

# WHAT CONSTITUTES A SCRIPTURAL MARRIAGE?

By Brother Mike Sutherland

**Let me state at the outset that a Biblical marriage is much more than a sexual relationship.** We can state from Malachi chapter 2 that a Biblical marriage exists in a covenant relationship. Without getting into the specific physical details, at the outset, God established the marriage relationship as a blood covenant. Think about it. Need I say anymore? The whole idea of premarital sex is both a scriptural misnomer and a scriptural oxymoron. God takes this whole pagan idea of premarital sex very seriously. In fact, God takes it much more seriously than most Baptist preachers. In the Old Testament, God ordained the death penalty for what people today wrongfully refer to as “premarital sex”. The terms “premarital” and “sex” are Biblically contradictory and redundant when used together. God refers to “premarital sex” as fornication, whoremongering, harlotry, whoredom, and a whoring around. Regardless of intent, or whether you realize it or acknowledge it, if a man and a woman have a sexual relationship, they are announcing their intent before God to live as husband and wife. There are no one-night stands with God.

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 Genesis 2:18 where we see:

Genesis 1:27-28

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. <sup>28</sup> 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

<sup>18</sup> 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 way the Devil would have it. God intended that a man might be submitted to her 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 “the family”. Marriage was the act that God ordained to establish 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*:

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Genesis 2:24

<sup>24</sup> 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 2:14–15 (KJV)

<sup>14</sup> 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**. <sup>15</sup> **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**.

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.

1 Corinthians 6:15–17 (KJV)

<sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> **What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.** <sup>17</sup> But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

This particular passage is quoted in *1 Corinthians 6:16* in the context of the longest passage on

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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: that is, producing children. This verse states:

Genesis 38:8

<sup>8</sup> 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. (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*.

**WARNING, it should now be abundantly clear that mass confusion is the result of mankind separating the act of marriage from the institution of the family. God never intended for them to be separated. In fact, God in effect *married* the word “marriage” to the word “family” when he ordained and established the relationship between Adam and Eve.** When you start discussing the Biblical concept of marriage, you have to be very careful how you parse your words because the Biblical definition of marriage does not agree with the pagan and the legal definition of marriage.

**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<sup>1</sup> of the Roman Catholic

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<sup>1</sup>In Roman Catholic and Protestant theology the so-called sacraments are considered to be channels to God’s saving grace. We would remind our readers and listeners that Baptists are not

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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 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 contacting 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

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Protestants. The English word “*sacrament*” is a transliteration of the Latin word “*sacramentum*”. The Latin word “*sacramentum*” is the term used to describe the “mysteries of a pagan religion”. These mysteries were/are considered to be initiation rites into pagan religions. In our case, that pagan religion is “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS” (*Revelation 17:1-18*).

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on your wedding day.

Throughout this study, I have continued 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 authority vested in the church or in the government to institute marriages. In *Exodus 22:16-17*, the father even had the right to refuse to allow a man to live with his daughter as his wife even when the man had taken her virginity away!

In closing this discussion of “What Constitutes A Scriptural Marriage”, I must say that I have studied and written in much, much greater detail on this subject than I can document in these brief five pages on the subject before us.