the fruit thereof. The act of becoming one flesh established the husband and wife relationship according to Genesis 2:24:

Genesis 2:24

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

Genesis 2:24 is at least partially quoted five more times in the Bible with the scriptural definition of marriage as being "one flesh" never being changed. Genesis 2:24 is also partially quoted in Malachi 2:15 with the use of the phrase "And did he not make one?". Genesis 3:24 is quoted in the following passages:

Malachi 2:15

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.

Matthew 19:4-6

4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female, 5 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**? 6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but **one flesh**. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

Mark 10:6-8

6 But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. 7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; 8 And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but **one flesh**.

1 Corinthians 6:16-17

16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be **one flesh**. 17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

THE MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND “HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” CONTROVERSY

Ephesians 5:31-32

31 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**. 32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

This particular passage is quoted in 1 Corinthians 6:16 in the context of the longest passage on marriage in the New Testament with that being 1 Corinthians chapter 7. The law of first mention defines a wife as woman who has become one flesh with a man in Genesis 2:24. The word “**marry**” sees its first mention in Genesis 38:8 where the word “**marry**” is defined as a man going in unto a woman for the purpose of producing seed. This verse states:

Genesis 38:8

⁸ And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother’s wife, and **marry** her, and raise up seed to thy brother.

Unmarried people become guilty of fornication when they come together sexually and then do not live together as husband and wife as commanded in the Scriptures. God considered the sexual relationship to be of such importance that the law required death for those who violated Biblical commandments concerning it. Married people who come together sexually with someone they are not married to commit fornication and adultery. Adultery comes under the broad umbrella of fornication in the New Testament. See the definitions section at the rear of the book. (We understand that adultery and fornication come from two different Greek words, but don’t pull out your Greek sword yet. You may give yourself a deadly wound). Now, Genesis 2:24 and Genesis 38:8 would normally be enough to convince most Bible students that a husband and wife relationship, or marriage, is established by the act of becoming one flesh, but that is not the case in the subject before us. Tragically, many men in our pulpits and men and women in our pews have been blinded by teaching and preaching that is more holy than the Scriptures. In fact, it is a teaching that exceeds the righteousness of the Scriptures.

The words marriage and wedding are used interchangeably in the New Testament. The word “marriage” is used 17 times in the New Testament while the word “wedding” is used 7 times. Most of the time the two terms are used to refer to the marriage supper and the wedding feasts that followed the man and woman becoming one flesh. That is true of the marriage (supper) in John 2:1-11 and of the marriage supper in Revelation 19:7-9.

Many Baptist and fundamentalist preachers, teachers, and pastors hold to a very Roman Catholic doctrine of what constitutes a scriptural marriage. Here is why we say that. The Roman Catholic Church holds that a marriage is a ceremony to be presided over by the church which is the same view held by many Baptists including many Independent Baptists. That doctrine will not stand the test of the Scriptures. Marriage is one of the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church. Because they unscripturally declare marriage to be a sacrament, they feel that they are the only earthly authority divinely authorized to dispense marriage. This makes the authority to contract

A SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE

a marriage to be vested in the Roman Catholic Church. The custom of having a ceremony with a priest, pastor, or preacher present came slithering up out of the crypts of Roman Catholic theology. Here is the proof:

Those who shall attempt to contract marriage otherwise than in the presence of the parish priest, or of some other priest by permission of the said parish priest, or of the Ordinary, and in the presence of two or three witnesses; the holy Synod renders such wholly incapable of thus contracting and declares such contracts invalid and null, as by the present decree It invalidates and annuls them. Moreover It enjoins, that the parish priest, or any other priest, who shall have been present at any such contract with a less number of witnesses (than as aforesaid); as also the witnesses who have been present thereat without the parish priest, or some other priest; and also the contracting parties themselves; shall be severely punished, at the discretion of the Ordinary. (Council Of Trent, Seventh Session, Decree On Reformation Chapter 1, July 15, 1563)

The authority to contract marriage is not Scripturally vested in any church including the Roman Catholic Church. Neither does the Roman Catholic Church have any scriptural authority to annul marriages. If you are a New Testament preacher or pastor, you do not have the scriptural power or authority to state: “By the power vested in me, I pronounce you husband and wife”. A church or state authority may have wrongfully granted you that authority, but it is not scriptural. The authority to contract marriage is scripturally vested in the family and its individuals. For those of you who will not marry divorced couples, you do not have the scriptural authority to “marry” anyone regardless of whether they have been divorced. Though civil authorities regulate marriage, they have no scriptural authority to contract marriages. In the Old Testament, it was generally the father of the Bridegroom that sought out a Bride for the Son. You never see an Old Testament priest in that role. Nor do you see an Old Testament priest officiating at any marriage ceremony, period. Nor is the king’s representative there officiating! The same pattern is repeated in the New Testament. We are not opposed to weddings and marriage ceremonies, but they are not required in the eyes of God for a marriage to be Scripturally valid and binding. It is the sexual act that makes a marriage scripturally binding. While we are not opposed to weddings, we have seen many so called Christian brides on their wedding days dressed in the most ungodly fashion that leaves little to the imagination. God’s standards for Christ honouring dress do not get thrown out of your bedroom into the public arena on your wedding day.

Throughout this book, we will continue to rebuke the idea that it is a ceremony that makes for a Biblical marriage. You will not find one commandment in the Old Testament to a priest or in the New Testament to a pastor or preacher that directs them to conduct marriage ceremonies. Neither will you find one example in either Testament of a religious or governmental official conducting a marriage ceremony or vows. What you will find in the Old Testament is that all instructions, commandments, and charges regarding marriage are given to the parents. There is no scriptural

THE MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND “HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” CONTROVERSY

authority vested in the church or in the government to institute marriages. In Exodus 22:16, the father even had the right to refuse to allow a man to marry his daughter even when the man had taken her virginity away.

We will start the next phase of our study with the dictionary definitions of the words betroth, espouse, bride, bridegroom, marry, husband, wife, and concubine. For a more in depth definition and description of these terms refer to the “Glossary Of Terms”. The Webster’s 1812 definition of espouse is:

To betroth; to promise or engage in marriage, by contract in writing, or by some pledge; as, the king espoused his daughter to a foreign prince. Usually and properly followed by to, rather than with. To marry; to wed.

The Webster’s 1812 definition of betroth is:

1. To contract to any one, in order to a future marriage; to promise or pledge one to be the future spouse of another; to affianc; used of either sex. “The father betroths his daughter”.
2. To contract with one for a future spouse; to espouse; as, a man betroths a lady.

So, we see that the definitions of betroth and espouse are essentially the same. The 1812 Webster’s Dictionary definition of bride is:

1. A woman newly married. But the name is applied to a woman at the marriage festival, before she is married, as well as after the ceremony.
2. A woman espoused, or contracted to be married.

The custom of continuing to call a woman a bride even after the wedding ceremony is thought to have originated in Deuteronomy 24:5 which states:

Deuteronomy 24:5

⁵ When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken.

The 1812 Webster’s Dictionary definition of bridegroom is:

A man newly married; or a man about to be married.

The 1812 Webster’s Dictionary definition of marry is:

A SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE

To enter into the conjugal state; to unite as husband and wife; to take a husband or a wife. To take for husband or wife. We say, a man marries a woman; or a woman marries a man. The first was the original sense, but both are now well authorized.

Notice that the definition of marry is focused upon becoming one flesh in this Webster's definition. The word conjugal means to come together physically.

The Webster's 1812 definition of husband is:

A man contracted or joined to a woman by marriage. A man to whom a woman is betrothed, as well as one actually united by marriage, is called a husband. Lev 19. Deu 22.

The Webster's 1812 definition of wife is:

The lawful consort of man; a woman who is united to man in the lawful bonds of wedlock; the correlative of husband.

The Webster's 1812 definition of concubine is:

1. A woman who cohabits with a man, without the authority of a legal marriage; a woman kept for lewd purposes; a kept mistress.
2. A wife of inferior condition; a lawful wife, but not united to the man by the usual ceremonies, and of inferior condition. Such were Hagar and Keturah, the concubines of Abraham; and such concubines were allowed by the Roman laws.

What we see in all these definitions above is a combination of scriptural descriptions and legal descriptions. The scriptural definition of a term may not be the same as the legal definition, but many times the legal definition of a term is the same as the scriptural definition. If the legal definition of term contradicts the scriptural definition of a term, we are bound to obey the scriptures. Such is the case in same sex "marriages" which are strictly forbidden by the Scriptures as being an abomination. The Webster's 1812 definition of unmarried is:

Not married; having no husband or no wife.

This is the case for Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:8. He states that he is unmarried. He does not state that he has never been married or that he is not divorced. We will discuss the implications of that later on in the chapter on "Standards For Church Service/Qualifications For Church Offices". The only place that the word "unmarried" is used in the Scriptures is in 1 Corinthians 7 where it is used four times. The word "unmarried" is used both of the divorced women in 1 Corinthians 7:11 and of a

THE MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND “HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” CONTROVERSY

virgin in 1 Corinthians 7:34. What this means is that the scriptural definition of an unmarried person is both a virgin who has never been married and the individual who has been married, but is now divorced. We realize that by definition that a virgin is one who has never had sex (been married) to an individual of the opposite sex.

The first two questions we will ask is what is an espousal and what is an engagement? The third question we will ask is: “what constitutes a scriptural marriage?”. Here are some of the questions that follow from that first three questions. Does a scriptural marriage require a ceremony? Does a scriptural marriage require a marriage license or certificate? Does a scriptural marriage require the presence of a priest, pastor, preacher, or state official as an administrator?

What is the difference between an espousal and an engagement? In Matthew 1:18-19, we read:

Matthew 1:18-19

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.

It is most important to note here that Joseph was espoused to Mary but they had not yet become husband and wife by becoming one flesh. In other words, they were not married. If the case was otherwise, there could have been no virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Note the following description:

“Betrothal with the ancient Hebrews was of a more formal and far more binding nature than the “engagement” is with us. Indeed, it was esteemed a part of the transaction of marriage, and that the most binding part.... Among the Jews the betrothal was so far regarded as binding that, if marriage should not take place, owing to the absconding of the bridegroom or the breach of contract on his part, the young woman could not be married to another man until she was liberated by a due process and a paper of divorce” [The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Copyright 1929, General Editor James Orr, page 1,997]. [Note from the author of this book: betrothal is the same as espousal]

We would note that this process is not contained in the Scriptures and that it was Jewish custom. Concerning this custom of betrothal, in the article titled “Betrothal And Nuptial Rites, the 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia had this to say:

“The first step toward marriage was betrothal, involving the consent of the parent or guardian of the girl and the payment of a price. The act of betrothal is expressed by the Hebrew word “aras”; the price paid, by “mohar” (see Gen. xxxiv. 12; Ex. xxii. 16-17; Deut. xx. 7, xxii. 29; Hos. ii. 19-20). The mohar may be in the form

A SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE

of service in the field or in war (Gen. xxix.; I Sam. xviii. 25). Probably it was customary, even in early times, to give the bride some portion of the mohar, or at least to give her presents (Gen. xxiv. 53, xxxi. 15, xxxiv. 12). After betrothal the bride might be taken to her husband's house and the nuptials celebrated either immediately or later (Gen. xxiv. 49-67; Judges xiv. 5 et seq.). The initial steps, it appears, were customarily taken by the parents of the suitor, who formally made the proposal (Gen. xxiv., xxxiv. 4-6; Judges xiv. 2, 10). Not infrequently, however, in the comparatively free social intercourse of those days, the young man and woman had met and formed a mutual attachment resulting in a love-match (Gen. xxix. 9-12, 18; I Sam. xviii. 20, 28).

The bride did not always go to her husband empty-handed. Sometimes she received gifts from her father, and a king's parting gift to his daughter was in one case a conquered city (Josh. xv. 16 et seq.; Judges I. 12 et seq.; I. Kings ix. 16). In post-exilic times mention is made of a wife's dowry and of a woman being able, by her own wealth, to support her husband (Tobit viii. 21; Ecclus [Sirach] xxv. 22). Mention is made also of a written marriage-contract (Tobit vii. 14).

After betrothal the bride was subject to the same restrictions as a wife (Deut. xxii. 23-24). Of the marriage ceremonial little is known; it is not mentioned at all in the story of Isaac, while in that of Jacob (Gen. xxix.) a marriage-feast and a nuptial week are spoken of. The central features in later times were the wedding-procession and the wedding-feast. The bridegroom in festive attire and accompanied by his friends went to the home of the bride, whence she, likewise in bridal garments, veiled, and accompanied by her companions, was led to the house of his parents (Isa. lxi. 10; Judges xiv. 10-11; Jer. ii. 32; Isa. xlix. 18; Ps. xlv. 8-15). The procession was enlivened with songs by, or in praise of, the bride and bridegroom, and was lighted, if in the evening, by torches or lamps (Jer. vii. 34, xvi. 9, xxv. 10; I Macc. ix. 37-39; Matt. xxv. 1-12; comp. Ps. xlv. and the Canticles, possibly representing such wedding-songs). There followed the nuptial feast in the house of the bridegroom, and the subsequent festivities sometimes continued for several days (Matt. ix. 15, xxii. 1-14; John ii. 1).” (Cited from

<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5941-exogamy> [The Internet Edition Of The 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia])

This Jewish custom of betrothal and/or espousal is much more binding than its Gentile counterpart of “engagement” which can be broken without a decree of any court system though it may sometimes have some civil consequences. An engagement is a commitment by two individuals of opposite sex to marry one another at some point in time. Typically, it is not a legally binding commitment and can be broken at will.

Under Jewish law, a man and a woman can be considered to be husband and wife without having ever been married. It exists in a state of espousal or betrothal. That condition was legal under

THE MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND “HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” CONTROVERSY

Jewish law and right and holy in God’s eyes. However, the opposite condition also exists because of man’s wickedness. What we mean is that a man and a woman could be married, but not be husband and wife in God’s eyes or legally under man’s laws. We will use a New Testament case of adultery and bigamy to prove this point. According to Mark 6:17-18 a man can be married to a woman and her not be his wife . These verses say:

Mark 6:17-18

¹⁷ For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias’ sake, his brother Philip’s wife: for he had married her. ¹⁸ For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife.

What these verses indicate is that though Herod was married to Herodias through a sexual relationship, he could not scripturally be her husband because she was scripturally married to Herod’s brother Philip. What we have here is a case of adultery and bigamy on the part of Herod and Herodias. Adultery and fornication are a violation of God’s law and being married to another person while you are still legally married to yet another person is bigamy according to man’s law in some nations. We have a similar situation with the woman at the well who the Lord Jesus Christ was dealing with in John 4:16-18 which says:

John 4:16-18

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.

In commenting on these verses, Pastor Robert Sargent had this to say:

“A formal (legal) covenanted agreement by *itself* does not constitute a marriage. (This is the Roman Catholic [sacramental] position, that a man and a woman are joined together by God at the altar with the priest.) A physical relationship *alone* does not constitute a marriage. If this were the case there would be no such thing as adultery or fornication! Note what Jesus said to the woman in *John 4:18* – the man she was ‘living with’ was not her husband. See also: *I Corinthians 7:2*.” (Page 49, *The ABCs Of Christian Maturity, Volume 1, Divorce*, by Pastor Robert Sargent)

We quoted Pastor Sargent here because his viewpoint agrees with that of many fundamentalists. We disagree with Pastor Sargent here when he states that “a physical relationship *alone* does not constitute a marriage”. While that may be legally and traditionally true, it is not scripturally true. A physical relationship places a scriptural obligation upon a male and female couple to live together as husband and wife regardless of whether any ceremony or legal documents are involved. While the

A SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE

legal authorities may bind upon a couple a legal marriage, that legal marriage is not a scriptural marriage until the two become one flesh. Furthermore, even under civil law, common law marriages become legally binding marriages after so many years even if no ceremony was performed and no marriage license was ever issued. We agree with Pastor Robert Sargent that a formal (legal) covenanted agreement does not constitute a scriptural marriage. That requirement is nowhere found in the Scriptures. The lack of physical consummation of marriage formed the basis for religious annulments in times past which were not generally honoured by civil authorities unless it was accompanied by a legal bill of divorce. This same annulment concept was recognized in the ancient pagan code of Hammurabi which stated that: “128. If a man take a woman to wife, but have no intercourse with her, this woman is no wife to him.” The same is true today also. If a “legal” husband and wife do not become married to one another an annulment can be sought in many states where the “legal” marriage is declared null and void. Many of those who state that a physical relationship alone does not constitute a marriage argue that there must be an intent to become husband and wife. That is not what the Bible says. The Biblical standard says that if you become one flesh with an individual, then your actions announce to God that it is your intent to be husband and wife. In the Scriptures, if you enter into a physical relationship, you have established a de facto covenant as husband and wife. Turn in your Bibles to Exodus 22:16 and Deuteronomy 22:28-29 where we read:

Exodus 22:16

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.

Deuteronomy 22:28-29

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.

There is no betrothal, no espousal, no altar, and no ceremony involved in Exodus 22:16 or Deuteronomy 22:28-29. According to Exodus 22:16, when a man lies carnally with a woman he must endow her to be his wife. Where no betrothal exists, Deuteronomy 22:29 says that if a man and a woman are found lying together, then the woman shall be the man’s wife and he can never divorce her. There is no intent to become husband and wife here because from the context it can be emphatically implied that they thought they were getting by with something. In other words, they were having “casual sex”. They may have thought it was “casual sex”, but God considers it to be a binding, lifetime marriage though there is no intent to become husband and wife. In western culture, our conscious has become so seared by a constant bombardment of in your face sex that we no longer look upon sexual intercourse as being the act of marriage that God says it is. Many so-called Christian leaders and pastors have become so spiritually blinded by a constant diet of sex from their televisions that they dismiss what God calls a marriage as being mere pre-marital sex.

THE MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND “HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” CONTROVERSY

Now, let's go back to the woman at the well. The reason the man living with the woman at the well was not called her husband is because he was married to another woman. This was the same type of situation that John the Baptist rebuked Herod for! The Lord Jesus Christ did not say that the woman at the well had not married the man she was with at this time. He said that the man she was with at this time was not her husband. It is obvious that she was having a sexual relationship with a man that was not her husband, but was instead the husband of another woman. The woman at the well was married to him, but she was not his wife. The woman at the well was guilty of fornication and adultery because she was having sex with another woman's husband. She had married him in the same sense as Herod had married Philip's wife Herodias, but she could not scripturally have him as her husband just as Herod could not scripturally have Herodias as his wife though they were married. Many preachers and teachers teach that a husband or wife cannot be guilty of fornication which is a contradiction of Matthew 19:8 where the Lord Jesus Christ said a wife can be guilty of fornication. Many Independent Baptist preachers, pastors, and teachers teach that fornication only applies to premarital sex. Again, that teaching contradicts Matthew 19:8 and for that reason we reject that teaching. The idea that a married person cannot be guilty of fornication also contradicts Ezekiel 16 where a case of adultery is referred to as fornication in three different verses. We believe one of the reasons the penalty for adultery and fornication in the Old Testament was death is because God did consider the consummation of a sexual relationship as establishing a marriage covenant. One of the scriptural proofs of that statement is located in Deuteronomy 22:28-29. We would also note that the Lord Jesus Christ said to the woman at the well: "thou hast had five husbands". What we can gather from that is that she had five men who were no longer her husbands. Note that "HAST HAD" is in the past tense. Also note that she had remarried which means that all of the divorces she had were legal under the law – Deuteronomy 24:1-2 – else she would have been stoned to death under the Mosaic Law – Deuteronomy 22:22.). What that means is that she had a legal bill of divorce. When the Lord Jesus Christ stated "thou hast had five husbands", it put to bed the doctrine that states that once you are married to someone that you can never divorce them. What that also means is that when someone divorces someone then that person is no longer considered to be their spouse (thou hast had). That means that they have zero husbands and zero wives until such time as they remarry. According to Matthew 19:9, if a person is scripturally divorced, then they are not guilty of adultery and therefore cannot be guilty of perpetual adultery.

We are not trying to degrade the scriptural husband and wife relationship to a mere act of sexual intercourse, but we are trying to impress upon our readers how seriously God views acts of sexual intercourse that have not the intent to become husband and wife. If you have an act of sexual intercourse with someone then you impose upon yourself the scriptural obligation to make them your spouse.

Again, in its first use in our Bibles the word marry occurs in Genesis 38:8 where its obvious definition is to go in unto for the purpose of producing seed. It is also clear from the context of Matthew 19:3-9 that the definition of marry is to become one flesh with someone of the opposite sex. Furthermore, it is clear from the context of 1 Corinthians 7:9 that a person was to marry rather than to continue to burn in lust for another person. It is obvious from the context of 1 Corinthians 7:9 that

A SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE

a ceremony is not being referred to, but the act of becoming one flesh. First Timothy 5:14 instructs the younger women to marry for the purpose of bearing and raising children.

Though the first marriage is unique in nature, it does provide us with some instruction as to what constitutes a scriptural marriage. Turn in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 2 where we see:

Genesis 2:20-25

20 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. 21 And the LORD God 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; 22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. 23 And Adam 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. 24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. 25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

You never see anyone at a marriage altar in the Scriptures. Marriage is much more than a ceremony. A ceremony is nothing more than words. Marriage is a lifetime of walking what you talked at a ceremony. We do not see a formal wedding ceremony anywhere in the Scriptures. In fact, you can lie down without a ceremony and become one flesh and live happily ever after as husband and wife and it be perfectly pleasing unto God. You must be warned that if you lie down with a woman and become one flesh with her you are under an obligation to God to take her in as your wife. God does not take sexual relationships as lightly as men do and as lightly as many fundamentalist preachers do. The proof of that is that many fundamentalists will get livid when we say that having a sexual relationship is marriage in the eyes of God. Many see it as nothing more than an illicit sexual affair that is nothing more than a one-night stand. It is much more serious than a one-night stand. It is a marriage in God's eyes and in the eyes of the Scriptures. What many compromised and fornicating "fundamentalist" preachers of today call pre-marital sex, would have resulted in a public outcry over a hundred years ago and would have led to what we called a "shotgun wedding". Our "fundamentalist" preachers, teachers, and pastors need to get their heads out of the sewer of television, the cesspool of the internet, and the outhouses and toilets of their cell phones and start studying and boldly preaching the Word Of God. Many of our "fundamentalists" of today have become as the prophets of Judah in Jeremiah 8:10-12 which declares:

Jeremiah 8:10-12

¹⁰ Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them: for every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. ¹¹ For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. ¹² Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination?

THE MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND “HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” CONTROVERSY

nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.

The reason our “fundamentalist” preachers and pastors can no longer blush is because the light of the Holy Ghost has become so darkened by the Satanic sewage that they feed themselves from their televisions, radios, computers, and cell phones. They can no longer preach the word of God with any conviction because the blackness of their hearts has grieved the Holy Ghost. Neither do they view the sin of fornication as seriously as God does. Would to God that our so-called fundamentalist preachers and pastors had the attitude of Ezra the priest when he said in Ezra 9:6-7:

Ezra 9:6-7

⁶ And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens. ⁷ Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day.

Fornication and adultery make a fundamentalist no less disqualified to be in the pulpit than a man who has had a divorce that he has caused. However, we do believe that the Devil has taken many innocent men from our pulpits whose divorces were no fault of their own. We also believe that the Devil has used many fundamentalist, self-righteous hypocrites to accomplish that which rightly dividing the Scriptures could not have done. Now, let’s get back to the study at hand.

Adam is the only man to ever live that can literally say that his wife is literally bone of his bones and literally flesh of his flesh. Again applying the law of first mention, Genesis 2:20-25 gives God’s definition of what constitutes a scriptural marriage, a husband, and a wife and in keeping with the law of first mention that definition remains the same throughout the Bible. God says that a man and a woman become husband and wife when they become one flesh. I know that does not sit very well with many Baptists and fundamentalists, but that is what the Bible teaches. Many will argue that that is not the whole counsel of God, but they will be pressed beyond measure if they try to prove that the Author of the Scriptures considered marriage to be anything but becoming one flesh. We understand that becoming husband and wife, or becoming one flesh, binds certain spiritual responsibilities upon both the husband and wife so that the marriage is not just a physical relationship. We will prove scripturally that when a man consummates a sexual relationship with a woman that he is scripturally bound to make that woman his wife! It is that sexual relationship that makes them **one flesh**. It is the sexual act that creates the obligation for the couple to become husband and wife. What you do not see in Genesis chapter 2 is a ceremony, an altar, a marriage license, a priest, a justice of the peace, or any formal covenant. Yet, God said that they were husband and wife. That pattern is repeated throughout the book of Genesis (and the Old Testament) and includes the marriages of

A SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE

Lamech, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and even Absalom when he went in unto his father David's ten concubines (!). Lamech was of the seed of Cain and was the first polygynist (polygamist) recorded in the Bible. That is instructive in itself. The only place where a covenant is mentioned in the context of marriage is in Malachi 2:11-16 where there is a reference to Genesis 2:24 in verse 15. These verses read:

Malachi 2:11-16

¹¹ Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god. ¹² The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts. ¹³ And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand. 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. 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. ¹⁶ For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

While many believe that Proverbs 2:17 refers to a covenant of marriage for the woman also, we do not. We believe it refers to female prostitutes that hung out around the pagan temples just as the daughters of a strange god here in Malachi refer to the same type of female temple prostitutes. We believe that context in Proverbs 2:17 dictates a foreign woman who has broken her covenant of allegiance to God. Here in Malachi 2:11, the men of Judah were whoring around on their wives with temple prostitutes and marrying them. Let us continue with the covenant described in Malachi 2.

We would even go so far as to state that we believe that the Scriptures teach that it is the sexual act that establishes the covenant relationship between a man and a woman making them husband and wife. **THE LORD JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF CALLED MARRIAGE THE PHYSICAL ACT IN MATTHEW 19:4-6.** From the context it is clear from the statements of the Lord Jesus Christ that no ceremony was in view, but rather the act of fornication by the wife. That sexual act is quite different from a ceremony. It is not the performance of another ceremony that constitutes the act of adultery, but rather the sexual act. The word "covenant" occurs in the immediate context of becoming one flesh in Malachi 2:14-15. The only other place that a covenant is mentioned in the context of marriage and divorce is in Ezra 10:2-3 which states:

THE MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND “HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” CONTROVERSY

Ezra 10:2-3

2 And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, *one* of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. 3 Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law.

Note that the covenant was a covenant of divorce between the priests and God to put away (divorce) the strange wives they had taken from outside the God ordained confines of the people of Israel.

Several passages of Scripture supporting the conclusion that it is the sexual act that establishes a covenant relationship are Genesis 38:8-9, Deuteronomy 21:13, Deuteronomy 22:28-29, Deuteronomy 25:5, Exodus 22:16, and 1 Chronicles 2:21. Genesis 38:8-9 says:

Genesis 38:8-9

⁸ And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother. ⁹ And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother.

Note that Onan was instructed to marry his brother's wife for the purpose of producing seed. Note also that the sexual act was referred to as a **marriage**. There is no ceremony and no marriage license here. Deuteronomy 21:13 says:

¹³ And she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife.

The act of “*going in unto her*” is a sexual act that establishes the husband and wife relationship. There was no ceremony, priest, or marriage altar involved here. Deuteronomy 22:28-29 reads:

Deuteronomy 22:28-29

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.

In verses 28 and 29, it is the act of “lying with her” that creates the scriptural requirement that they become husband and wife. This particular passage shows how serious God takes what man might call

A SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE

a casual sexual relationship. It is clear from the context that neither individual involved in this sexual act intended on becoming husband and wife. They just got caught and God commanded the man to take the woman for his wife with the additional condition that he could never divorce her (put her away). While many say that the sexual act is but a consummation of the marriage, this passage and many more before and after it see the sexual act as establishing the husband and wife relationship and not merely as the consummation of it. Deuteronomy 25:5 states:

Deuteronomy 25:5

⁵ If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her.

This is the law of the kinsman redeemer that is sometimes referred to as the levirate marriage. Note that the living brother was to marry the dead brother's wife, and take her to him to wife for the purpose of producing children. It was the sexual relationship that established her as the living brother's wife. Deuteronomy 25:5 is quoted in Matthew 22:24 (also in Mark 12:19 and Luke 20:28) when the Lord Jesus Christ is dealing with the Sadducees about the resurrection. We would note that this commandment had to be obeyed regardless of whether the brother in the role of kinsman redeemer was already married. Note again that the purpose of the marriage was to produce seed. This same idea that is conveyed in Deuteronomy 22:28-29 is established in Exodus 22:16 where we see:

Exodus 22:16

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.

The phrase "lie with her" means that he has had a sexual relationship with her. Clearly Exodus 22:16 states that because the man has had a sexual relationship with the maid he must take care of her as his wife [Implying that since he had already married her in the sexual relationship, he must take care of her as his wife]. Yet again we see this same principle illustrated in 1 Chronicles 2:21 which tells us:

1 Chronicles 2:21

²¹ And afterward Hezron went in to the daughter of Machir the father of Gilead, whom he married when he was threescore years old; and she bare him Segub.

Once again it was the sexual relationship that established the condition of the woman becoming a wife. We should not neglect to deal with the abomination wrought by Absalom before all of Israel when he went in unto David's concubines. According to Leviticus 20:11, Absalom had to be put to death for this vile act. Absalom's vile act is recorded in 2 Samuel 16:21-22 which reads:

THE MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND “HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” CONTROVERSY

2 Samuel 16:21-22

²¹ And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father's concubines, which he hath left to keep the house; and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that are with thee be strong. ²² So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.

We know from the events in 2 Samuel Chapters 17 through 19 that Absalom was eventually slain with the destiny of the concubines being recorded in 2 Samuel 20:3 where it is stated:

2 Samuel 20:3

³ And David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten women his concubines, whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in ward, and fed them, but went not in unto them. So they were shut up unto the day of their death, living in widowhood.

David's concubines became Absalom's wives when Absalom went in unto them in the sight of Israel. There was no ceremony performed. Neither was there any intent to conduct a ceremony. It was strictly multiple sexual acts. The proof that they became Absalom's wives is contained in 2 Samuel 20:3 where the Bible says the concubines remained in **widowhood** until their deaths. Go read it yourself in context! There is but one reason that they lived in widowhood until their deaths and that is because they had become Absalom's wives. Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians 6:16-17, the Holy Ghost considers the sexual act of such critical importance that He warns that if you sexually join yourself with a harlot, that you become one flesh with her. In other words, you become married to an harlot. What these passages prove is that it is the sexual union that creates the marriage! In 1 Corinthians 6, the Holy Ghost considered the sexual relationship with an harlot to be a whole lot more serious than just the one night stand (fornication) that most once married fundamentalist preachers hold to. It was not just fornication. It was a marriage. Why do most fundamentalist preachers go up in arms when we declare a one night stand or a premarital or post marital affair to be a marriage?? We can tell you why. Many, if not most, of these “fundamentalist” preachers have been guilty of the very acts that the Holy Ghost describes here. Many “once married” preachers are counting on a piece of paper from man to clear themselves to be able to pastor and preach. That piece of paper is worthless before God because many “once married” preachers and pastors have had sex with women before they had a wedding ceremony, some even being guilty of fornication and adultery after their wedding ceremony, and they wickedly consider themselves to have had but one wife in a lifetime because they have only had one wedding ceremony. God does not see it that way. You are just as guilty as any divorced man ever was. If you have sex with any woman, you are under the scriptural obligation to take care of her as your wife. Jack Hyles and Jack Schaap were guilty of the very acts described here, but at least they were not divorced! I believe the Bible term for them is whoremongers, but at least they were not “double married”. Many godly divorced men are much more qualified to be in pulpits than those two

A SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE

whore hopping preachers were. Need we mention the abominable conduct of Bob Grey at Trinity Baptist of Jacksonville, Florida. Yet, he remained in the ministry with the leadership in his church being aware of his conduct, but at least he was not divorced or double married! We can even prove that it is not a sin to have, or to have had, more than one wife if the man was divorced according to the Scriptures. We are not talking about living with multiple wives at the same time.

If you have had multiple sexual relationships with different women and if you preach that a man who has multiple wives at the same time and a divorced man that has had more than one wife in a lifetime are disqualified, then you need to sit down because your sexual conduct has disqualified you permanently since you believe that there is no forgiveness for a man who has had multiple wives in his lifetime. Do you think for a minute that if David and Solomon had sex with a woman that they did not make them their wife?? Why do you think Solomon and so many of the other kings of Judah and Israel had so many wives? It is because they had sex with those women and according to Exodus 22:16 and Deuteronomy 22:28-29 any man that had sex with an unmarried woman was required to make them their wife! If you are an adulterous and fornicating preacher, pastor, evangelist, or deacon, do not think that the same standards do not apply to you. Contrary to what most fundamentalists, including this author, have been taught, there was no specific commandment that said a man could not have more than one wife. In fact, the Bible says in 2 Samuel 12:8 that God gave Saul's wives into David's bosom. Saul's wives would have included Ahinoam and his concubine Rizpah which probably created some confusion in David's household because he already had a wife named Ahinoam. We now turn to the marriages of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

We are first introduced to Abram (Abraham) in Genesis 11:27. Then we are introduced to Abraham's wife Sarai (Sarah) in Genesis 11:29. The first mention of Abraham was in his begetting. The first mention of Sarah was in her marriage to Abraham. It says in Genesis 11:29 that Abraham took his wife Sarah. We learn in verse 30 that she was barren. We see very few details in the marriage of Abraham and Sarah. Genesis 11:27-30 tells us:

Genesis 11:27-30

²⁷Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. ²⁸And Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees. ²⁹And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah. ³⁰But Sarai was barren; she had no child.

The only details that we are offered of Abraham's and Sarah's marriage is that Abraham took her. There is no mention of any ceremony or any wedding. There was no priest there and no civil authority. It is obvious that they had become one flesh because verse 30 says that Sarah was barren. then again in Genesis 16:1-4 which states:

Genesis 16:1-4

THE MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND “HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” CONTROVERSY

¹ Now Sarai Abram’s wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was 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. ⁴ And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.

Lamech, of the seed of Cain, was the first polygamist recorded in the Bible in Genesis. Abraham was the first polygamist recorded in the Bible following the flood and it lead to immediate problems because it was contrary to the will of God. We will deal with polygamy later in this chapter. Note that Sarah gave her Egyptian maid unto Abraham to be his wife. The law of the land, the Code of Hammurabi Number 146: states:

If a man take a wife and she give this man a maid-servant as wife and she bear him children, and then this maid assume equality with the wife: because she has borne him children her master shall not sell her for money, but he may keep her as a slave, reckoning her among the maid-servants.

While what Sarah and Abraham done here was strictly in accordance with the law of the land, it was a violation of the express will of God from Genesis 2:24 and it showed a lapse of faith in the promise of God given to Abraham in Genesis 15:4. Again and again, we come back to one of the themes of this chapter and that is that there was no ceremony involved in the marriage of Abraham and Hagar. Hagar became Abraham’s wife when he “went in unto” her. The act of going “in unto” her was the marriage. We see this pattern repeated in the case of Isaac and Rebekah in Genesis 24:61-67:

Genesis 24:61-67

⁶¹ And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way. ⁶² And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahairoi; for he dwelt in the south country. ⁶³ And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming. ⁶⁴ And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. ⁶⁵ For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a vail, and covered herself. ⁶⁶ And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. 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.

We are provided with many more details of the events leading up to the marriage of Isaac and

A SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE

Rebekah than we are with any other marriage recorded in the Scriptures. The case of Isaac and Rebekah provided the seed bed for many of the Jewish customs surrounding marriages even unto this day. We do not see similar details leading up to a marriage recorded for any other marriage in the Scriptures. Furthermore, in the case of Isaac and Rebekah, we do not see a betrothal or espousal recorded. In fact, Isaac had no clue who was going to be his wife! Neither was a ceremony performed. Rebekah became Isaac's wife when he "took" her. As far as we can tell, Abraham was not even around. The events surrounding the four marriages of Jacob are quite a bit different than those for his father Isaac. These events are recorded in Genesis chapters 29 and 30 where we read:

Genesis 29:20-30

20 And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him *but* a few days, for the love he had to her. 21 And Jacob said unto Laban, Give *me* my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her. 22 And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. 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. 24 And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid *for* an handmaid. 25 And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it *was* Leah: and he said to Laban, What *is* this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me? ²⁶ And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. ²⁷ Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years. ²⁸ And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also. ²⁹ And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid. ³⁰ And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years.

Genesis 30:1-10

¹ And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die. ² And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb? ³ And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her. ⁴ And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in unto her. ⁵ And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son. ⁶ And Rachel said, God hath judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son: therefore called she his name Dan. ⁷ And Bilhah Rachel's maid conceived again, and bare Jacob a second son. ⁸ And Rachel said, With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed: and she called his name Naphtali. ⁹ When Leah saw that she had left bearing, she took Zilpah her maid, and gave her Jacob to wife. ¹⁰ And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a son.

THE MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND “HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” CONTROVERSY

It is interesting to note here that a feast was made to celebrate the event that was about to take place. It is quite possible that this event is the root source of the lavish marriage suppers and wedding feasts that have characterize all Jewish weddings down through the ages. If you argue for a covenant here, and there was not, it is obvious that Jacob expected that he would be going in unto Rachel and she would become his wife. The act of “going in unto” was the act of becoming one flesh. It is clear that there was no espousal, covenant, or ceremony here that involved Leah. If you argue for a covenant here, then you have to believe that the covenant was created and made binding by Leah and Jacob becoming one flesh. There was obviously no verbal agreement between the two of them. Neither was there any intent here on Jacob’s part to marry Leah. Yet, it is undeniable here that when Jacob went in unto Leah and they became one flesh that Leah was Jacob’s wife regardless of his understanding that his marriage was to be to Rachel. There may have been an agreement here between Jacob and Laban concerning Rachel, but it was not a covenant between Rachel and Jacob and neither did it involve Leah. It is clear from verse 28 that Leah and Rachel became Jacob’s wives. Though Jacob took Rachel to wife, later on this practice was outlawed in Leviticus 18:18 which says:

Leviticus 18:18

¹⁸ Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her life time.

We also see in the cases of Leah’s handmaid Zilpah and Rachel’s handmaid Bilhah that they became Jacob’s wives when he “went in unto” them. To be sure, there was no ceremony and no fanfare that involved these two handmaids that Jacob married. Given the circumstances, can you imagine the ruckus that would have ensued had a ceremony or wedding feast taken place? There was already much tension and contention in Jacob’s home because of his multiple wives. Now, let’s look at Ruth and Boaz in Ruth 4:13

Ruth 4:13

13 So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife: and when he went in unto her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bare a son.

Ruth became Boaz’s wife when he took her meaning that she became his wife when they became one flesh. That is the meaning of “he went in unto her”. Boaz became the kinsman redeemer of a Gentile Bride. Hallelujah! In the eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ that is me! The Lord Jesus Christ is the kinsman Redeemer for all those who receive him as Saviour.

We do not see a ceremony in any of the Biblical marriages that we have looked at thus far. You do not see an Old Testament or New Testament example where any man made requirement such as a ceremony, an altar, a marriage license, or a formal covenant constituted a scriptural marriage. Neither do you see the presence of any religious or government official. As detailed as the instructions were for the duties of the priest in the Old Testament none of them included any requirement to officiate at a marriage ceremony. There were detailed requirements in the New Testament for pastors

A SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE

and none of them required that pastors officiate at marriages. Marriages officiated by priests is a very Roman Catholic idea and did not come forth until the Council of Trent in 1563. To the Roman Catholic Church, marriage was a sacrament that only a Roman Catholic priest could administer. However, marriage in the Bible has never been a function of the state, or, a function of a priest, pastor, or preacher. It has always been a family affair that required the permission of the bride's father unless the woman getting married had already been married before. We have for many years extended that Old Testament custom into American culture where in years gone by the man had to go to the father and request the hand of his daughter in marriage. What we call a marriage today is not the scriptural presentation of what marriage is. In today's world, we interpret marriage to be a ceremony because all western societies are in open fornication. In most Biblical marriages, there is a marked absence of a ceremony. What we see in the Old Testament and the New Testament are celebrations of the accomplished fact of the marriage. The wedding celebrations and marriage feasts in the Bible do not inaugurate the marriage. They celebrate it. Even in the marriage at Cana of Galilee where the water was turned into wine, it is obvious that what was taking place was the celebration of the marriage that had already taken place because they were already out of wine. In other words, what we have in John 2 is the marriage feast. The marriage feast and the marriage supper always followed the husband and wife becoming one flesh just as it does with the Marriage Supper Of The Lamb in Revelation chapter 19. In Jewish custom, it was the displaying of the tokens of virginity that set in motion the lavish celebration and marriage suppers which followed.

The whole point of the previous discussion has been to prove that scripturally a marriage takes place without a ceremony and without a celebration having taken place. That is the whole point of legally recognizing what is called Common Law marriages. Common Law marriages are as legally and scripturally binding as any marriage though no ceremony was ever performed that had the sanction of the state or the church. In early American history, Common Law marriages were quite common. Furthermore, we have documented case after case where no ceremony or celebration is recorded in the Scriptures and yet the women involved are said to be wives.

CONCUBINES

Let's establish the fact that a concubine is a wife that comes without a dowry to her husband and without a payment required to the father of the concubine. The concubine was equal in rights to the woman who was called a wife. The concubines sons were on equal footing with the sons of the wife. Many times the terms concubine and wife are used interchangeably when applied to the same individual. In Genesis 16:3 Hagar is called a wife of Abraham and concubine of Abraham in Genesis 25:6. These verses state:

Genesis 16:3

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.

THE MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND “HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” CONTROVERSY

Genesis 25:6

⁶ But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country.

Keturah is called a wife in Genesis 25:1 and a concubine in Genesis 25:6 and 1 Chronicles 1:32. These verses say:

Genesis 25:1

¹ Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah.

1 Chronicles 1:32

³² Now the sons of Keturah, Abraham's concubine: she bare Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah. And the sons of Jokshan; Sheba, and Dedan.

Bilhah and Zilpah are called Jacob's wives in Genesis 37:2 while Bilhah is called Jacob's concubine in Genesis 35:22 with these verses reading as follows:

Genesis 35:22

²² And it came to pass, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine: and Israel heard it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve:

Genesis 37:2

² These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.

The events recorded concerning the Levite's concubine in Judges 19 are among the most sordid and tragic in the Scriptures. The King James Bible's marginal note on Judges 19:1 reads: "a woman a concubine, or, a wife a concubine". The Levite of Judges 19 is referred to as the husband of the concubine that was slain. These verses are written in Judges 19:3 and Judges 20:4-5:

Judges 19:3

³ And her husband arose, and went after her, to speak friendly unto her, and to bring her again, having his servant with him, and a couple of asses: and she brought him into her father's house: and when the father of the damsel saw him, he rejoiced to meet him.

Judges 20:4-5

⁴ And the Levite, the husband of the woman that was slain, answered and said, I came

A SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE

into Gibeah that belongeth to Benjamin, I and my concubine, to lodge. ⁵ And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and beset the house round about upon me by night, and thought to have slain me: and my concubine have they forced, that she is dead.

Then we have the brief history concerning David's ten concubines that is written in 2 Samuel 12:11, 2 Samuel 15:16, and 2 Samuel 20:3 which is written thus:

2 Samuel 12:11

¹¹ Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.

2 Samuel 15:16

¹⁶ And the king went forth, and all his household after him. And the king left ten women, which were concubines, to keep the house.

2 Samuel 16:21-22

²¹ And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father's concubines, which he hath left to keep the house; and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that are with thee be strong. ²² So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.

2 Samuel 20:3

³ And David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten women his concubines, whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in ward, and fed them, but went not in unto them. So they were shut up unto the day of their death, living in widowhood.

Second Samuel 12:11 contains Nathan's prophecy concerning David's concubines. Nathan told David that a neighbor would lie with his wives "in the sight of this sun". That neighbor was his very own son, Absalom, as we saw in 2 Samuel 16:21-22 where Absalom went in unto David's ten concubines in the sight of all Israel in broad open daylight. From 2 Samuel 15:16, we know that David took all of his wives with him when he left Jerusalem. In 2 Samuel 20:3 David put what had been his ten concubines in ward and they lived in widowhood for the rest of their lives. Only wives could live in widowhood as those ten concubines did. They were called widows because Absalom made them his wives when he went in unto them and he is now dead.

Rizpah, who is called Saul's concubine in 2 Samuel 3:7, is also called a wife in 2 Samuel 12:8. It is interesting to note that God said he gave Saul's wives (PLURAL) into David's bosom and yet we can only document one wife and one concubine, Rizpah (2 Samuel 3:7), from the scriptures.

THE MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND “HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” CONTROVERSY

Ahinoam, Saul’s wife, is identified in 1 Samuel 14:50. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that concubine Rizpah was also considered to be a wife. When we look at these verses we see:

1 Samuel 14:50

⁵⁰ And the name of Saul’s wife was Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz: and the name of the captain of his host was Abner, the son of Ner, Saul’s uncle.

2 Samuel 3:7

⁷ And Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah: and Ishbosheth said to Abner, Wherefore hast thou gone in unto my father’s concubine?

2 Samuel 12:8

⁸ And I gave thee thy master’s house, and thy master’s wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.

Here is what the 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia had to say concerning concubines:

“A concubine is recognized among the ancient Hebrews. She enjoyed the same rights in the house as the legitimate wife. Since it was regarded as the highest blessing to have many children, while the greatest curse was childlessness, legitimate wives themselves gave their maids to their husbands to atone, at least in part, for their own barrenness, as in the cases of Sarah and Hagar, Leah and Zilpah, Rachel and Bilhah. The concubine commanded the same respect and inviolability as the wife; and it was regarded as the deepest dishonor for the man to whom she belonged if hands were laid upon her. Thus Jacob never forgave his eldest son for violating Bilhah (Gen. xxxv. 22, xlix. 4). According to the story of Gibeah, related in Judges xix., 25,000 warriors of the tribe of Benjamin lost their lives on account of the maltreatment and death of a concubine. Abner, Saul’s first general, deserted Ish-bosheth, Saul’s son, who had reproached his leader with having had intercourse with Rizpah, the daughter of his royal father’s concubine, Aiah (II Sam. iii. 7); and Absalom brought the greatest dishonor upon David by open intercourse with his father’s concubines (ib. xvi. 21 et seq.).

The children of the concubine had equal rights with those of the legitimate wife. Abraham dismissed his natural sons with gifts (Gen. xxv. 6), and Jacob’s sons by Bilhah and Zilpah were equal with his sons by Leah and Rachel; while Abimelech, who subsequently became king over a part of Israel, was the son of Gideon-gerubbaal and his Shechemite concubine (Judges viii. 31). In the time of the Kings the practise of taking concubines was no longer due to childlessness but to luxury. David had ten concubines (II Sam. xv. 16), who, however, also did housework; Solomon had 300 (I

A SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE

Kings xi. 30); and his son Rehoboam had sixty (II Chron. xi. 21)". (Cited from the 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia article on Concubinage Internet Edition at: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/4585-concubinage>)

The conclusion that we can draw from the scriptural references to concubines that we have quoted and this quote from the 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia is that a concubine and a wife are on equal footing in the home.

MULTIPLE WIVES

A question often arises as to why many of the Old Testament patriarchs and kings had multiple wives and concubines. To many Christians and unbelievers this is puzzling since in American culture we have been rightfully taught that a marriage is made up of only two people; one of which must be a man and the other a woman. Polygamy is illegal in the United States. Though God allowed multiple wives, it was not his original intent. The scriptural definition of marriage requires that two are to become one and not that three or more are to become one. In our previous discussions leading up to this section, we have destroyed the wicked idea of polygamist marriages and same sex unions that God calls abominations. The purpose of this section is to further document the scriptural record concerning multiple wives.

For purposes of this discussion on multiple wives, we are going to consider concubines as meeting the definition for a wife.

We have heard it stated that God always condemns polygamy in the Bible. Then, why did God give David multiple wives in 2 Samuel 12:8?? That does not sound to much like condemnation to us. Merab, Saul's daughter, was promised to be David's wife by Saul, but she was given to Adriel. Saul also promised to David his daughter Michal to be a wife and David took her to be his wife, but Saul later wickedly gave her unto Phaltiel (See 1 Samuel 18:17-27 and 1 Samuel 25:44). See also Abigail and Ahinoam (1 Samuel 25:39-44); Maacah, Haggith, Abital, Eglah (all four in 2 Samuel 3:1-5); Michal (2 Samuel 3:13-16); Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:27). From Scripture, we know that David had eight wives and ten concubines. However, God warned against a king multiplying wives and horses to himself. Deuteronomy 17:14-17 and 2 Samuel 12:7-8 state:

Deuteronomy 17:14-17

14 When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; 15 Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. 16 But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. 17 Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that

THE MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND “HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” CONTROVERSY

his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.

2 Samuel 12:7-8

7 And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; 8 And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.

Comparing 2 Samuel 12:7-8 with Deuteronomy 17:14-17 we have ourselves a problem to deal with. If the commandment in Deuteronomy 17:17 is that “Neither shall he [speaking of the king] multiply wives to himself”, then what do you do with the fact that God said in 2 Samuel 12:8 that he gave “thy master's wives into thy bosom” [referring to King David]? If God's command in Deuteronomy 17:17 to the kings was that the kings were not to multiply unto themselves wives and God gave Saul's wives into David's bosom then we would have to conclude that having multiple wives was not a sin. Otherwise the action of God in 2 Samuel 12:7-8 could be interpreted as sin and that would be impossible because God cannot sin. The other point that could be made here is that it was God who done the multiplying and not David though David had already violated this charge to the king. It was David's desire to have multiple sexual partners (wives) that led to much tragedy in his family. We would again make the point here that the only difference between a wife and a concubine is that a wife came with a dowry and a concubine did not.

We want to warn our readers that we are not advocating an individual having multiple spouses because we do not believe that is the ideal that God established in Genesis 2:24. Nor is a marriage involving multiple spouses the picture of the Lord Jesus Christ and His church as is plainly presented in the New Testament. There is one New Testament Bride and the one man and one woman husband and wife relationship is declared to be a type of that Bride. We also believe that the requirement that the Old Testament High Priest take a virgin as his wife was a type of what was supposed to have been the relationship between Israel and Jehovah God. God had ONE chosen nation to be his bride and wife and that nation was Israel. She was to be a virgin unto Jehovah God. That type has its perfect fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ, our High Priest, who has that chaste Virgin, the Church, as His Bride. While we know and understand that it has always been God's intent that there be one man and one woman for a lifetime, we also cannot deny the fact that many men of God in the Old Testament had multiple wives. That would include that man David that was after God's own heart. There are no verses in either the Old Testament or the New Testament that specifically state that a man cannot have more than one wife. God gave David multiple wives. There is no specific limitations on the number of wives a man may have under the Old Testament law. As a matter of fact, God regulated the treatment of multiple wives under the Old Testament law. Two examples of this law are written in Exodus 21:10 and Deuteronomy 21:15-16 which state:

A SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE

Exodus 21:10

10 If he take him another *wife*; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish.

Deuteronomy 21:15-16

15 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: 16 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:

There were five generations born in the line of Cain before the first incident of polygamy involving Lamech is recorded in the Bible in Genesis 4:19 which reads:

Genesis 4:19

¹⁹And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah.

What this means is that the seed of Cain was the first to introduce polygamy into the world. That should be very revealing and instructive to us. What Genesis 4:19 and Genesis 5:1-22 tells us is that polygamy did not enter into the world until the fifth generation following Cain and that that period of time had to be at least 700 years. We get that seven hundred year figure by inferring that the five generations of Cain plus Adams age when he beget Seth must be roughly equal to the same figures for the generations of Seth which are recorded in Genesis chapter 5. Those figures total 687 years. The seed of Cain was destroyed in the flood and God restored the ideal of “one man with one woman for a lifetime” when he brought Noah and his three sons and their four wives from the Ark. It was not until 375 years after the flood that we see the next incident of polygamy recorded in the Bible and that involved Abraham in Genesis 16:3-4 and his brother Nahor in Genesis 22:24 where we are told:

Genesis 16:3-4

³And 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. ⁴And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.

Genesis 22:23-24

²³And Bethuel begat Rebekah: these eight Milcah did bear to Nahor, Abraham’s brother. ²⁴And his concubine, whose name was Reumah, she bare also Tebah, and Gaham, and Thahash, and Maachah.

THE MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND “HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” CONTROVERSY

So, both Abraham and Nahor had two wives at the same time. This is not to say that there were no more polygamous marriages in the world because if Abraham was guilty, then it only makes sense that many more men in the world were also guilty. One thing should be noted in the case of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar is that the polygamous arrangement resulted in instant strife in the home between all three that were involved. What also ensued from this was the birth of the wild man Ishmael whose seed has been a source of never ending strife in the Middle East. The Ishmaelites have been and continue to be the perpetual enemies of the Jewish people. Esau is the next polygamist we will consider. He took three wives none of whom were from among the people of Isaac and the Bible says it was a grief unto Isaac and Rebekah. These are identified in Genesis chapters 26:34 and Genesis 28:6-9 with the concise list showing up in Genesis 36:1-3 which states:

Genesis 36:1-3

¹ Now these are the generations of Esau, who is Edom. ² Esau took his wives of the daughters of Canaan; Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Aholibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite; ³ And Bashemath Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebajoth.

The reason these wives were a grief unto Isaac and Rebekah is given in Genesis 28:8 where it says that Esau took his wives from among the daughters of Canaan because he knew it displeased his father Isaac.

The next case of polygamous marriage we run into is that of Jacob in Genesis 30:3-9 where it is written:

Genesis 30:3-9

³ And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her. ⁴ And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in unto her. ⁵ And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son. ⁶ And Rachel said, God hath judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son: therefore called she his name Dan. ⁷ And Bilhah Rachel's maid conceived again, and bare Jacob a second son. ⁸ And Rachel said, With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed: and she called his name Naphtali. ⁹ When Leah saw that she had left bearing, she took Zilpah her maid, and gave her Jacob to wife.

From these verses we see that Jacob had four wives. Many believe that Moses had two wives based upon Exodus 2:21 and Numbers 12:1 which say:

Exodus 2:21

²¹ And Moses was content to dwell with the man: and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter.

A SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE

Numbers 12:1

¹ And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman.

One thing that is clear from these two verses is that Moses had at least one wife who was black. It is debatable in the eyes of some as to whether Moses had two wives. You will have to draw your own conclusions, but according to Exodus 3:1, Jethro, Zipporah's father, was a Midian and not an Ethiopian. The wife referred to in Numbers 12:1 is stated to be an Ethiopian. The next case of polygamy we find is in the case of Gideon. Judges 8:30 reads:

Judges 8:30

³⁰ And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives.

Judges 8:31 also says that Gideon had at least one concubine. Our next case of polygamy involved Elkanah which is recorded in 1 Samuel 1:2:

1 Samuel 1:1-2

¹ Now there was a certain man of Ramathaimzophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite: ² And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

Elkanah was the father of the prophet Samuel. We also see the strife in this home caused by a man having more than one wife. Peninnah and Hannah struggled with one another unto the point that Hannah referred to Peninnah as being an adversary that severely provoked her by mocking her because she was barren (See 1 Samuel 1:4-7). The next case of polygamy is that of Saul where we read in 1 Samuel 14:50 and 2 Samuel 3:7:

1 Samuel 14:50

⁵⁰ And the name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz: and the name of the captain of his host was Abner, the son of Ner, Saul's uncle.

2 Samuel 3:7

⁷ And Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah: and Ishbosheth said to Abner, Wherefore hast thou gone in unto my father's concubine?

We have already documented the multiple wives of David, but that in no way approached unto that of his son Solomon who we read about in 1 Kings 11:3 which says:

THE MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND “HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” CONTROVERSY

1 Kings 11:3

3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.

Can you imagine the tension, strife, and confusion which must have existed in Solomon's home? Through these multiple marriages, Solomon introduced idolatry and child sacrifice into Israel from which she never recovered until all the twelve tribes were sent into captivity. Our next polygamous incidents involved Jerahmeel and Caleb in 1 Chronicles chapter 2 where we see the following:

1 Chronicles 2:25-26

²⁵ And the sons of Jerahmeel the firstborn of Hezron were, Ram the firstborn, and Bunah, and Oren, and Ozem, and Ahijah. ²⁶ Jerahmeel had also another wife, whose name was Atarah; she was the mother of Onam.

1 Chronicles 2:46-48

⁴⁶ And Ephah, Caleb's concubine, bare Haran, and Moza, and Gazez: and Haran begat Gazez. ⁴⁷ And the sons of Jahdai; Regem, and Jotham, and Geshan, and Pelet, and Ephah, and Shaaph. ⁴⁸ Maachah, Caleb's concubine, bare Sheber, and Tirhanah.

This is all we know of Jerahmeel and this particular Caleb. No further mention is made of them in the Scriptures. This is not the Caleb from the book of Joshua because they have different fathers. Two other men of whom we know little who had two wives each were Ashur and Shaharaim. Their marriages are recorded in 1 Chronicles 4:5 and 1 Chronicles 8:8 where it is written:

1 Chronicles 4:5

⁵ And Ashur the father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah and Naarah.

1 Chronicles 8:8

⁸ And Shaharaim begat children in the country of Moab, after he had sent them away; Hushim and Baara were his wives.

Our next polygamist is the first Judean king Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. Quoting from 2 Chronicles 11:21 we read:

2 Chronicles 11:21

²¹ And Rehoboam loved Maachah the daughter of Absalom above all his wives and his concubines: (for he took eighteen wives, and threescore concubines; and begat twenty and eight sons, and threescore daughters.)

Rehoboam nowhere near approached unto his father Solomon. We do not have a clue how many

A SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE

children Solomon had, but Rehoboam only averaged about one child per wife/concubine having a total of 88 children. We know from 2 Chronicles 13:21 that the Judean king Abijah had fourteen wives:

2 Chronicles 13:21

²¹ But Abijah waxed mighty, and married fourteen wives, and begat twenty and two sons, and sixteen daughters.

From 2 Chronicles 21:17 we know that the Judean king Jehoram had at least two wives because that verse says:

2 Chronicles 21:17

¹⁷ And they came up into Judah, and brake into it, and carried away all the substance that was found in the king's house, and his sons also, and his wives; so that there was never a son left him, save Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons.

Our next man having multiple wives is the Judean king Joash in 2 Chronicles 24:2-3 which states:

2 Chronicles 24:2-3

2 And Joash did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest. 3 And Jehoiada took for him two wives; and he begat sons and daughters.

Chronologically, our last case of polygamy recorded by name in the Old Testament is that of the Judean king Jehoiachin. This is recorded in 2 Kings 24:15 and says:

2 Kings 24:15

¹⁵ And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, those carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon.

While Jehoiachin's case was the last incident of polygamy recorded in the Old Testament by name, it is quite likely there was a huge case of polygamy involving all the people of Israel and all their priests upon their return from their Babylonian captivity because God required all of them including the priests to put away their strange wives in Ezra chapter 10. These strange wives were the pagans that God had commanded them not to marry. What we have seen on our excursion through the Old Testament halls of polygamy is that there was a total of twenty (20) polygamous marriages mentioned by name. Those mentioned by name were Lamech, Abraham, Nahor, Jacob, Esau, Moses(?), Gideon, Elkanah, Saul, David, Solomon, Jerahmeel, Caleb, Ashur, Shahraraim, Rehoboam, Abijah, Jehoram, Joash, and Jehoiachin.

THE MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND “HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” CONTROVERSY

There are no New Testament examples of a man having more than one wife at a time, but we know that it was a problem both from the Bible and secular history. We know that it was Biblically the case because the Holy Ghost prohibited polygamous marriages in 1 Timothy 3:2 for bishops, in 1 Timothy 3:12 for deacons, and again for bishops in Titus 1:6 when he said that bishops and deacons must be “the husband of one wife”. We also know that it was a problem in secular society from the 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia and the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus which we now quote:

Josephus and the Talmud.

That polygamy survived into the Christian era is, however, asserted by Josephus (“Ant.” xvii. 1, § 2); and he himself (“Vita,” § 75) seems to have had one wife in Palestine and another in Egypt (comp. Löw, “Gesammelte Schriften,” iii. 47). Such a practise is forbidden by a baraita in Yeb. 37a; and this prohibition is (with certain limitations) introduced into the Shulh.an ‘Aruk (Eben ha-‘Ezer, ii. 11). The Talmud certainly does not enact monogamy (see Bigamy); and as far as the Law is, concerned, Justin Martyr (“Dial. cum Tryph.” § 134) is not wrong in asserting that in his time (2d cent. C.E.) Jews were permitted to have four or five wives. (Cited from the 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia article on Monogamy: Internet Edition located at: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/10949-monogamy>)

Nevertheless, having the advantage of precedent, it was long before polygamy fell into disuse in Hebrew society. Herod had nine wives at one time (Josephus, Ant, XVII, I, 2). Justin Martyr (Dial., 134, 141) reproaches Jews of his day with having “four or even five wives,” and for “marrying as many as they wish” (compare Talm). It was not definitely and formally forbidden among Jews until circa 1000 AD. It exists still among Jews in Moslem lands. [Cited from page 634 of the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE) from the article “Marriage”; James Orr, General Editor]

He also allotted one of Aristobulus’s daughters to Antipater’s son, and Aristobulus’s other daughter to Herod, a son of his own, who was born to him by the high priest’s daughter; for it is the ancient practice among us to have many wives at the same time. [The Works Of Flavius Josephus, Book 17, Chapter 1, Section 2 (14)]

Now Herod the king had at this time nine wives; one of them, Antipater’s mother, and another the high priest’s daughter, by whom he had a son of his own name. He had also one who was his brother’s daughter, and another his sister’s daughter; which two had no children. [The Works Of Flavius Josephus, Book 17, chapter 1, section 3(19), page 452]

She also frequently reproached Herod’s sister and wives with the ignobility of their descent; and that they were every one chosen by him for their beauty, but not for their

A SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE

family. Now those wives of his were not a few; it being of old permitted to the Jews to marry many wives, — and this king delighting in many; all whom hated Alexander, on account of Glaphyria's boasting and reproaches. [The Works Of Flavius Josephus, War Of The Jews, Chapter 24, page 1351]

The reason we presented the information above is that many commentaries state that the practice of polygamy had ceased among the Jews at the time of the Lord Jesus Christ. That that statement is untrue can be documented from the five quotes just cited. Flavius Josephus was born in 37 A. D. Justin Martyr died in 165 A. D. The article on marriage from the ISBE plainly states that polygamy was not out formally forbidden among the Jewish people until 1,000 A. D. and that the practice still continued in Moslem lands at least until 1929 which was the original copyright year for the ISBE.

We have used a lot of time and gone into a great deal of detail to document the prevalence of polygamy among the Jewish people for several reasons. We will use this information in our chapter dealing with "Standards For Church Service" because it drives to the issue of the proper interpretation of 1 Timothy 3:2 and 1 Timothy 3:12. We also wanted to document the misery that polygamy caused in the nation of Israel because it departed from God's ideal for marriage given in Genesis 2:24. We also wanted to use it as the springboard to present the purity and absolute oneness of the Bride of Christ and the Lord Jesus Christ as it is illustrated in type by the perfect unity of the "one flesh" relationship of husband and wife established by God in Genesis 2. In that perfect unity with the Lord Jesus Christ we exist in an eternal state of innocence that cannot be corrupted by sin. The oneness of the Bride of Christ and the Lord Jesus Christ totally destroys the myth that polygamy was instituted by God.

According to Ephesians 5:30-32, the marriage between the Lord Jesus Christ and the Bride of Christ has already taken place. These verses read:

Ephesians 5:30-32

³⁰For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. ³¹For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. ³²This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

The coming Marriage Supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19 is but the celebration of an accomplished fact. The Bible teaches that the church and its members have become one flesh with the Lord Jesus Christ! Not only are believers one flesh with the Lord Jesus Christ, but they are one spirit with the Lord Jesus Christ. We can prove this from 1 Corinthians 6:15-20 which states:

1 Corinthians 6:15-20

¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ What?

THE MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND “HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” CONTROVERSY

know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. ¹⁷ But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. ¹⁸ Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. ¹⁹ 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? ²⁰ For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

This idea of oneness in Christ is pictured in the Old Testament in Malachi 2:14-16 which tells us:

Malachi 2:14-16

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. 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. 16 For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

Malachi 2:14-16 does not say wives. It says wife (singular). The Lord Jesus Christ in rebuking the Pharisees for their licentious interpretation and application of Deuteronomy 24:1-4, cites Genesis 2:24 when he had this to say in Matthew 19:

Matthew 19:4-6

4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, 5 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? 6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

Genesis 2:24

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

This statement of the Lord Jesus Christ would also rule out polygamous, polygynous, and polyandrous marriages because it states that TWO would become ONE flesh. It does not say that two or more became one flesh. It also rules out the abomination of same sex unions because the scriptural qualifications are MALE AND FEMALE. It is obvious from Genesis 2:24 and Matthew 19:4-6 that God's original intent from the beginning was one man and one woman for a lifetime. God hates

A SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE

putting away. In 2 Corinthians 11:2, Paul stated that the espousal of the Church was to ONE husband. The Church is not many brides, but one bride. The oneness of that relationship is emphasized very strongly in Ephesians 4:2-6. These verses state:

Ephesians 4:2-6

2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

In Ephesians 5:22-33, the husband and wife relationship of Genesis 2:24 is presented as a type of the relationship between the Lord Jesus Christ and His Bride, the church. These verses read:

Ephesians 5:22-33

22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 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. 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. 25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 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. 28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: 30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 31 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. 32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

The oneness of this relationship is emphasized over and over again by the apostle Paul in Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 10:17, 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 1 Corinthians 12:20, Ephesians 2:16, Ephesians 4:4, and Colossians 3:15. These verses read:

Romans 12:4-5

4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

THE MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND “HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” CONTROVERSY

1 Corinthians 10:17

17 For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:20

20 But now are they many members, yet but one body.

Ephesians 2:16

16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

Ephesians 4:4

4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

Colossians 3:15

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

That one body that is called out over and over in these Scriptures is the Bride Of Christ. This emphasis over and over upon one body finds its culmination in Revelation 19:6-8 where a single Bride is presented to the Lord Jesus Christ in all of her glory. Since this single Bride and single Bridegroom represents the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church we can emphatically state that God never intended for us to have multiple spouses, but that he allowed it because of the lack of faith of men and women and because of the hardness of their hearts.

SEPARATION IN CHOOSING A SPOUSE

Next to salvation, one of the most important decisions a Christian will ever make is the one that leads to their marriage to their spouse. Who will your spouse be?? It has always been God's command to his people that they would not marry pagans. In God's plan, Jews were to marry Jews and after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, Christians were to marry Christians. Put simply, this means that a believer cannot marry an unbeliever. In the Old Testament, it was a lot easier to keep this commandment because all you had to do was marry someone who was physically born an Israelite. In the New Testament, the decision becomes much more complex because you have to make

A SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE

a spiritually discerned judgment as to whether a person is born again spiritually. That is, are they a born again Christian? That decision is very difficult to make on short notice most of the time unless there is direct intervention from the Holy Ghost of God. Whether to marry someone should be a spiritually discerned decision making process. Unless you have known and experienced someone's spiritual testimony for a long time before you think you have fallen in love with them, you had better take much time in trying to spiritually discern whether they know the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. You need to question your potential spouse about when and how they received the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have any reservation about doing this, you had better heed the red flag the Holy Ghost has run up for you and run from that individual. You need to observe their lifestyle. Is their everyday decision making process one that seeks to honor the Lord Jesus Christ? What is their manner of speech and dress when they are away from the house of God? Do they feed you a constant diet of anything but Jesus? Is their focus upon worldly entertainment? What do they believe about holiness and biblical separation? What do they believe about the Bible and Bible doctrines? Most of the time the rush to marry is the rush to fulfill lust. Before you have a physical relationship with someone, you had better establish a spiritual relationship with them. Before you have a physical relationship with someone, you had better establish a Holy Ghost informed emotional relationship with them. God absolutely forbids pre marital sexual relationships. Have a sexual relationship with someone makes you married to them in the eyes of God. People who get married following extended sexual relationships experience the highest rates of divorce in the United States. If someone wants to try you out before they marry you, it means that they do not love you after a Godly fashion. If someone keeps pushing you about a sexual relationship, it is a very strong indication that they are in open rebellion to God. A person that is in open rebellion to God may not be saved. If you are considering marrying someone, ask God over and over again to direct your paths in a direction that would not be displeasing to Him.

We are going to quote several passages of Scripture governing God's commands in choosing a spouse and make a few brief comments. Turn in your Bibles to Genesis 24:3-4:

Genesis 24:3-4

³ And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: ⁴ But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.

Abraham here is beseeching his servant to search out a wife for his son. In this passage of Scripture Abraham's servant is a type of the Holy Ghost. We are to beseech the Holy Ghost to direct us in our search for a mate. Abraham's charge to his servant here is that he not bring a daughter of the Canaanites; in other words a pagan. Now turn in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 28 where we read:

Genesis 28:1

1 And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou

THE MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND “HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” CONTROVERSY

shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan.

Genesis 28:6-9

⁶ When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, and sent him away to Padanaram, to take him a wife from thence; and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan; ⁷ And that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother, and was gone to Padanaram; ⁸ And Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father; ⁹ Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife.

In this passage of Scripture, we see Isaac's charge to his son Jacob that he not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. It is the identical charge that was given to Abraham's elder servant concerning Isaac's future wife. She was not to be a pagan unbeliever. We cannot emphasize strongly enough the need for parents to properly train up their children in all Biblical precepts including those on how to evaluate whether a particular individual is the choice God would have them to make. Train them to seek God's will in this matter of marriage. Charge them not to marry and unbeliever. Turn now in your Bibles to Exodus 34:12-16 and let us begin reading:

Exodus 34:12-16

¹² Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee: ¹³ But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves: ¹⁴ For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God: ¹⁵ Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice; ¹⁶ And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods.

God's charge to the nation of Israel, their fathers and their mothers, and their sons and daughters was not to make a covenant with the wicked, pagan inhabitants of Canaan land which they were about to enter. Their altars, their images, and their groves were instruments that they used to worship their pagan gods. God will not allow his people to worship other gods and be in fellowship with Him. God's warning was that if their sons and daughters married into pagan families, that they would fall into idolatry and go a whoring after their gods. You cannot marry a known unbeliever and expect to change them after you marry them. That is not God's way and is the surest way to be deceived by Satan. They will corrupt you. It only takes a little bit of dirt to be dirty and if you ignore it long enough, you will be filthy after a while and vex your righteous soul with the works of the wicked. Now let's go to Deuteronomy 7 verses 2 and 3 where it is written:

A SCRIPTURAL DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE

Deuteronomy 7:2-3

² And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: ³ Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.

Here is yet another admonishment from God that the sons and daughters of Israel were not to make marriages with the pagans that lived in the Promised Land. How often this admonishment was ignored by the children of Israel and ultimately it was their pagan marriages that lead to their being exiled from the Promised Land for almost 1,900 years not to count the numerous holocausts and pogroms that they suffered at the hands of the pagans that they had intermarried with. There is a terrible cost to be paid if you disobey God's command not to marry unbelievers. A further illustration of the pain caused by the violation of this precept is contained in Ezra chapter 9 verses 1 and 2 and Ezra chapter 10 verses 2 and 3. These verses state:

Ezra 9:1-2

¹ Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. ² For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass.

Ezra 10:2-3

² And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. ³ Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law.

Here in Ezra 10, God has commanded them to put away all their pagan wives and all their children born of those pagan wives. What a painful experience that was for them. Note also from Ezra 9:1-2 that it was not just the people that had been guilty of intermarrying with pagans, but the priests were also guilty of intermarrying with pagans. Can you imagine the weeping and wailing that was going on here. The priests had to give a trespass offering before they could continue to offer the sacrifices. Note that the separation ordered here had nothing to do with race. The separation was a separation from those who believed in pagan gods. It was a separation based upon things spiritual and not upon physical characteristics. Following this cleansing of the people and the priesthood the people

THE MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE, AND “HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” CONTROVERSY

and the priesthood entered into an oath to keep themselves clear from the pagans. This oath is recorded in Nehemiah 10:29-30 and states:

Nehemiah 10:29-30

²⁹ They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God’s law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes; ³⁰ And that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons:

These commandments to be a separate people and not to intermarry with pagans were not isolated to the Old Testament. The Holy Ghost’s command to Christian widows that are seeking to remarry is that they seek out a fellow believer. We see this in 1 Corinthians 7:39 which says:

1 Corinthians 7:39

³⁹ 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.

That is what the meaning of “only in the Lord” is. It means that a Christian must seek out a Christian mate. We see further New Testament guidance for this precept in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 where the Holy Ghosts says:

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

¹⁴ Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? ¹⁶ And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹⁷ Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, ¹⁸ And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

What this passage in 2 Corinthians 6 means is that we are not to hook up, or become yoked, with unbelievers in any area of life and that includes marriage. The Lord Jesus Christ does not fellowship with Belial. If you enter into a marriage with an unbeliever you are entering into fellowship with the Devil (here called Belial). Christians are light and the unbelievers are darkness. The body of the believer is the temple of the living God while the body of the unbeliever is the temple of Satan who is the god of this world. We are not to join in any relationships with those that are unsaved.