

“THE MAKING OF MARRIAGE”

by Steve Hammond, Sunday, March 24, 2019

Mark 10:1-16 at NFBC

//2 And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” 3 He answered them, “What did Moses command you?” 4 They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away.” 5 And Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. 6 But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ 7 ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife,[a] 8 and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. 9 What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”//

—Mark 10:2-9 ESV

Don't you just love fake “test” questions? The Pharisees deliberately asked Jesus about a political hot-button issue, divorce, in an attempt to get him to appear compromising to the crowds. They knew Moses allowed for divorce in Deuteronomy 24, but they also knew divorce was getting out of control and the subject was divisive. They simply asked whether divorce was lawful or not. And once Jesus gave his answer they were going to try and make him squirm.

But instead of going to Deuteronomy 24 or some other passage on divorce, Jesus went to the heart of the question, which was not about divorce at all. This was about marriage. I was all ready to make this a sermon about divorce, but in keeping with what Jesus did here, the real emphasis needs to be on marriage.

Jesus went to the source of all things: Genesis. From Genesis 2 Jesus asked the Pharisees, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female”? Then he connected that fact to a subsequent verse, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24) And then Jesus rendered his verdict saying, “So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” (Mark 10:8b-9)

Jesus is reminding the Pharisees, the crowds and us what the original marriage looked like so it can act as a definition or prototype for all marriages. And what he looked at was rather simple. One fact. Well, two-in-one fact. God “made them male and female”. That's it. That's all Jesus

needed. That, and the follow-up about the bond between the male and female being something God made to supersede even the bond between the parents and their offspring.

Consequently, from those elementary facts, Jesus established for the Pharisees, and for us, that divorce was not a part of the definition of marriage.

Sure, the Pharisees point out, Moses did allow a law about divorce to enter the picture. But it's not the original picture. And it does not make for a pretty picture. It is there as a concession to the fact that we human beings can have hearts of stone and sometimes marriages that can not be salvaged or saved. Jesus warns, however, that this does not mean we can divorce for any and every reason (which was happening in his day, much like our day). Divorce isn't like a business arrangement, where partners can part if things don't go as planned. Divorce is more like having your leg or arm cut off. There really needs to be a *most* serious reason for that to take place.

And so, in Matthew, Jesus points to sexual immorality as being a most serious reason, rendering a marriage broken such that the offended partner might responsibly divorce. There are other exceptions mentioned in scriptures elsewhere. (They are sometimes summarized as: Adultery, Abuse and Abandonment.)

But in Mark here, Jesus doesn't give any "exception clause." That doesn't mean there aren't such exceptions. It means Mark is keeping the focus square on marriage. Not on divorce. The message of marriage is to reflect God and his design for humanity, not sin and its undoing of what God has done.

With that in mind, then, I would like to shift gears and take you on a journey from those earliest chapters in Genesis. To help us get a fresh picture of marriage – without all the complications that come along later.

Imagine, for just a minute or so, you are witnessing things from the angelic point of view as God creates the universe back in the beginning. Suppose you see the light and the stars and the galaxies forming out of nothing . . . and suppose God is not giving you any commentary along the way. You just have to be surprised to see things going from one amazing revelation to another.

You might think God's just putting on a magnificent light show at first. Very impressive for sure. Then you might think: Wow. Look at all the

amazing galaxies, stars and planets . . . and then: Ooooooh. Now there's an interesting one! Lots of blue water, lush green landscape and beautiful white clouds. Even animals – living creatures going about their business independently – made made from the dust of the earth, living in their respective realms of the waters, the land and sky.

And look! There's one that's upright. He looks different. He's talking! He's talking to GOD!!! JUST LIKE US.

Keep in mind you have never seen God do any of this before. And even when God started fooling around with the dust and clouds of nature you had no idea that it would amount to anything more than just decorations for your superior, spiritual reality.

But then you notice God has created only one physical creature – out of the dust of the earth – something that stands and talks and walks and thinks and rules the world around him in a way that reflects God, as if God himself were walking around and running things down there.

But there's only one of him. And you have to wonder if God is *really* done. You notice this creature, Adam, is (and this is a new word) "lonely." Even where he and God can walk and talk in the Garden . . . and even where he has a rapport with the animals . . . there is still something more which God desires for the man.

So then you see God go to work one more time. After putting the man into some strange sleep, God awakens Adam to a new sight. Not of God; not of an angel; not of a new animal or creature, but: "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." There before him is a woman. Not completely different; not completely the same. Just complete as far as being human. And complete in finishing God's amazing work of creation. Now this new creature called "Man" is a creature of male and female.

But I've got to ask you something. You know the story goes on to chapter three, where Adam and Eve fall into sin. And not only the seeds of divorce are planted, but all the seeds of every kind of sin is given root in our humanity. But you also know God prophesies about another seed will come from the woman and will prove to be the Savior from our sin. That the great battle at the cross will bruise his heel while it crushes the head of the Serpent. Through other scripture you know that our Savior will actually be a "second Adam." He will be sinless himself. He will be, not only a perfect reflection of God, he will be the fullness of God in human flesh – greater than Adam #1 could ever have been! You know this. Right?

But I've got to ask you something. Where is his bride?

Has not God created a bride for this second Adam? I don't see any subsequent act of creation where God has done such a thing. And surely God is not going to use the old bride of humanity with all our sin and stain ruining the perfect image of God. Surely not, Lord! Surely God has divorced himself from that obligation and has moved on to a completely new thing.

Well, new thing yes. But divorce. No. God has indeed called us, we who are from this fallen world, with all our sin and ruin... God has called us to come to Christ, his Son, to be made new, to be redeemed. And God has called us to be his bride.

Let me turn us to the last book of the Bible for this picture.

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

5 And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

--Revelation 21:1-5 (ESV)

Why remember all the old ways of marriage if we're all fallen short of God's original work? Because Jesus. Jesus didn't just point the Pharisees and us back to the original design of marriage. He died on the cross and rose again on the third day for all our hard hearts and for all our falling short in sin. He redeems us. He saves us. And he calls us to marriage... Big Time! And he doesn't divorce us—unless we divorce him. He doesn't take his eye off his original goal from the beginning.

And neither should we.