



Thinking

About Marriage

By

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Introduction

[The United States Supreme Court has ruled in favor of gay marriage. This article was written prior to that decision.]

“Gay Marriage is Pro-Family”

“Most Americans expect Supreme Court to legalize gay marriage”

“Ireland gives resounding 62.1 percent ‘yes’ to gay marriage”

“Texas Senate revives anti-gay marriage bill”

“The gay-wedding industry goes mainstream”

“Gay marriage proponents pose ‘danger’ to Christianity”

These are recent news headlines about the ongoing ‘marriage debate.’ Gay marriage may be the biggest news story of the 21st century, but is marriage really changing? Can the ‘reality’ of marriage be changed? Let’s think about it.

Most historians and anthropologists would probably agree that heterosexual marriage (one man and one woman) has been the 'norm' in societies around the world for thousands of years. However, that is changing in the relatively young 21st century. Men are 'marrying' men and women are 'marrying' women in civil and even church ceremonies in many countries. The United States Supreme Court is scheduled to announce its decision this summer about whether gay marriage will be legal in this country.

True 'marriage' is not about civil ceremonies or even church ceremonies. Legislators, judges and clergy can redefine marriage for their purposes, but what we're thinking about goes deeper than the legal or even moral and religious issues surrounding the gay marriage debate. We want to know if the 'reality' of marriage can be changed. Can marriage, what it 'really' is, be changed? And if it can be changed, who can change it?

I'm going to take the theistic view of marriage, specifically the Christian view, because that addresses the 'reality' of marriage in a way that no other worldview can address. If there is no God to whom all people are accountable, then the idea of two (or more) people uniting for the purpose of sex and commitment (or not), has no particular meaning outside of what people might give it. If there is no God, then there is no obligation or accountability outside of an individual's subjective understanding about any aspect of how they want to live their life. People might disagree with each other about anything or everything, but no person's subjective view is more 'right'

or 'wrong' than any other person's subjective opinion.

Because I am taking the theistic view of marriage in this article, I realize that atheists, agnostics, polytheists, pantheists, panentheists and other non-theists won't agree with my premises or conclusions – and that's okay for the purpose of this article. My concern, and the reason I'm writing this particular post, is to help theists strengthen their understanding of the 'reality' of marriage. Unfortunately, many theists are buying into the arguments of non-theists for redefining the legal landscape of marriage. That's unfortunate for many reasons that are becoming more evident with every passing week, but the biggest reason is that theists are missing out on a phenomenal opportunity to glorify God – which should be the chief aim of every theist.

Physical Marriage

Christians have long believed that God is the 'Maker of all things visible and invisible' (Nicene Creed, 325 AD). That belief comes from both a Jewish and Christian understanding of the Genesis account of creation. It is in that Genesis account that we learn about the origin of marriage.

"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; male and female He created them. 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.'" Genesis 1:26-28

"And the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.' 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. 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. 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. 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.' Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." Genesis 2:18-24

God created humans in 'His own image' and created a male human and a female human. God's command to humans was to '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.' God designed marriage for the purpose of the two humans (male and female) being fruitful, filling the earth and subduing it, and having dominion over every living thing.

It's interesting to note from the science of biology that human males and human females each have a full set of physical organs necessary for life (e.g. each has a heart, set of lungs, kidneys, liver, etc). Each is complete in their humanness without needing organs from another human (except in the rare cases of babies born without life-necessary organs). It's also interesting to note from biology that human males and human females do 'not' have both of the organs necessary for

sexual reproduction (except in the rare cases of babies born with both sexual organs). Human males and human females have needed each other for thousands of years to be complete in their functional ability to be 'fruitful and multiply.' Even in the growing field of reproductive science the biological basics still come down to needing a human male sperm and a human female egg for human pregnancy to occur. Each parent contributes half of the genetic makeup of their offspring. That's the way God designed it.

The physical function of a 'man' leaving his father and mother and being 'joined' to his wife is the process of the male and female becoming 'one flesh.' That's the physical-emotional aspect of marriage and usually the basis for the 'gay marriage' debate.

Jesus Christ often taught about marriage during His ministry on earth during the early part of the 1st century AD. The Pharisees used the issue of divorce from marriage as a way to trick Jesus. Jesus supported the traditional definition of marriage from the Genesis account in His answer to the Pharisees.

"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.' They said to Him, 'Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her

away?’ He said to them, ‘Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.’ Matthew 19:4-9

Jesus added the words, ‘Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate,’ to the understanding of marriage. Many pastors still use those words during marriage ceremonies.

Marriage, from a biblical perspective, is between a human male and human female. Two life events can dissolve a marriage: death and sexual immorality.

“A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.” 1 Corinthians 7:39

*“And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.”
Matthew 19:9*

Since God invented marriage with its true meaning and physical boundaries, God is the only Being who can change marriage. Will He

change marriage? Here's how Jesus answered a group of Sadducees who tried to trick Him with a question about marriage and the resurrection. Keep in mind that the Sadducees didn't even believe in a physical resurrection, which makes their evil intent even more obvious.

“The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, saying: ‘Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her.’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.’ And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching.” Matthew 22:23-33

God designed ‘male to female’ marriage for human beings on earth. God designed no ‘human marriage’ in the resurrection from the dead.

So, is that the end of marriage? It's only purpose is for human males and human females on earth? After death there's nothing more to the meaning of 'real' marriage?

There is much, much more to the meaning of marriage and it is in that 'reality' we find the eternal meaning and value of marriage.

Mystical Marriage

'Mystical marriage' is that aspect of marriage that is both spiritual and mysterious.

“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 5:22-33

The reduction of marriage to just a 'legal' ceremony misses the point of the 'reality' of human male and human female marriage. **It's about Jesus Christ and His Church.** As Paul wrote, 'This is a great mystery.' The reason for 'purity' in marriage (human male and human female) is because of the purity of the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church. True 'marriage' can never be about human male to human male or human female to human female because it does not display the 'great mystery' concerning 'Christ and the church.' If you are a Christian and disagree with that statement, please read Ephesians 5:22-33 again. It is a 'mystery,' but God has chosen to reveal many of His mysteries to His children.

[You can learn more about how and why God reveals 'mysteries' to His children by reading Paul's letter to the Ephesians, especially Chapter 3]

The 'Marriage' Debate

Understanding this 'great mystery' does not make the 'marriage debate' easier for Christians. In fact, it makes it more difficult because we are dealing with a great many people who do not believe in God or at least not the God of the Bible. That tension is to be expected with non-theists.

However, what is not to be expected is the debate about marriage among Christians. Even though physical and mystical marriage are explained clearly in Scripture, there are many Christians who disagree with God's purpose and design. Why is that? Why would any Christian disagree with God's purpose and design for something as important as marriage? Especially a truth that has eternal implications?

It is my hope that all Christians will 'think' seriously about God's purpose and design for marriage and agree with Him. It is vital that Christ's Church be unified on the '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.' Amen.

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