

Genesis & A Biblical Worldview

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, July 15, 2012

Introduction

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God

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Creation

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Man

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Sin

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Grace

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Culture

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Purpose

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“Male and Female He Created Them”

Over the past few weeks, we have been considering how the Book of Genesis gives us the basic building-blocks for a worldview concerning mankind. So far, we have looked at what Genesis tells us about the objective aspects of man’s created nature (that toward his Creator, he is “image-bearer”, and that toward the creation, he is “dominion-keeper”); and what it tells us of the subjective aspects of his nature (that he was made with an essential need for relationship with his Creator, and that this relationship is to be expressed in a loving obedience to the One who made him for Himself).

This morning, we turn to what Genesis tells us about God’s design for the deepest human relationship possible--the marital relationship. And if ever there was a subject in which we needed a sure word from God, it is this one . . . and if ever there was a time when that sure word needed to be faithfully declared, it is today!

1. THE MARRIAGE OF ONE MAN AND ONE WOMAN IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH GOD’S DESIGN.

- A. The first thing that the Bible tells us about this important aspect of God’s design for humankind is found in the first section in which it tells us *anything* about humankind at all! In Genesis 1:26-27, we’re told, “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him . . .” Thus, we’re told of man’s creation. But right away, we’re told that the basic identity of “man” as a creation of God is not singular, but plural. As we read in the later half of verse 27, “. . . male and female He created them.” In other words, “mankind” is not to be considered “mankind” as God designed unless viewed as both male and female together. Both are essential to what it means to be human--‘made in God’s image’. Note too that God’s design of mankind as male and female is essential to the “dominion-keeper” mandate that He gave to them. We read in verse 28, “Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’” The command God gave them to “be fruitful and multiply” cannot be done except as male and female.
- B. In our day, this needs to be graciously but resolutely affirmed--not as a matter (as is often being said) of bigotry and intolerance, but of humble and reverent faithfulness to God’s expressed design. Based on Genesis 1, the biblical/theistic worldview affirms that mankind was designed by the Creator--at the very beginning--for heterosexual monogamy; and no provision was made at the beginning for any other kind of coupling. This design for human marriage given in Genesis 1 was affirmed (although in a different context) by Jesus Christ Himself to have been divinely spoken by God: “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:4-6). What is often

ignored in the current debate over whether or not marriage should be 'redefined' to fit changing cultural attitudes is the all-important question, "Who defined it first?" If 'marriage' was defined only by human culture and custom, then of course humankind can alter it however the changing needs or wishes require. But if it was defined by the Creator as an immutable expression of His fundamental design, it is authoritative and cannot be altered without causing harm to humanity itself.

2. MARRIAGE--BY DESIGN--MEETS AN ESSENTIAL HUMAN NEED.

- A. Genesis 1 tells us the story of God's basic design for humankind, and the mandate He gave to the first couple after they were both made. But Genesis 2 tells us the story of the beginning of marriage itself. There, we're told, "And the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him'" (v. 18). This lets us know that what follows was a part of God's intention to make for the first man Adam a companion suitable to him. We're told, "Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name." As we've seen in a previous lesson, the naming of the creatures required careful study on the part of man in order to capture each one's essence in a name. This helped raise within man a sense of his own need. "So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him" (vv. 19-20). Having thus raised in Adam a sense of his need, we're told, "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man" (vv. 21-22)--not from his head in order to be his ruler, nor from his foot in order to be his underling, but from his side in order to be his partner. And the woman was not taken from a different source than him, but from his own body, so that man and woman may truly become 'one flesh'. Man's response was 'enthusiastic': "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'" (v. 23).
- B. While affirming that there is no other design for marriage than as one man and one woman for life, the New Testament also teaches that not all 'need' to be in a marriage relationship (see Matthew 19:10-12; 1 Corinthians 7:7, 17, 28-35). If someone has the 'gift' of singleness, that gift should be recognized and respected. But in consistency with our worldview, we need to faithfully affirm that heterosexual/mongomous marriage *is* God's only provision to meet the essential and legitimate need that both women and men have for companionship, sexuality, and the raising of a family; and that it is the only institution given within which those needs may be fully met with His blessings and with innocence in His sight (see 1 Corinthians 7:1-9).

3. MARRIAGE--AS A SPECIFICALLY DEFINED INSTITUTION AMONG HUMAN BEINGS--IS ITSELF ORDAINED BY GOD.

- A. The Holy Spirit saw fit to include this closing comment after the story of the woman's creation from man: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (v. 24). God's word thus defines a marriage as having these three basic essentials: that (1) a man (male) "leave" the direct supervision and authority of the home of his father and mother--making a socially recognized separation of his household from theirs; (2) "cleave" to his wife (female)--entering into a publically recognized covenant with her in such a way that the newly formed

bond is considered life-long and inseparable; and (3) the thus-covenanted man and woman exclusively becoming “one flesh”--which includes not only the physical relationship, but the unity of the whole life in such a way that a new “kinship” is formed (see Judges 9:2).

- B. Because of these early Genesis passages, a consistent worldview means that we affirm the Bible’s concept of the institution of “marriage” as one that is not obsolete in our day, nor merely optional for those who may wish to choose it. Nor, in our worldview, can it be reduced to merely ‘the emotional union of people committed to mutual affection and care’ in an ambiguous and undefinable manner. As God our Creator has specifically defined it, it is an essential institution that He has ordained for the good of humanity that involves--at the barest minimum--the three components of a man leaving father and mother, cleaving to his wife, and the two becoming one flesh; an institution that is based on mankind’s fundamental design as a created being, and that is to be honored as such in all cultures and in all times (see Hebrews 13:4). In fact, God’s word speaks of it in a way that is not true of any other human institution. God has declared that He gave it to humankind as the “imitation” of the greater relationship that Jesus Christ holds forever with His redeemed people:

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband (Ephesians 5:23-32).

Truly, earthly marriage can have no greater honor--or be sanctified to a higher level--than to be declared to have been given by God as a picture on earth of the eternal relationship Christ enjoys with His precious Bride the Church!

¹All Scripture readings are taken from *the Holy Bible, New King James Version*; copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.