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Finally, brethren

WHATEVER THINGS

are true
are noble
are just
are pure
are lovely

PHILIPPIANS
4:8

are of good report
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTURE AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –
meditate on these things.

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at christistheway.com.

The Rapture

Ajayi Ojeva | Osogbo, Nigeria

The Rapture is a popular doctrine among denominational churches today. It was believed and taught by a few premillennialists in the church. It is connected with theories about the second coming of Christ and his kingdom.

The exponents of this doctrine believe and teach that Christ will come secretly and take his church out of the earth, leaving sinners behind. It is an arm of the premillennialists' theory about the second coming Christ.

The premillennialists are divided on the question as to when the so-called rapture will occur. Four positions are held among them. They all believe and teach a period of great tribulation on earth. They place the rapture at different periods of the tribulation.

The pre-tribulationists place the rapture before the tribulation. They believe that Christ will return at any moment to secretly rapture the church before the tribulation on earth. After seven years of tribulation, Christ will return with His saints to overcome the Antichrist and his forces and establish God's millennial, Jewish kingdom on earth.

Mid-tribulationists on the contrary place the rapture in the midst of the tribulation. They claim that Christians will experience the first half of the Tribulation, that is three and a half years of persecution, and then at the midpoint of the tribulation they will be raptured. They base their argument for such a position on Daniel 7:25 and Revelation 12:4 which include the phrase "time, times and half a time." This is taken to

mean a period of three and a half years of tribulation, before the rapture.

Post-tribulationists on the other hand placed the rapture after the tribulation. They believe the church will experience seven years of tribulation before Christ returns. They believe also that the Jews will believe in Jesus after the church has been raptured.

Pre-Wrath Tribulationists on their own placed the rapture after the tribulation, but before the wrath of the day of the Lord.

No passage of the scripture teach the doctrine of the so-called rapture.

Neither Matthew 24 nor 1 Thessalonians 4 teach such doctrine.

In Mathew chapter 24 verses 40 and 41 we read, "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left." In the verses, Jesus was not speaking about the so-called rapture. What does taking one and leaving the other mean then? In this life, two persons may be doing things together but be separated in relation to Christ. Thus, they shall be separated in eternity. At the second coming of Christ, men shall be separated in the resurrection and judgment; the righteous will resurrect unto resurrection of life. But the unrighteous unto the resurrection of condemnation (John 5:28-29). The meaning here apparently is that at the second coming of Jesus to judge the world, the righteous faithful saints will be taken away to their eternal reward in heaven, the unrighteous and unfaithful will be left for their final abode in hell. The judgment shall see the unrighteous going into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life (Matthew 25:46).

1 Thessalonians chapter 4, verses 15 to 17 reads:

"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught off together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

This passage does not teach a secret rapture in any way. First, the so-called rapture is supposedly followed by a return to the earth. But in this passage, there is nothing that suggests a return of the saints to the earth. This Scripture says. So we shall ever be with the Lord. Here, the saints are taken up to be with the Lord forever. There is only one coming of the Lord and that is for judgment (Matthew 25: 31-46).

Conclusion

The doctrine of so-called rapture is false. There is not going to be any intermediate between the second coming of Christ and eternity. There is no secret coming of the Lord. "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, amen" (Revelation 1:7).

A Study in Bible Math

Jefferson David Tant | Hendersonville, Tennessee, USA

I would assume that all who are reading this have studied math while in school, learning to add, subtract, multiply, and divide. Math is a vitally important subject, as we often have to put this knowledge to work in our daily activities. And while knowing how to add and subtract is important in the affairs of everyday living in this world, adding and subtracting also has some vital spiritual implications.

Consider that the Bible is the Word of God. God revealed his message to the apostles and prophets, who

then wrote the Scriptures for us—the Old and New Testaments. Note what Paul wrote to young Timothy:

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Paul wrote that “all Scripture is inspired by God.” That means what is written from Genesis to Revelation is from God. Of course, as God inspired the writers, he used their own personalities in giving the message for them to write. Paul was a trained scholar, a Pharisee, while Timothy was a young man. Thus the God-inspired words Paul used may have been a bit different than the God-inspired words Timothy used. But what they wrote was from the mind of God.

We are told of the time when Satan was tempting Christ, and Christ was obviously hungry. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry.

“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, God.’ And the tempter came and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.’ But He answered and said, ‘It is written, ‘man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God’” (Matthew 4:1-4).

Christ emphasized this principle in Mathew 5:18: “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”

The Old Testament has various warnings concerning how we handle the Word God has given to us. “Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar” (Proverbs 30:5-6). Then note what Moses, by inspiration, told the people of Israel: “You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you” (Deuteronomy 4:2).

Now, with respect to the early Christians, they didn’t have the creeds, manuals, and doctrines of men that are common today. By some estimates there are some 42,000 different denominations today, and they all claim to be Christian. But they are divided and not united. Note what Christ prayed for in John 17:17-21:

“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.”

What did Christ pray for? He prayed that all believers might be united, even as he and the Father are one—united. Now, how would you describe the oneness that Christ has with the Father? Could we imagine that Christ is a Baptist and that the Father is a Mormon? Or that Christ is a Methodist and the Father is an Episcopalian? Obviously not!

That means that the 42,000 different denominations do not measure up to Christ’s prayer. The Catholic Catechism, the Baptist Manual, the Methodist Discipline and the thousands of other creed books do have something in common. They all teach differing doctrines, and they all teach something different than the Bible. If they all taught the same thing that the Bible did, we wouldn’t need them. If they all taught the same thing, then we wouldn’t have 42,000 differing denominations. We would then have one church, the one body described in the New Testament. That’s all they had in the first century. What prevents us from having that in the 21st century? I’ll tell you what. It is Satan! The apostle Paul has told us that “God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints” (I Corinthians 14:33).

Consider Paul’s admonition to the church at Corinth.

“Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment” (I Corinthians 1:10).

Is the following what God wants? The Baptist Church baptizes only those who know what they are doing by immersion. The Catholic Church baptizes babies by pouring water on them. The Salvation Army does not baptize anyone.

What are the implications of what the apostle John wrote in that verse? The simple explanation is that any church, entity, or organization that has a creed book that differs from the Bible means that God will not accept it. John said it “does not have God.” The following illustration emphasizes this fact.

Who were the religious leaders in Christ’s time? Among the leaders were the Pharisees, who believed in God and worshipped God. But in addition to the Scriptures (the Old Testament books), they had their own traditions and doctrines. So, what did Christ think of that? **“But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men”** (Matthew 15:9).

Consider that they believed in and worshipped the true God. They had the Scriptures that had been revealed through the prophets, but they observed their own traditions and doctrines in addition to the Old Testament Scriptures. Christ said their worship was in vain. God didn’t accept it. Does this have an application for us today? Obviously so. Every denominational creed book or catechism, etc. adds to, eliminates or changes something that is found in the New Testament. I won’t go one for 100 pages to give you evidence of this. Just consider one. CHAPTER IV – CHURCH MEMBERSHIP (Hiscox Standard Manual for Baptist Churches):

“It is most likely that in the Apostolic age when there was but ‘one Lord, one faith, and one baptism,’ and no differing denominations existed, the baptism of a convert by that very act, constituted him a member of the church, and at once endowed him with all the rights and privileges of full membership. In that sense, ‘baptism was the door into the church.’ Now, it is different; and while the churches are desirous of receiving members, they are wary and cautious that they do not receive unworthy persons. The churches therefore have candidates come before them, make their statement, give their ‘experience,’ and then their reception is decided by a vote of the members.”

Note – If we are at liberty to claim that the Bible teaching on baptism is now “different,” what limits are there, if any, on changing anything we want?

Consider the closing words of the New Testament.

“I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18-19).

That’s our lesson in math—do not add to and do not subtract from. God has some words for us in Jude 3:

“Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.”

Once for all time and all nations.

It cannot be denied that every denominational creed differs from the Bible in some way.

Which do you choose to follow—the Word of God, or the creeds of men? There is one body that seeks to following the Scriptures without adding or subtracting. That body is composed of churches of Christ. But even there, just wearing the name does not make them followers of truth. Their teaching and practice must be examined by comparing them with the Bible. “...All the churches of Christ greet you” (Romans 16:16).

But To The Rest Speak I, Not The Lord

Pat Donahue | Harvest, Alabama, USA

Homer Hailey wrote:

"But of a mixed marriage, that is, a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever, Paul said, 'But to the rest say I, not the Lord' (1 Corinthians 7:10-12); the Lord did not speak of the marriage relationship between a believer and an unbeliever. If Matthew 19:3-9 is universal in application, then Paul's answer to the second question would have been the same as his answer to the first" (The Divorced And Remarried Who Would Come to God. 58)

Of course this was our brother Hailey's logic for teaching Matthew 19:9 does not apply to the unbeliever, and therefore it is okay for unbelievers to divorce and remarry (for any reason, even multiple times) and stay in whatever marriage they are in when they become Christians.

But you should notice I Corinthians 7:10-11 does not specify only marriages involving two Christians, it speaks to "the married." That would be all marriages on the face of it. So verse 12 is not saying Matthew 19:9 does not teach concerning mixed marriages, but shows Jesus in Matthew 19:9 (or at any other time while on earth) did not specifically state what the Christian is to do if his spouse (an unbeliever would be assumed) leaves him. Paul answers that question in verse 15 - "let him depart." In other words -

"If the believer couldn't do anything to stop it, she has not sinned when the unbeliever leaves. Don't go to the point of casting your pearls before swine in trying to convince him otherwise. Even if the marriage is restored, who knows if you would be able to convert him to Christ anyway (verse 16)?"

Verses 12-14 then are Paul's way of keeping the Corinthians from getting the wrong idea from his answer as stated in verse 15. Paul wanted to make sure the Corinthians didn't get the impression from his answer in 15 that the Christian could initiate the departing himself. I might do something similar if my youngest son were to ask me if he could play outside. Before answering his question directly, I would probably precede the answer with, "now let me make this clear; do not go near the road. If your ball goes near the road, don't go get it; come get Daddy and I will get it for you. Don't go near the road!" Then I would finally answer, "Yes, you may go play outside." Consider this Biblical parallel: Suppose someone asked me - "Does baptism save?" Before I answered "yes" (1 Peter 3:21), I might precede my answer with two points to make sure they don't get the wrong idea from my "yes" answer: (1) baptism doesn't earn our salvation (no, Jesus' death does that), and (2) the power is not in the water, but in God. Then I might answer "yes baptism saves" (in the sense a sinner must be baptized to be saved by the death of Christ).

The same thing is going on in I Corinthians 7: "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord" (verse 12) is not Paul's way of saying he is only discussing Christian marriages in 10-11 but mixed marriages in 12ff. Instead Paul tells all the married (Christian and non-Christian alike) to stay married in verse 10, and in verses 12-16 he is answering the question - "What if they leave me?" Paul's answer is found in verse 15 (you have not sinned if they leave you), and verses 12-14 (but you can't leave them) are Paul's way of making sure he doesn't leave the wrong impression with his answer in verse 15.

Conclusion: Jesus is talking about all marriages in Matthew 19:9 ("whosoever"), and therefore even if an unbeliever divorces his spouse and remarries, that is adultery and needs to be repented of upon conversion. There is only one exception for everybody, not just Christians.

A Beautiful Day For A Walk

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

It was about 70 degrees outside, the sun was shining, and just a beautiful day to take a walk, which is beneficial for my health. We have a local recreation center, of which Sylvia and I are members, where we usually walk a few days each week. On this day she was not feeling well, so I decided to walk outside, which I prefer. Just down the road from our house is a cemetery, Lone Oak, with paved streets making it a very good place for a walk. As I walked through the city of the dead there were several thoughts which came to my mind, some of which I wish to share with you today.

How many of those who are buried in this cemetery do you think thought the day of their death was their last day of life on earth? No way for us to know with our finite minds. It would probably be safe to say that this would be true of most of them. The causes of death would be varied, and in many cases totally unexpected. Death could have occurred because of an accident, maybe a car wreck, or some other tragic event. It could have been because of some unknown health problem, an aneurism or a heart issue, etc. Death certainly occurs by various means. Isaac tells Esau, "Then he said, "Behold now, I am old. I do not know the day of my death" (Genesis 27:2).

Scattered throughout this grave site are those who died at a very young age, those who would have to be considered very old, and yet many somewhere in between. Death is no respecter of persons, all ages die. I am afraid many if they are young think they have lots of years ahead of them and maybe at some point they will consider becoming a child of God. In the parable Jesus stated about the prosperous rich man, this individual thought he had many years ahead of him to enjoy his prosperity (Luke 12:19). Look at what he was told, "But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'" (Luke 12:20) You may have the most opportune time now to submit to the Lord and be not almost persuaded but fully convince of your need to obey Him (Acts 24:25; 26:28).

Among those who are buried in this cemetery are those who were very well known. There are at least two who served as governor of the state of Tennessee there. One who preached the gospel during the period of time which we often refer to as the Restoration Movement, T.W. Brents. Yet there are others of which little or nothing is known about them. Some no doubt had been very wealthy and others lived in poverty. Regardless of who we are, well known and affluent or unknown and poverty stricken, we to must die. We have an appointment with death, which we all will keep unless the Lord returns (Hebrews 9:27).

Yet one day all those who are in these graves will hear the voice of the Lord and come forth (John 5:28-29). There will a resurrection from the dead of both those who have done good and those who have done evil. The ones who have done the will of the Father will experience life, possessors of eternal life. Those who have done evil will faced condemnation, eternal damnation separated from God and His blessings. What a scene! No grave can hold one when the Lord tells him to come forth (John 11:44).

Knowing all this, should one not put a premium on being prepared to meet the Lord? A story was told of a father and his young daughter visiting a cemetery one day. As they walked through the graveyard, they read many of the epitaphs written on the Head Stones. The little girl with a somewhat puzzled look on her face asked her dad, "Where are the ones buried who are not going to heaven?" Most family members convince themselves their loves have gone to be with Lord, even though they never worshipped and served God. This is the reason most all grave markers have something written like, "Gone To Be With Lord," etc. Are you prepared to meet the Lord? This might be your last chance. Through Amos the prophet God said, "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel."

The Queen James Bible

Mike Thomas | Bowling Green, Kentucky, USA

The **Queen James Bible**, advertised as the world's first "gay" Bible, was published in 2012 by a group of editors who chose to remain anonymous. They gave their Bible its name as a spinoff to the **King James Bible** and their belief that King James "was a well-known bisexual... known as 'Queen James.' It is in his great debt and honor that we name The Queen James Bible so." The Introduction on page 1 says,:

"Anti-LGBT Bible interpretations commonly cite only eight verses in the Bible that they interpret to mean homosexuality is a sin; Eight verses in a book of thousands! The Queen James Bible seeks to resolve interpretive ambiguity in the Bible as it pertains to homosexuality: We edited those eight verses in a way that makes homophobic interpretations impossible."

The eight verses they edited are Genesis 19:5, Leviticus 18:22; 20:13, Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9,

1 Timothy 1:10, and Jude 7. Notice how a couple of them compare to the King James Version.

Genesis 19:5 – “And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them.” (**KJV**)

The **QJV** says, “And they called out unto Lot, and said unto him, ‘Where are the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may rape and humiliate them.’” So, according to these interpreters, the real error of the men at Sodom was their desire to “rape and humiliate” the men visiting Lot. By implication, then, if they had been more cordial and respectful and were able to persuade Lot’s visitors to lay with them, they would not have violated God’s will on sexuality. Ironically, they forgot this point when they translated Jude 7.

In the **KJV** that verse says, “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” The **QJV** reads the same but replaces “strange flesh” with “nonhuman flesh.”

Now wait a minute. I thought God sent fire on Sodom and Gomorrah for wanting to “rape and humiliate” Lot’s visitors. Yet in Jude 7 the authors of the **QJV** tell us the real crime was men wanting to lay with angels. Which is it – rape and humiliation or lusting after nonhuman flesh? The Bible’s account is consistent in that God judged the Sodomites for practicing homosexuality. Yet the **QJV** says it was meanness in Genesis 19 and angel-lust in Jude 7. Are we to believe God changed His story between the two texts and that He does not know for certain why He burned these cities? God forbid!

It is evident that the men of Sodom thought Lot’s visitors were men because that’s what they asked for – “Where are the men?” If their crime had been that of wanting to lay with angels, they would have requested, “Where are the angels...that we may know them.” Even Lot’s response proves they wanted to be with men because he said, “I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.

Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes...” (Genesis 19:7-8, **KJV**). Granted, I am troubled by Lot’s counteroffer, I must confess, which he likely made in haste and panic, but it still reveals his understanding of their request. If he had opposed the Sodomites for wanting to lay with nonhumans, he would have said, “Here are my human daughters...take them instead.” But he did not and instead offered the women to satisfy the men’s sexual desires. The Greek text supports this understanding in Jude 7 where the word for “flesh” (*sarx*) is “the body (as opposed to the soul or spirit); a human being” (Strong’s). Thus, the men of Sodom wanted to be with other humans and not spirit beings.

Despite the effort of liberals to reinterpret the Bible, they will never explain away all that God has said against homosexuality. He has given too much evidence to prove He does not condone this behavior. When Jesus was asked about divorce in Matthew 19, He responded by returning to the original marriage in the Garden. “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?’” (verses 4-5). His response did more than give insight into His objection to divorce. He referenced an arrangement that would forever define life on earth. Human conception will never occur apart from the man’s seed and the woman’s egg, save in the case of Jesus Christ. Other than that, the natural order of things is through the male / female relationship. Because of this, Paul described homosexuality as “unnatural” when “men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful” (Romans 1:27). The **Queen James Version** gets around this passage by saying Paul was condemning “ritual lust, one toward another” and “God gave the idolators up unto vile affections...” But even by adding these words to the text, they still have not addressed what nature proves – life is only possible through the union of man and woman, like God designed in the first marriage. No interpretation of scripture will change that fact.

The **QJV** is an example of how brazen Satan is in his effort to pervert God’s word. He has been doing it since the beginning of time when he redefined God’s instructions to Eve. She knew God had told her and

Adam they “will die” in eating the forbidden fruit, but the devil said they “will NOT die.” Just one word was added to God’s original revelation, yet it was enough to alter all of humanity for the rest of time. Unfortunately, the devil is doing the same thing in the perverted tactics of the **Queen James Bible** and the LGBTQ community. They are doing just as the Spirit warned – “according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

I know of no greater fable told in our generation than that of homosexuality being natural and that our Creator is indifferent to it. The fact that an entirely new Bible has been rewritten to support it is evidence of what Peter warned – “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you...and many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed” (2 Peter 2:1-2).

You ... Put My Tears Into Your Bottle...

TEXTS TO PAUSE & PONDER ON

William Stewart | Odessa, Ontario, Canada

Of the 150 Psalms in the Bible, five are identified as "a Michtam," which means golden or profound.¹ Easton's Bible Dictionary says,

The root of the word means to stamp or grave, and hence it is regarded as denoting a composition so precious as to be worthy to be engraved on a durable tablet for preservation...

The message of the Bible is profound by its very nature, so when it tells us a text is golden, we really ought to take note. One of those golden psalms is Psalm 56. We want to note some things from it today.

The psalm is related to events recorded in 1 Samuel 21. We're not told why, but while on the run from Saul, David went to Achish, king of Gath (1 Samuel 21:10). Maybe he thought he'd be safer in enemy territory than among his own people, not knowing who might turn him over to Saul. But any perceived safety in Gath disappeared when the king's servants recognized him and called to mind the son of the maidens in Israel, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Samuel 21:11; cf. 18:7). 1 Samuel 21:12 says David was afraid of Achish after his identity was made known.

Coming to Psalm 56, though he was afraid, he put his trust in the LORD (v 3-4). What did the enemy do that he should fear?

All day they twist my words; all their thoughts are against me for evil. They gather together, they hide, they mark my steps, when they lie in wait for my life. (v 5-6)

There's no indication that physical harm came to David at all in Gath; neither the Psalm nor the historical record in 1 Samuel speak of the enemy hurting the Psalmist, but the threat was real; his life was in danger.

In the midst of his discussion about the enemy and God's protection, we read:

You number my wanderings; put my tears into Your bottle; are they not in Your book? (v 8)

How comforting to know that God is watching over us, and He is aware of every move we make. He knows our wandering. In David's case, the Lord knew every hiding place and retreat the future king of Israel had to make. It would be easy to feel alone and forsaken, but David reveals he was confident in God's concern for him. We too can find comfort in the fact that our Father numbers our wanderings.

In Luke 12:7 we are told that God knows how many hairs are on our heads. He knows us better than we know ourselves. In our text, David says God is always aware of and stores up every tear His people shed. It is not literal, but an image of course, but what a great image! God has a record of our tears. Not a single tear falls from our eyes, but God takes note of it and is there for us in the trials and griefs we endure.

The Foundation of Marriage

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

Here's some interesting facts about marriage in America, taken from pewresearch.org.

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- *Half of Americans ages 18 and older were married in 2017, a share that has remained relatively stable in recent years but is down 8 percentage points since 1990.*
- *The number of U.S. adults cohabiting with a partner (living together outside marriage - KS) is on the rise. In addition to the half of U.S. adults who were married, 7% were cohabiting in 2016.*
- *The number of Americans living with an unmarried partner reached about 18 million in 2016, up 29% since 2007. Roughly half of cohabiters are younger than 35 – but cohabitation is rising most quickly among Americans ages 50 and older.*
- *Remarriage is on the rise. In 2013, 23% of married people had been married before, compared with just 13% in 1960.” (This statistic does not distinguish between marriages ending by the death of a spouse and those ending by divorce. - KS)*
- *Support for the legalization of same-sex marriage has grown in the past 10 years. In 2007, Americans opposed legalizing same-sex marriage by a margin of 54% to 37%. In 2017, more favored (62%) than opposed (32%) allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally.”*

It should be obvious that Christians are faced with the crucial choice of following God's plan for marriage or conforming to the world (Romans 12:2). And this emphatically includes issues besides divorce/remarriage and same sex marriage.

What is the nature of marriage?

Marriage is the first divine institution (Genesis 2:18-24). When the Pharisees tested Christ on divorce (Matthew 19:3; Mark 10:2), He pointed them to the words of the Lord God in the garden. Thus, Genesis 2:18-24 records the divine beginning and foundation of marriage.

“And the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone’ (Genesis 2:18). The morally pure single life is not sinful (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:25-38), but the single life is incomplete.

“I will make him a helper comparable to him” (Ibid). The term “comparable” (NKJV), “meet” (KJV, ASV), “suitable” (NASB), “fit” (ESV), means

“literally, an helper, as over against him, i.e. corresponding to him.... The expression indicates that the forthcoming helper was to be of similar nature to the man himself, corresponding by way of supplement to the incompleteness of his lonely being, and in every way adapted to be his co-partner and companion”
(Whitelaw. **The Pulpit Commentary**. 2:50).

In relationship the wife is the husband's helper, and he is the leader (Ephesians 5:23). In nature she is “comparable... corresponding.” Spiritually she is his equal. Each has a spirit in the image of God (Genesis 1:27).

After the Lord God caused Adam to name the lower creatures, showing him that each had a mate, unlike Adam, and that none of them was suitable to be Adam's mate, 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” (Genesis 2:21-22).

Eve was literally to Adam “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Genesis 2:23). She was “called Woman , because she was taken out of Man” (Genesis 2:23).

The ancient theologian Jerome is the first recorded writer to observe that the Lord chose to fashion the woman, not from Adam's foot, so he wasn't to walk on her, nor from his head, so she's not over him, but from his rib, the place closest to his heart, symbolizing that the marriage relationship is the closest fleshly tie. We love our children, but children grow up, leave, and start their own homes (Genesis 2:24), whereas God intends nothing but death to sever the marriage tie (Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-12; 22:23-30; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; Romans 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:10-16). The Lord Himself makes the two one flesh (Matthew 19:4-6).

When Christ stated His law concerning divorce, He called the Jews back to the garden, to Genesis 2:18-24 (Matthew 19:3-12; Mark 10:2-12). Thus, when the Lord God brought the woman to the man in the garden, He was instituting marriage as a divine institution, while fulfilling man's innate need for companionship. Marriage approved of God did not evolve as a human construct; it was revealed and instituted by the Lord God as the first divine institution and the basis for a stable, moral society (cf. Malachi 2:15).

Of course, He created them Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve, and divinely approved marriage is between a man and a woman (cf. Matthew 19:4-6). He gave the man one mate, and divinely approved marriage is between one man and one woman (Matthew 19:4-6). The Lord is the witness to the marriage (Malachi 2:14), and He is the One Who ties them together as one (Matthew 19:6). "Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Ibid).

Our nation and the Lord's church in our nation will be no more secure than our homes are strong.



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