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“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder,” Matthew 19:6.

Jesus Speaks on Marriage

Lesson Aim: To cultivate the qualities which make a Christian home.

L85. Date: November 1970. **Text:** Matthew 19:3-12. **Topic:** Marriage.

INTRODUCTION

“In the morning of time, when the heavens declared the glory of God and the firmament showed His handiwork, God made man in His own image and put him in the beautiful Garden of Eden to be master of things under his Heavenly Father's sovereign care. But God saw that man was lonely so He made for him a companion, whom He called woman, to share with him the joys of original human love in the midst of the beauty of God's glorious universe. And so the home was the first divinely created institution among men.”

These are the words with which I begin each wedding ceremony. They set forth a basic philosophy of marriage. It is seen as natural, divinely ordained, and essential to the preservation of human society.

The institution of marriage is being assailed today. Advocates of promiscuity, who declare that marriage should be done away with, attack it. Enemies who call it simply a civil contract with no religious implications attack it. It is attacked by those who advocate such freedom-of-divorce laws that one may enter and terminate marriage relationships at will.

The Bible declares marriage is a religious union. It was ordained of God. It is to be governed by certain principles set forth in His word. Today's study is concerned with finding out what Jesus said about marriage.

This is a very vital lesson. It has been said that as goes the home so goes the nation. No nation is strong when its homes are weak. We want our nation to be strong as a bulwark for righteousness. Therefore we must listen

intently as “Jesus Speaks on Marriage.” The lesson aim is “to cultivate the qualities which make a Christian home.”

EXPOSITION

I. THE AUTHOR OF MARRIAGE, 19:3-5.

God Himself set the institution of marriage among men. It must be said, therefore, that He is the Author of marriage and the home.

1. God made human beings “male and female” in the very beginning, verse 4. This was because He intended that they marry and produce children. All He does is according to plan; nothing happens by accident with Him. He would have made all people males, or all females, or all sexless unless He had purposed marriage and procreation. Hence, He prepared us for that. The difference is not merely physical, but psychological. In the very nature of humans He put the mother instinct and the father instinct. Thus He intended it to be.

2. God made human beings male and female to match each other. There is an interesting record in Genesis 2:7-25. God created man and put him in Eden to dress it and to keep it. But He saw man was lonely and said, “. . . **It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him,**” verse 18. Then He brought every beast of the field and every fowl of the air to Adam who named them. **“But for Adam there was not found an help meet for him,”** verse 23. Then God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, took a rib from his side, and made a woman. Immediately upon seeing her, Adam said, **“This is now (at last!) bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of Man,”** verse 23. This was the “help meet” Adam needed.

“Help meet” means “one to answer back; one to match: one of like nature.” God created the woman to match the man. This likeness applies in both physical and psychological relationships. He created her with marriage in His blessed design.

3. God brought human beings together in the first marriage bond. Genesis 2:22. **“He made a woman, and brought her unto the man.”** It could be said, then, that God performed the very first marriage ceremony. Marriage becomes much more than a barbed wire fence to keep loose passions under control. It is a relationship between a man and a woman which is so evidently approved of God that He brought the first man and woman together and formed the first marriage bond. How this hallows the relationship of each husband and wife who have shared their lives since that

time.

4. God set up the marriage union between a man and a woman as an exclusive bond, Genesis 2:24. Marriage is thus declared as being the deepest corporeal and spiritual unity possible among humans. It is also set out that monogamy (having only one partner in marriage) is the divinely appointed intention.

Outside of marriage, the closest relationship possible between humans is the parent-child relationship. But because a person would leave “father and mother” to be joined to a married partner, marriage is shown to be the preeminent of the two. Celibacy is no more a sacred state of living than is marriage.

Do we seem to have gone beyond the teachings of Jesus in going back to the book of Genesis? Not at all. Jesus bases His interpretation of marriage on these very truths taught in Genesis 1 and 2. It would be impossible to understand His views on marriage without knowing how God decreed marriage from the creation.

II. THE NATURE OF MARRIAGE, 19:5-6.

1. Marriage is the union of two persons as “one flesh.” This underscores the physical fact of marriage. The union itself does not make of the two “one spirit” but “one flesh.” It is a physical union. This means that in the mind of God the proper marriage involves normal sexual union.

It is only when sexual relationships are taken out of context (the marriage relations) and used for the wrong motive (satisfaction of lust rather than sharing unity in love) or expressed in some way God never intended (perversion in any of its forms) that it becomes base and evil. Both the man and the woman are made in the image and likeness of God. God put the sex drive in them both. The expression of that part of their natures within the marriage relation is not only permissible but required, 1 Corinthians 7.

It is not saying “I do” in a wedding ceremony which makes two people “one flesh” before man and God. It is their physical union. Marriage is the union of two persons as “one flesh.”

2. Marriage is an exclusive union. It excludes parents. A man will “leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife.” Here is a warning to parents that they refrain from tampering in the marriage relationship of their children. (How many times “in-laws” have brought divorce!) A man's supreme devotion on earth is to be his wife; a woman's supreme devotion on earth is to be her husband. Only God is to be held above one's devotion to his married partner.

It is to exclude others lovers. This is why adultery is so serious a sin. It not only defrauds one's married partner, it destroys God's purpose in marriage. It excludes any other married partner. Divorce will be discussed below, but let it suffice here to say that God's intention was one man married to one woman for life. Be careful of anything more than this.

3. Marriage is a divine union. Jesus said, **“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder,”** verse 6. Note the expression, **“. . . God hath joined together. . .”** This does not mean that God selects a married partner for each person. It does mean that a man and a woman who are joined in marriage (even if they are not Christians) are joined under God for it is His will that the marriage bond be entered and homes established.

4. Marriage is a natural union. God made male and female for each other. He wrote this into the very nature of men and women. Jesus assumed it was so natural for men and women to marry that He said only a few exceptional people should not marry, Matthew 19:10-12.

Just as the glove was made for the hand, the hat for the head, the tire for the wheel, the propeller for the airplane, so the man and the woman were made each for the other. It would be unnatural for most people if they did not marry.

III. THE PERMANENCE of MARRIAGE, 19:6-9.

1. God's intention that marriage would be permanent is indicated by the nature of the union of the husband and wife. **“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. . .”** verse 6. The union formed between two people make them no longer two separate individuals but one body. Such a union defies separation.

A man would no more wish to part with his wife than to part with his head, or heart, or limbs. She is a member of his body as Paul teaches in Ephesians 5:28-31. God Himself joins them together. Thus they become one the same as the body, which is also united by God, is one. This indicates God's intention that the marriage union would be permanent.

2. God's intention that marriage would be permanent is indicated in the prohibition against breaking it. **“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder,”** verse 6.

God is the One who ordained marriage. When any man and woman are rightly united in marriage it is according to the ordained purpose of God. “Joined together” literally means “yoked together.” In grammatical form this verb is a timeless aorist indicative, meaning that it is true always. What God yokes, no man should attempt to break. God's ideal and man's desires may

not always coincide, but from the beginning God intended the marriage relationship to be permanent.

3. God's intention that marriage would be permanent is indicated by the prohibition of the commonly accepted grounds of divorce, verse 8. Divorce was first authorized in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Those who heard Jesus objected, "Why did Moses require a bill of divorcement be given a woman when her husband sent her away if divorce was never intended?" Such a writ was common among the Hebrews.

Moses decreed that if a man married a woman and found some "uncleanness" in her, he must give her a "bill of divorcement" when he sent her away. The rabbis debated over what "unclean" thing was a proper ground for divorce. Some said only something disgraceful. Others said it could be any small matter. The result was that a woman could be put away "for every cause" (verse 3), meaning "on any grounds one may allege."

When Jesus said, "**From the beginning it was not so,**" He repudiated the commonly accepted grounds for divorce. He declared that originally there was no such thing nor was it intended that way at the beginning. Jesus withdrew most rights for divorce which people in His day were claiming as their rights.

4. God's intention that marriage would be permanent is indicated by the seriousness of the offence which is sufficient to warrant a termination of the marriage bond. Jesus gave only one ground for divorce: ". . . **except it be for fornication. . .**" verse 9. That's all. And how serious is that offence! If a husband and a wife are one body, divorce is like amputation. One would consent to amputate a member of his body only as a last resort. When all other possibilities were exhausted and one's life was in danger, then only would one agree. So it is with divorce. It is permissible only when the bond has been broken so that it is no longer possible to reunite it. How permanent God intended that union to be!

IV. THE TERMINATION OF MARRIAGE, 19:7-9.

1. The purpose of God is that one man would be married to one woman for life. Elsewhere the Bible teaches that the death of one's married partner leaves one free to enter another marriage contract. But the familiar "so long as you both live" of the marriage vows is the expression of the original design of God.

2. The permission for divorce among the Hebrews is recorded in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Even this (which required that a "bill of divorcement" be given to the wife who is set away by her husband) was given for the

protection of the innocent, not to liberalize divorce practices.

In ancient times a woman must be supported by a man. No woman went out into public life, secured employment, and supported herself. She must be supported by her father, her husband, by a servant, or become a prostitute. Moses saw men cast out their wives. Many had to choose the latter two resources because their father was unable and their husbands unwilling to support them. So Moses required that a writ of divorce be given the woman sent away by her husband so she would be free to marry again. Thus she would be saved from a degrading life. This came because of the hardness of men's hearts, not because of God's original purpose for man.

3. Jesus set out some principles which govern the termination of marriage and the right of remarriage for one who is divorced.

(1) By naming only one sufficient reason for divorce, Jesus excluded all other reasons as acceptable before God. See Matthew 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:12. Fornication (adultery) is the only reason Jesus gave as sufficient ground for divorce.

(2) In a divorce which was caused by the unfaithfulness of one married partner, the innocent party is free to marry again. Matthew 19:19 makes it clear that none must put away his married partner and remarry "for any reason except" adultery. This means that in the case of adultery, remarriage is permissible for the innocent one.

(3) In a divorce which was not caused by adultery (fornication), neither party is free to remarry. Matthew 5:32 makes it clear that in such cases the marriage bond is not broken. One so divorced, marrying again, commits adultery. (4) The one who sues for divorce (unless fornication is involved) is not free to remarry any more than the one sued, Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18.

(5) Divorce for adultery is permissible, but not mandatory. If one is joined to an unfaithful partner, he may sue for divorce but he is not required to do so.

(6) Either a man or a woman may sue for divorce in the case of fornication, Mark 10:12.

(7) Permission for divorce seemingly given in the Mosaic law was sufferance but not approval. Comparison of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 with Matthew 19:3-12 makes it clear that Jesus repealed that permission.

(8) It is not specifically stated in the teachings of Jesus, but the implication is clear that a right to divorce is accompanied by a right to remarry. Anyone who has a Scriptural divorce, in other words, can enter another marriage relationship without sin.

CONCLUSION

How high and holy a relationship is involved in marriage. It was instituted of God for the good of man and woman, for the procreation and training of children, for the stability of society, and for the preservation and promotion of religious faith.