

MARRIAGE and DIVORCE

The Bride, and the Adulterous
The Resurrection to God, and the Resurrection to Hell

Target Truth Ministries.com

Pastor Gerry Burney
PO Box 1299
Ukiah, Calif. 95482

Deuteronomy 17:14-17; 1 Tim. 1:12-17

Few people understand just what is meant by the *sanctity* of marriage. I, as a Christian pastor, share with all Catholics, Protestants, and the Jewish faith, the understanding of the *sanctity* of marriage, that marriage has a connection with God's plan for us, that marriage is designed by God, and that marriage by any other definition is a deception. Many may use the term *marriage* to mean things other than what God intended, and that is what is happening today. It is like calling a bicycle a car. Both will get you down the road, but they are not the same thing. So it is with marriage. There is only one true *marriage* which is sanctified by God and recognized through history, and its purpose is to display God's plan for salvation.

When you hear the word *marriage*, what comes to your mind? Some think of love. Some think of fifty year anniversaries. Some think of having to endure fifty very long years. Some think of children. Some remember hardships, and also joys. Some think of political change, that is, *expanding* the definition of marriage to include homosexual and polygamous situations.

When you hear the word *wedding*, what comes to your mind? Brides think of the groom, and grooms think of the bride. Mothers think of their children's happiness, and pray for them, and fathers think of how to pay for it (some fathers also think of their children, and pray for them).

When you hear the word *divorce*, what comes to your mind? Children—and how they will suffer. Who is right, and who is wrong. Reconciliation. Broken lives. Separation. Suffering.

History is full of differing opinions of how to interpret God's Word concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage. God uses marriage as the example of His plan of salvation throughout the Scriptures, which means that the solution to our dilemma on how to understand God's ways concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage, is to understand God's plan of salvation.

As Christians, what we should be thinking about, when we hear these words of marriage and divorce, is God's plan:

- The ***betrothal*** pictures God loving *all* His creation. God, however, knew that *not all* of His creation would love Him back and trust in Him.
- The ***wedding*** pictures Jesus (the groom), coming back for His bride—the resurrection and rapture for those who trust in Him (the second coming—the millennium).
- The ***divorce*** pictures the resurrection to the judgment of eternal separation from God, for those who do not love God and trust fully in Him (the final judgment).
- The ***marriage*** pictures the resurrection to eternal life with God in His kingdom (the new heaven and earth).

It is my contention that if we raised our children, if we taught in our churches, if we counseled those getting married about the true meaning behind the marriage and divorce plan of God, then: **1)** Every time we hear of people getting *engaged (betrothed)*, we would be reminded of God's love and the creation. **2)** Every time we hear the word *wedding*, we would think of the resurrection, and God's saving grace. **3)** Every time we hear the word *divorce*, we would think of God and His judgment to come for those who do not love Jesus. **4)** Every time we hear the word *marriage*, we would think of God and His eternal kingdom.

The world today has a misunderstanding of marriage and divorce. In today's worldview, marriage is simply the joining together of those people who love, and are committed to each other. And, many times divorce is just a means of starting over...“I'll just marry someone else.”

In broad terms, this can include like beings (homosexuals), and multiple beings (polygamists).

God, however, gave His plan for marriage (and also divorce), to reflect His plan of the resurrection and judgment to come, when Jesus returns to the earth.

Jesus is the bridegroom (**Matt. 9:15; Luke 5:31-33; John 3:29**), and the believers who love God, and are committed to Him, are the bride (**Rev. 19:7-9, 21:9**), and those who deny Christ will be separated and divorced (**Rev. 19:11-21, 20:11-15**). [A point of clarification is in order here. Let us not be confused with the analogy of God's bride being made up of many souls. This is not a picture of multiple wives. This is a picture of one body (the bride, or wife). God describes the followers of Christ in *singular* terms—the bride (**Rev. 21:2, 9**), and the wife (**Rev. 19:7, 21:9**)].

So, why are we humans depicted as a bride? Why not the groom? In God's plan, we humans were created in the image of God, just as Eve (the bride), was created out of the image (side) of Adam. Thus, we, like Eve, are viewed in God's plan as the bride, and God (the Creator), is the groom, depicted by Adam, from whom Eve came. From the beginning, God wanted us to understand that the bride (Eve/humans), came out of the creation of the groom (Adam/God). This is why there are no marriages in heaven (**Matt. 22:30, Mark 12:25, Luke 20:35**), because the heavenly host are pictured as married to God, *not* to each other.

The purpose of marriage, then, is to represent God's plan of creation, love, and salvation, including the resurrection and judgment to eternal separation. Therefore, marriage and divorce cannot be changed into a human plan of including everybody into marriage, and "no fault" divorce. These are human perversions of "anything goes." God's plan is restrictive. Not everyone will enter into the final marriage. God's plan calls for a divorce, and God is not tolerant. God is patient, but not tolerant. God does discriminate.

God established how we are to institute marriage amongst humans as between one man, the groom, and one woman, the bride (**Deut. 17:14-17; Matt. 19:4-6; 1 Tim. 3:2-12; Titus 1:6; 1 Cor. 7:2**).

This means that to truly understand how God designed marriage to work, we need to understand God's plan for salvation—and the resurrection, and judgment to come. By discussing marriage and divorce, in terms relating to God's plan of salvation, people can better understand the true sacred nature of each.

God's plan is laid out for our understanding in the Jewish marriage tradition. Jesus even performed His first miracle at a marriage feast—a transfiguration (**John 2:1-6**), thus, establishing the connection between the resurrection—a transfiguration (**1 Cor. 15:51-58**), and the marriage feast to come (**Rev. 19 and 20**). Did you think this was just a coincidence?

The problem for the Christian church today, is that the church has allowed the connection between the marriage and divorce plan of God, and God's plan of the resurrection and judgment, to be eroded. Today, we are left with the love and commitment portion remaining, but no God (**2 Tim. 4:3**). Today, the world sees traditional marriage as restrictive, and out-of-date. But, God actually called for marriage to be restrictive (one man and one woman), with no re-marriage. By ignoring the connection of marriage to God's plan of salvation and judgment, we miss God's purpose, and we open the term "marriage" up to new interpretations, which do not agree with God's Word, or God's plan of the resurrection and judgment to come. God requires marriage in a certain way in order to deliver His message of *eternal* salvation and judgment, and not simply to meet the human needs of how to live in this earthly life, which is only *temporary*.

We all know that in our western culture, the focus of the wedding is on the bride. All eyes are on the bride. But, in the Jewish tradition (as well as all of the eastern faiths), it is the groom who everyone focuses on. The groom is the center of the ceremony. The description of the Jewish marriage, including the betrothal, wedding, and actual conclusion, (which Jesus was very familiar with, since He instituted it), is as follows:

- In a Jewish wedding, the father selects the bride (God, the Father has selected/predestined who is to be saved—**Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:4, 11**).
- The groom travels to the bride's place, proposes a covenant to purchase the bride, toasts the engagement with wine, pays a price, and goes to build a place for the bride. (Jesus came to earth, drank wine with the

apostles the night before His death to seal the covenant, gave His life in payment for our sins, and went to prepare a place for us—**John 14:1-6**—in the millennium).

- In the Jewish tradition, the father sets the wedding date. (Jesus said no one knows the day or the hour, except the Father—**Matt. 24:36**).
- In a Jewish wedding, the groom is announced with a shout. Then, the bride leaves her home, and goes with the groom (along with many others in the marriage procession), from the bride's place to the new house, where the vows are taken, wine is drunk, and the wedding celebration begins. The bride is "surprised" because she doesn't know exactly when this will happen. However, the "surprise" is not a shock—she has been waiting and expecting it. Rather, it is a pleasant joyful experience. (Jesus' return will be announced with a shout—**1 Thess. 4:14-17**, the resurrection will take place—**1 Cor. 15:51-52**, and the millennium will begin—**Matt. 26:29; Rev. 19:6-9**).
- When the marriage consummation is complete (in a Jewish wedding, up to seven days), the marriage is then complete, and the bride is seen unveiled (revealed), and a great marriage supper is held. (At the end of the millennium, a long period of time with Christ (the groom), there will be a celebration of the marriage for the saved, and a final judgment for those who have rejected Jesus. Then, at last, the saved will spend eternity in God's kingdom—**Rev. 19 through Rev. 21:1-7**).

In summary, then, the term "marriage" in the Jewish tradition includes all the following: The marriage begins with a **betrothal** (seen as this long period of time from the creation until Christ's return. The Hebrew word for "betrothal" is *kiddushin*, which means sanctified, or set apart). Once the bride is set apart (all those to be saved), then, the next event is the wedding celebration (seen as the actual event of Christ's return—**Rev. 19-20**). This celebration will last a long time—the millennium—1,000 years). At the end of the celebration, the bride is revealed, and a great marriage feast is held. At the end of the millennium (**Rev. 20-21**) will be the final judgment, and the new heaven and earth will begin. The term "marriage" includes all of this.

Now, we don't need to practice all these Jewish traditions in our ceremonies, but we do need to teach the connection of God's marriage plans to His plans of salvation and judgment. God uses this marriage plan to emulate His relationship with those who love Him, trust Him, and stay true to Him. For those who deny Jesus, God's plan calls for a divorce in the end—a permanent, eternal separation.

Just as the central focus of a married couple should be Christ, so the central thought of the marriage should be the resurrection, the reconciliation, and the possibility of a divorce.

We need to note that there is no remarriage in God's plan (**Matt. 5:31-32; Mark 10:11; Luke 16:18**). The actual marriage, the finalized marriage, is at the very end, when the final judgment is held (**Rev. 20**), and those who are not to remain in the marriage are divorced. In human affairs, this is frequently done, as we are all sinners (**Rom. 3:23**). However, in God's plan there is no remarriage, as there is only one, true uncreated, eternal, sinless God (**Deut. 6:4; Isa. 44:6-8, 45:21-22, 47:9-10; 1 Corin. 8:4**). Therefore, marriage to God, or divorce from God, are the only options. In human affairs, God has provided for a couple of exceptions (such as that of the widow), but in God's salvation plan, there will be no exceptions.

God allows marriage between men and women, but He does not require it. In **1 Corinthians 7**, Paul points out the dangers of marriage, as well as the benefits of remaining single. Paul also notes that marriage is given to keep us from immoral sexual activity. Moreover, the marriage plan itself is given to us to demonstrate God's plan for our eternal destiny.

The ideal marriage includes one man and one woman in total love and commitment to each other, and both primarily committed to God. Unfortunately, we are all fallen beings (sinners at birth), and few achieve God's example. God does not desire divorce, but does allow divorce, only because of the hardness of human hearts towards one another. This, too, is in God's plan, because God Himself will invoke a divorce between Himself and all those who do not love, and commit to Him—the hard-hearted. This divorce will occur at the very end judgment (**Rev. 20**), and will result in eternal separation from God. Isolation, alone, forever.

God does allow provisions, or exceptions, for remarriage (such as for widows in this earthly life), because we humans, unlike God, do sin, fall short, and die (**1 Cor. 7**). God's own marriage plan is perfect, as there is only one, true God, and He is uncreated, and eternal, and there will not be any remarriage to some other god possible, because there is no other god. This is also why homosexual "marriage" must be rejected. There is only one God. The bride in God's plan does not marry a bride, and, further, we are not gods, which means God does not marry some other god. Unions between homosexuals may be recognized by a government, if man chooses to do so. However, this can never be a marriage in the ancient meaning God gave—one woman (bride), to one God (groom).

The reason so many marriages fail, is not just because the church has failed to correctly convey the sanctity of the marriage covenant, and how it is related to God's plan of salvation. The primary reason so many marriages are failing, is due to the fact that either one, or both of the individuals getting married, are not true Christians. To be a true Christian, means one must place Christ as first priority in one's life, thus, placing Christ at the center of one's life. Most couples

getting married either do not both worship Christ as Lord and Savior, or one, or both of them, mistakenly think of themselves as a Christian. In reality, many people were raised in a Christian environment, but actually are not truly born again (**John 3:3-6**). Thus, many are like the two soils in **Matthew 13**, where they begin to look like they are taking in the Word of God, but they die before bearing any fruit. By restoring the true meaning of the marriage and divorce plan of God in our teaching and preaching, all who hear will understand, with clarity, exactly what is God's plan of salvation, and its relationship to God's plan for marriage.

If men and women entered into marriage as born-again believers, committed to God, then most divorces would not happen in the first place. Even for those marriages which did end in divorce, as Christians, they would not end the marriage in order to remarry another, as remarriage is not part of God's plan (with a couple of exceptions, such as widows). Many Christians today, do not understand these distinctions of God's plan.

Today, many Christians do not understand what it is to be "born again," to have a personal relationship with God. Many Christians today, are not truly Christian, and the church bears much responsibility. I would venture to say that most Christians today have no idea that there is a direct connection between God's plan for marriage, and God's plan for salvation and judgment.

Those who have been involved in marriage (before understanding what it is to be "born again"), and those who have been divorced, and are now remarried to another (and have not properly understood God's restrictions and purpose for Christians), are still sinners—but so are we all. These are not necessarily permanently condemned to hell for their poor choices and lack of understanding. God is gracious and merciful. Forgiveness is available to all sinners, if we repent (change) our ways. God told Israel to change their ways, and at the same time, God provided laws to care and provide for those already in sinful conditions, such as polygamy (**Exodus 21:10; Deut. 21:15**). But, note that God did say to change, and this change was to begin with the leadership (**Deut. 17:14-20**). God's motive is to correct *in love*, to provide for, and to *care* for us while we change. Paul said it best in **1 Timothy 1:12-17**. We act ignorantly while in unbelief, but God has perfect patience for us to trust in Jesus and change.

The question today is, when we become "born again" (**John 3:3-6**), will we begin a transition to God's ways (as we become aware of His ways), or will we remain in the world? If one has a question about what to do, now that they are "born again," and have become aware of God's commands on marriage and remarriage, one need only ask themselves: What is my motive? Do I truly desire to follow God's ways from now on, or am I more motivated to continue in the world's ways?

Just as God provided for Israel during their transition to follow Him, so too, God will forgive our past sins, and help us transition into our new *born again* life with Him.

God will honor our desire to follow in His ways, and help us while we make that transition, and forgive our sins. God wants us to start anew, become born again, and as God says in **Deuteronomy 17:16**, don't go back to the old ways. Repent, change, transition to God's ways. God's kingdom is at hand (**Matt. 3:2**).

Once a truly born-again Christian is made aware of God's plan, and restrictions on remarriage, they must transition to God's ways, and stay true to God, or become like the five virgins of **Matthew 25**. These desired to be with God, but are excluded, because of their lack of love and commitment (**Matt. 7:21-23; Matt. 25; Rom. 3:19-20**). In **Matthew 25**, only five of the ten virgins will be welcomed at the wedding. Virgins, are those who have never worshiped another god, and all ten in this parable qualify in this regard. However, only five of those who profess Jesus, as Lord and Savior, actually have a loving and committed relationship, and demonstrate evidence of their love (**Jas. 2:16-19**). The other five talk about *wanting* the benefits of heaven, but are unwilling to *commit* themselves to love Jesus, first and foremost, in their lives. They have no oil. Jesus, for these five, is not the center, or focus, of their lives. Jesus is not a priority.

We enter this world separated from God as sinners (**Eph. 2:5-9**). We enter this world as sinners because of the fall in Eden (**Gen. 3**), and we are now separated from God, estranged, and in need of reconciliation. In the book of Hosea, we read how Hosea is like Christ in performing this reconciliation. Hosea is to take an *adulterous* wife (**Hos. 1:2**), and Hosea is to pay a price for her. Gomer, the wife of Hosea, is separated from him, estranged, but not yet divorced, just as we, too, are born into this world, separated from God, estranged (because of the fall in Eden), and yet, not divorced. We are in need, just as Gomer, of being reconciled to the marriage, or face divorce (see the study "You Asked For It" @ **Target Truth Ministries.com**).

In the Jewish tradition, the marriage begins with the betrothal, where the father selects the bride, and the couple are considered married from the betrothal on, unless there is a formal divorce (**Matt. 1:18-19; Gen. 19:14**). In God's plan, the marriage begins with the creation of all host—where God selected (created), a heavenly host (**Gen. 2:1**—the Hebrew word translated "array," used in some translations, includes *all host*). We are created/selected/betrothed, and await the Groom. In **Revelation 12:1-4**, we learn that about one-third of the host fell, and Jesus (like Hosea), will pay a price (Jesus paid His life—His blood), and Jesus, like Hosea, will take an adulterous wife (the betrothed who have sinned). This is the love Jesus has for us, that He paid the price—in full. The host, which did not fall (about two-thirds), need no price paid, and they are not estranged and separated from God (see book "*The Flat Earth & Genesis*").

Jesus did just as the son does in a traditional Jewish marriage. After the price had been paid, He went to prepare a place for us (**John 14:1-6**), to provide a place in the millennium for us (**Rev. 20**), as our eternal home is already prepared (**Matt. 25:34; Heb. 11:16**), and we will join with Jesus as soon as He returns one day to claim His bride (**Rev. 19**—see **Millennium Study**, or books *Revelation, Apostasy, End-Times, & "This Generation"*, or *God's Plan / Satan's Plan*, at **Target Truth Ministries.com**) Of the one-third who fell, God predestines some to be elect (saved), and some not to be elect (condemned to hell—**John 3:18**). All will be called to salvation, the Good News of Christ (**Matt. 13**—see **Original Sin**, and **Predestination Studies**, or books *Flat Earth & Genesis*, or *God's Plan / Satan's Plan*, at **Target Truth Ministries.com**).

Just as in the traditional Jewish marriage, the father sets the date for the wedding (**Matt. 24:36**).

All the host are considered married from the beginning of creation (the betrothal), having been created (selected), just as in a traditional Jewish marriage, and the marriage is not finalized until after the consummation of the marriage is over, at the end of the millennium. Then a great marriage feast is held, or in the case of those not invited to be part of the celebration, the final judgment takes place (**Rev. 20**—see **Millennium Study**, or book *Revelation, Apostasy, End-Times, & "This Generation"*, at **Target Truth Ministries.com**). The two-thirds of the host which did not fall are active with God, and they will also be part of the wedding, having been created (selected) by the Father in the beginning. Of the one-third that did fall (**Rev. 12:1-4**), only a fraction will enter into the wedding (perhaps only one-fourth – **Matt. 8:11-12; Matt. 13; Matt. 22**).

When the date of the wedding is to begin (**Rev. 19**), it is a picture of a wedding celebration, where the bride is ready (by her own works, she is rewarded—**Rev. 19:7-8**), and Christ returns for His bride, just as in the

traditional Jewish marriage. This celebration could last from one day to one week (in the Jewish tradition, one week is normal). During this period of fellowship between the groom and bride, the bride used to remain veiled, until the marriage was complete, and consummated. In other words, in the original Jewish wedding, the bride was not to be revealed or seen until the very end. After the marriage was consummated, then the wife was revealed. The events of **Genesis 29** caused a change in this tradition. In weddings today, the bride's veil is lifted, and the bride revealed, prior to the wedding vows being taken. At the end of the celebration period, the marriage having been consummated, and therefore, finally complete, then a great marriage supper is held. During this whole period, from betrothal, to the wedding, to the actual marriage conclusion, a divorce is possible. In fact, Jesus will judge those not worthy to be part of the marriage (those who don't love Jesus), and divorce them in the end (**Matt. 8:11-12; Matt. 22:11-14; Rev. 20**). Thus, the reason why the bride was to remain veiled until the very end, is because the bride of Christ will not be revealed and known until the very end.

The church bishops used to control the approval of marriage, and discourage divorce, endeavoring to follow God's plan. At first, the church bishops greatly restricted divorce. In time, the church bishops allowed divorce, but no remarriage—which agrees with God's plan. From the very beginning, the early church position was no remarriage. Centuries later, unfortunately, remarriages were accepted and expanded, which is popular in meeting human desires, but is specifically not part of God's plan, with certain exceptions. During the 1500's, the Protestant reformers were successful in placing matters of marriage and divorce under government jurisdiction. By allowing government to dictate standards, God's plan was replaced with man's plan, and divorce was allowed to lead to the unrestricted remarriages we witness today. The bishops opened the door to the eventual dissolution of the sanctity of traditional marriage. Today, marriage is becoming an all-inclusive arrangement, even extended to homosexual and polygamous relationships. God's plan for marriage has always been a restrictive, discriminatory plan, which foretold of the resurrection and judgment to come.

Today, any connection between God's marriage plan, and God's plan of salvation, resurrection, and judgment, has long been lost. In order to re-establish the true sanctity of marriage (as instituted by God), we must return to God's Word, and God's plan for marriage and divorce, based upon God's plan of salvation and judgment. Marriage is not simply a union between two loving beings, or between several loving beings. Marriage is the example of God, one day uniting with His bride for all eternity at the judgment, and, the divorce of all others to hell—eternal separation and isolation, alone, forevermore.

To this end, God has set forth a plan to develop our understanding of His true love for us as sinners, and also His final judgment—divorce for those who deny Jesus.

- In a **marriage**, we are to witness and experience God's plan for joy and love (In the resurrection to come, many will experience this joy of love with God).
- In a **divorce**, we are to witness and suffer the pain of separation—also part of God's plan (In the resurrection to come, many will experience this separation and isolation).
- In the resurrection to come *no one* will experience remarriage—there is only one God.

Under God's plan, we are to be living, every day, the actual plan of salvation and judgment. Through these life processes, we should come to understand God's plan of reconciling us, a fallen people, to eternal life with God, and also His plan of divorce to eternal separation—hell. Remarriage to another is outside of God's plan (with a couple of exceptions, like the widow, which fulfills a human need). This ban on remarriage is to be an example to us that there is no other god to marry.

Are Christians ready to reinstate God's plan for marriage and divorce, and thus, restore a true understanding of God's plan of salvation and judgment (understanding that God is loving, forgiving, and patient with us while we change)? This is not the definition of marriage most people are familiar with!

Or, have we abandoned God, for human understanding, and convenience (**2 Tim. 4:3**)?

Target Truth Ministries.com