

# A Biblical Perspective on Marriage

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“Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4).

## Introduction

We live in a time when the institution of marriage is under attack from many quarters. Young people often delay marriage for many years to favor a career and/or live a lifestyle of habitual fornication. Divorce rates are still near an all-time high, as the idea that marriage is for life fades in our culture along with the biblical worldview. Traditional marriage ceremonies with vows that reflect the teachings of Scripture very often are replaced with new age musings or secular humanistic romantic platitudes (Interestingly, the statements “till death do us part,” “so long as ye both shall live” and “obey him, and serve him” are usually the first to go.) The ethical decline of our nation over the past few generations on this issue is reflected in the adoption of permissive divorce laws (so-called “no-fault divorce”). The covenant of marriage is essentially treated as breakable for any cause, at any time. Those guilty of adultery or the breaking of the vows are not punished or sanctioned in any way. The cheating husband usually sees his standard of living go up, while adulterous wives get rewarded with alimony and child support. American lawmakers and judges reflect our nation’s great moral corruption. What is more perverse and disturbing is the fact that our society is in the process of redefining marriage itself to satisfy the lawlessness and human autonomy that characterizes our apostate, secular humanistic culture. For example, so-called sodomite and lesbian “marriage” has largely been accepted as morally virtuous in the Western nations that formerly professed to be Christian. This has been done in spite of the fact that such unions are clearly against nature and an abomination in God’s sight.

The only solution to this ethical degradation and chaos is a full return to the teachings of Scripture on this topic. The institution of marriage as intended by God can only survive in a cultural environment where men reject human autonomy and subject themselves to Jesus Christ. Once a society cuts itself loose from the absolute, unchanging ethical standard of Jehovah’s law-word, freedom and liberty under God is replaced by anarchy and bondage. This tragic reality is because human opinions, social convention and feelings cannot provide a solid foundation for this institution. A marriage founded upon such sand is held hostage by romantic feelings, mutual exploitation, selfishness, narcissism, self-interest, unlawful desires and boredom. As Rushdoony notes,

When the Biblical faith which undergirds Western family life is denied, then the nature of the marital relationship is also altered. The humanistic relativism of modern man dissolves the ties between man and woman as far as any objective law and value are concerned and reduces them

to purely relative and personal ties. Now a purely personal tie is impersonal in its view of other people. A man whose judgment is governed by his personal considerations only, does not consider the personal considerations of other people, except insofar as they can be used to further his own ends. As a result, an externalism prevails.<sup>1</sup>

Given these sober realities we will do well to consider the meaning, excellence and purpose of marriage according to the sacred Scriptures. Before we do so, however, there are a few introductory matters to consider.

First, Hebrews 13:4 in the Greek does not have a verb and thus translators and interpreters must decide (depending on the context) whether the sentence is hortatory (i.e. an exhortation) or declaratory (i.e. a statement of fact). While some translators supply the indicative verb *is* (“marriage *is* honorable,” KJV, NKJV, NEB, Young’s Literal Translation), the majority favor a hortatory construction (“*let* marriage *be* honorable” or “held in honor,” ASV, NASB, RSV, NIV, Moffet, Berkeley, JB, NAB). Given the context, the view that this is an exhortation makes the most sense. Chapter 13 forms a postscript to this epistle and contains a whole series of ethical and doctrinal exhortations (vs. 1-17). Translators favor an exhortation because the two verses preceding and following verse 4 contain commands. An unrelated statement of fact seems out of place in a sequence of exhortations. The sense of the passage is: “*Let* marriage *be* held in honor among all and *let* the *marriage* *be* held as undefiled.”

Second, the reasons that the author of this epistle found it necessary to address this matter are rooted in the social environment of his audience. The societal practices of the Jews of the first century in this area were contrary to godliness from two radically different perspectives. On the one hand, there was the Essene ascetic sect that denounced marriage as a serious impediment to the achievement of holiness before God. There were also influential Gnostic and Manichean groups that made inroads among some professing Christians. The ascetic Gnostics believed the body was intrinsically inferior and regarded it as the prison house of the spirit. Many Gnostics viewed Adam’s first sexual relationship with his wife as the direct cause of the fall. Consequently, they greatly depreciated marriage and the family as detrimental to piety. Later, the Alexandrian fathers, under the influence of Platonic philosophy, made a distinction between the natural life and the superior contemplative life. Origen even made a distinction between a lower quality of piety for regular married Christians and a special higher piety for the select few—the saints. Such thinking, along perhaps with a worship of the virgin Mary eventually led to voluntary celibacy as the path to a higher spiritual perfection. All of this pagan thinking would lead to the involuntary celibacy of the papal church. All of it unwittingly was an attack on the excellency of marriage. As Philip Schaff points out,

The ancient church...held to the divine institution of property and marriage, and was content to recommend the voluntary renunciation of these intrinsically lawful pleasures to the few elect, as a means of attaining Christian perfection. She declared marriage holy, virginity more holy. But unquestionably even the church fathers so exalted the higher holiness of virginity, as practically

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<sup>1</sup> Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973), 339.

to neutralize, or at least seriously to weaken, their assertion of the holiness of marriage. The Roman church, in spite of the many Bible examples of married men of God from Abraham to Peter, can conceive no real holiness without celibacy, and therefore requires celibacy of its clergy without exception.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, marriage also came under assault from those who were influenced by the permissiveness of Jewish culture. Many Jews justified sexual immorality on the bases of externalizing the law and by holding to the idea that if the seventh commandment had not been explicitly violated *as to the letter*, then no moral guilt was incurred. There was also the influence of Greco-Roman culture which was notoriously lax when it came to fornication. The ancient world at that time reflected our culture in that many looked at marriage as a kind of yoke or burden and generally believed that while adultery ought to be avoided, fornication and premarital sex were indifferent. In modern American society, things are perhaps even worse, as fornication is not only accepted by the masses as a normal practice before marriage but is even expected. Young men and women who do not engage in premarital sex are viewed as exceptionally strange and rare. There is no longer any social ostracism for living together before marriage and having children out of wedlock is common and accepted. If things continue on the current path, marriage and the “traditional” family may eventually obtain minority status. Thus, we can see that the exhortations in this passage are perfectly suited for our modern immoral culture.

Third, the author of Hebrews exalts marriage and points believers to its excellency in two ways. In the first half of the verse he gives a very positive assessment of marriage. It is something that all believers should regard as honorable. It is the only God-ordained sphere for fulfilling one’s sexual needs and desires. If anyone teaches or implies that marriage is not a good, honorable and excellent institution; or that sexual relations within marriage are unlawful or even on a lesser plane than celibacy he is being unscriptural. In the second part of the verse he condemns the evils prohibited by focusing the believer’s attention on the divine judgments against fornication and adultery. If the first half of the verse is the carrot, then the second half is the stick. Jehovah regards sins against marriage as serious, as meriting the wrath of God. In other words, men or society may not have a problem with sexual immorality but God does and those who do not repent will not escape. This verse is essentially a concise exposition of the commandment, “You shall not commit adultery” (Ex. 20:14; Dt. 5:18).

## Let Marriage Be Honorable

The author of Hebrews begins by exhorting Jewish believers to “let marriage be held in honor among all.” The word “honorable” (*timiotatos*) means “honored,” “esteemed,” “beloved,” “regarded as precious.” Believers are to regard marriage as an institution of God for our benefit. We must not teach or do anything that detracts from this noble, respectable, excellent institution.

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<sup>2</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, [1910] 1989), 2:396.

In order to understand the full force of this exhortation we need to define the word marriage and look at the many biblical reasons as to why marriage is honorable.

The word “marriage” in this content can only refer to marriage that is lawful or defined according to the Word of God. This means that it must be according to the original institution of the ordinance when God presented one woman, Eve, to her husband, Adam (Gen. 2:22). Polygamy was tolerated by God and regulated by His law (Ex. 21:10-11; Lev. 18:18), however, it was never the original design for mankind and is not honorable. For this reason, only monogamous heterosexual marriage is suitable as a symbol of the church’s relationship to Christ (e.g., Eph. 5:22-33). Marriage is not lawful or honorable when it consists of two persons coming together who violate the biblical prohibitions on the degrees of consanguinity (Lev. 18:6ff.). The so-called marriages between homosexuals are not worthy of respect, but rather are abominations that merit the death penalty (cf. Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26ff.). Moreover, marriages that involve one or more persons who are unlawfully divorced are not honorable but sinful. For a marriage to be honorable there must be common consent between the parties involved and a biblical fitness for the duties involved.

If we want the divine benediction upon a marriage, then it is absolutely necessary that the marriage covenant between a man and woman have respect unto God’s Word in every way. Marriage is a “lawful conjunction of one man and one woman by their just and full consent, into an indissoluble union (whereby they become one flesh), for the procreation of children, and mutual assistance in all things divine and human.”<sup>3</sup>

The biblical reasons why marriage is to be honored are numerous. First, marriage is exceptionally important because it was established directly by God in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:18, 23-24; Mt. 19:5). God Himself brought Eve and presented her to Adam. Only marriage and the Sabbath were instituted by God without mediation of men or angels. The first marriage was *directly* solemnized by Jehovah. Second, marriage was initiated after God Himself concluded that it was good and necessary for man’s happiness, completeness and effectiveness: “And the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him’” (Gen. 2:18). Marriage proceeds from God’s divine wisdom and counsel. God understood that marriage was necessary for procreation and godly dominion over the earth. It is the primary ordinance for the carrying out of the dominion mandate. The family is the nursery of the church, business and the state. If the family becomes weakened and degraded morally, society will suffer the consequences. “We can form no conception of social virtue or felicity, yea, no conception of human society itself, which has not its foundation *in the family*.”<sup>4</sup>

Third, marriage was established before the fall while man was in a state of innocence. This means that marriage is fully compatible with and conducive to holiness. It also means that it was to be universal to the human race. The first marriage occurred in paradise indicating that matrimony and blessedness belong together. The ideal state of both men and women is not in separation but in union. Each sex (male and female) was designed by God to complement and

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<sup>3</sup> John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, [1855] 1980), 7:402.

<sup>4</sup> Arthur W. Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1954), 1125.

help the other throughout life. In marriage there is such a union of purpose, goals, love and passion that the two are said to be one flesh (Gen. 2:24; Eph. 5:28-31). Any idea that a life of celibacy is more conducive to holiness is totally contrary to God's created order. The popish notion that monks, priests, nuns and bishops are more pure in their celibacy than our *sinless* parents in paradise before the fall is neo-platonic nonsense.

Fourth, the creation of Eve and her presentation to Adam is the climax of the creation narrative. The last created thing in the universe was Eve. She, in a sense, is the crown of creation; the most beautiful of all creatures. Yet she was created to provide a wife, a helper suitable for Adam. It is noteworthy that in the creation account at the end of each day, God looked upon what He made and declared "that it was good." But after Adam had been made and had been placed in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it God said, "It is not good that man should be alone (Gen. 2:18). There was something vitally important missing from the creation. Adam was not suited for dominion by himself. God made Adam aware of his need by assigning him the task of naming all the animals. He saw male and female for each animal; that each animal had a corresponding mate. God enabled Adam to be intensely aware of his incompleteness, his need of a helpmeet comparable to him so that his appreciation of his wife and marriage would be magnified. It all was placed in Scripture so that we would see the importance of marriage. In fact, Adam was so excited and happy when God presented his wife to him he exclaimed, "This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man" (Gen. 2:23).

Fifth, marriage is given a special honor and protection in the law of God. The covenant family is central to the kingdom of God and the establishment of Christian nations. Consequently, God has put many safeguards in place to protect this institution. Adultery was a death penalty offense (i.e. the maximum penalty) in the law (Dt. 22:22) and fornication or premarital sex was severely penalized (Dt. 22:29). The New Testament recognizes this fact and almost every writer deals with threats to marriage by condemning adultery and fornication; and by dealing with principles for harmony in the marriage relationship. Moreover, marriage was crucial for propagating lawful children who would follow the covenant. The children produced out of wedlock were referred to as "bastards" and were excluded from the assembly of the Lord unto the tenth generation; that is, from all administration of office or positions of authority in the congregation of Israel (Dt. 23:2).

Sixth, marriage was exalted in the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. The incarnation of the Word did not involve a human father. Yet, by a special revelation to Joseph (Mt. 1:20, 24) God made sure that the sinless Son of God was born into a godly family with both a mother and father. God had respect unto His own law and created order. In addition, when Jesus began His ministry in Galilee, He chose a wedding feast as the place to perform His first miracle (Jn. 2:8). He changed water into wine in order for the guests to celebrate the wedding with joy. In his teaching ministry He upheld the creation ordinance of marriage and emphatically rejected the loose, unscriptural views of divorce that were being taught by the religious leaders of His day (cf. Mt. 5:27-32). He said, "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” (Mt. 19:9). When Christ used a parable to teach about the necessity of an imputed righteousness, He described it in terms of a “wedding garment” (Mt. 22:11).

Seventh, the Word of God exalts marriage in that it is the only institution intimate enough to symbolize the relationship between Jehovah and Israel or Christ and the church. Isaiah assures Israel of God’s love and mercy saying, “For your Maker is your husband” (54:5). Jeremiah tells the backsliding people of God to repent because “I [Jehovah] am married to you” (3:14). In Ezekiel God’s love for Israel is expressed in terms of a marriage covenant: “‘When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered a covenant with you, and you became Mine,’ says the Lord God” (Ezek. 16:8). Paul picks up on this theme when he uses marriage as an analogy of the intimate spiritual union that exists between Christ and the church: “For we are members of His body and 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” (Eph. 5:30-32). In Revelation 21 the church is the New Jerusalem, “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” The Word of God has set its seal upon the honorableness of marriage from Genesis to the book of Revelation.

## The Purpose of Marriage

That fact that marriage is a divine institution alone ought to make every one of us render to it the honor that is its due. However, it is also worthy of praise and special respect due to its great usefulness to mankind. God gave marriage to man for specific reasons. We will set forth the reasons both from our text and other places in Scripture.

First, marriage is presented throughout the Bible as the only biblical solution for those tempted to commit sexual immorality. In Hebrews 13:4 the author says, “...the marriage bed is undefiled.” That is, there is nothing wrong, degrading, polluting or immoral about sexual intercourse between a man and his wife. With a few strokes of the pen the author dispenses with those of gnostic or platonic bent who viewed all sex, even lawful married relations, as debasing and defiling. This statement presupposes that the sexual relations of married persons is approved by God and is not contrary in any way to a spiritual and sanctified lifestyle. Therefore, when the pope says it is wrong for a man to have strong sexual desires for his wife, he is contradicting Scripture. When professing Christians argue that the *sole* purpose of marriage is for procreation or that one should not enjoy sex with one’s spouse, they are going beyond the teaching of Scripture.

That marriage is the biblical way to avoid sexual immorality is perhaps most clearly set forth in 1 Corinthians 7:1-5:

*It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality [porneia is plural—fornications], let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.*

Corinth was perhaps the most sexually immoral city of the ancient world. Sexual perversions abounded on every side. While Paul acknowledges that some believers have the gift of remaining single (1 Cor. 7:7), those not so gifted should get married to avoid temptations toward unlawful sexual activities of every kind. Indeed, the husband needs to be available to fulfill his wife's sexual needs and vice versa in order to help each other avoid falling into sexual sin. (The word "render" is in the present imperative indicating a habitual duty.) According to Paul, marriage without a continuing sexual relationship is not only unnatural and expressly forbidden but is also spiritually dangerous. It can cause one's spouse to seek a sexual fulfillment outside the boundaries of God's law. "Marriage is a protective shield that should be employed effectively against Satan's subtleties (Eph. 5:11). Refusal to use the protection God provides is a sin for which the individual is held accountable."<sup>5</sup> As Paul says, "...if they [the unmarried and widows] cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion" (1 Cor. 7:9). "Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body" (1 Cor. 6:18).

The author of Hebrews presses home the honor of marriage and the lawfulness of the marriage bed by pointing us to God's attitude toward those who reject the sanctity of marriage: "But fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (4b). The word fornicators (*porneia*) rendered "whoremongers" in the KJV means "the sexually immoral." Fornication in Scripture is a very broad term which covers sexual activities between unmarried persons, incest, bestiality, homosexuality and so on. Sex between unmarried persons was generally accepted in the Greco-Roman world as something indifferent. Some frowned upon it, but many accepted it as perfectly natural. Adultery (*moicheia*) is a much more specific term that refers to unfaithfulness by either party to their marriage vow.

The point that is made here is that even if you do not regard fornication or adultery as a sin; or, you think that you can get away with such activities without consequence, you are gravely mistaken. Such behaviors are noted by God and will be recompensed with divine vengeance on the day of judgment. People who do not repent of such things and respect the ordinance of marriage will be eternally damned on the final day. These sins are so detestable in God's sight that professing Christians are repeatedly warned that a habitual course in them excludes one from the kingdom of God. Such behaviors prove that a person is still dead in trespasses and sins, unregenerate and without saving faith. Note the following passages: "If

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<sup>5</sup> Simon J. Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 213-214.

anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him..." (1 Cor. 3:17). "Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9, 10). "Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness...of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19, 21). "For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 5:5-6). "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Rev. 22:15). "But outside *are* dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie" (Rev. 22:15). All sins merit the eternal death penalty, but sins that mock the institution of marriage are singled out as particularly heinous and damnable in God's sight. If the wages for all sin is death, then sexual sins which are especially heinous in God's sight will most certainly result in eternal damnation. Thus Solomon says, "Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; He *who* does so destroys his own soul" (Prov. 6:32).

The biblical teaching on marriage as an antidote to fornication and on marriage in general teaches us two important things. (1) We must show an utmost respect for this precious God-given institution by studiously avoiding all situations, enticements and temptations that result in a violation of the marriage ordinance. This means keeping godly company and avoiding those who take fornication lightly. It entails guarding the eye gate from all illicit sexually stimulating images (Job 31:1; Mt. 5:28). (Probably the greatest failure in this area in our day among professing Christian men involves the internet.) It also involves nurturing a healthy, robust, lawful sexual relationship with one's spouse. Biblical sanctification involves not only avoiding or shunning the bad, but also putting in its place a positive, lawful counterpart. Sexual temptations and sins often grow in the noxious soil of a bad marriage relationship. This situation must not be allowed to develop. (2) We must never fail to keep our mind on God's hatred of sexual sins as a motivation to obedience. While society may praise fornication and wink at adultery, God promises a severe punishment on everyone who makes a mockery of marriage by their life-style. Think of the awful horrifying miseries that await those who fornicate or commit adultery. Think of the utter foolishness, blindness and insanity that is willing to exchange a few hours of pleasure for a torment that will never end. The pleasures of sin are never worth the consequences of iniquity. Sin does not pay, for the wages of sin is death. Let us then watch and pray continually for God's sustaining grace and the persevering power of the Holy Spirit. "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). "But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints" (Eph. 5:3). "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that each of you should know how to

possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor...For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects *this* does not reject man, but God..." (1 Thess. 4:3-4, 7-8).

Second, marriage was instituted for the propagation of children. This point is established from the creation itself: "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27). God did not create two men or two women, but one man and one woman. This verse teaches us that human sexuality is not an accident of nature (macro-evolution), but is a gift of God for a distinct purpose. The created reality of male and female prepares us for the teaching on procreation in verse 27. (Interestingly, the usual Hebrew words for "man" and "woman" are not used; instead *zakhar* and *negebhah* are used in order to emphasize what is distinct to each sex.) This verse also prepares us for the detailed teaching on the first marriage set forth in chapter two. The ordained pattern for childbearing is that a union must occur between one man and one woman.

It is also proved by the specific commands of verse 28: "Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.'" The two assignments given to Adam and Eve are procreation and dominion. This is the first revelation given to mankind and there is no evidence in Scripture that it has ever been abrogated. God instituted monogamous heterosexual marriage so that husbands and wives would have children. Before the fall infertility, disease and bodily defects did not exist and thus every marriage would have resulted in children. After the fall infertility can make it impossible for some couples to have children. This tragic fact, however, does not nullify the marriage relationship.<sup>6</sup> The bearing of children is one purpose of marriage, but not the sole purpose. Moreover, there are a number of examples of childless couples in Scripture who maintained their marriage, prayed for children and placed their hope in God (1 Sam. 1:6ff; Lu. 1:7). Consequently, we must reject arguments to the effect that a barren spouse merits an annulment or a divorce. No. It rather should result in prayer, contentment and possibly adoption. After the fall, the *normal* end of marriage is procreation.

Children are crucial to a marriage relationship for a number of reasons. (1) The task of a God-glorifying cultural dominion over the entire earth was and continues to be dependent on the great multiplication of human numbers. In our day of widespread hedonism and love of

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<sup>6</sup> Sodomite rights advocates use the fact that a number of heterosexual married couples cannot bear children as a basis for their argument for the acceptance of homosexual "marriage." This argument assumes that since both heterosexual couples and homosexual "couples" cannot bear children, then they should be treated the same by law. In other words, procreation should not be regarded as a purpose of marriage. There are several problems with such an argument. First, the reason homosexuals cannot bear children is because it is *impossible* due to what they are by creation. It is simply unnatural or against nature. Heterosexual couples who cannot bear children are only in this position *because of sin and the fall*. The effects of the curse have resulted in what is a normal part of God's created reality being damaged, disabled or diseased. In other words, what is natural and normal for the homosexual couple is unnatural and abnormal for the heterosexual couple. For a society to ignore a creation ordinance or a creational reality and base laws on rare exceptions that are abnormal and caused by the fall is unscriptural and irrational. Second, the moral law of God unequivocally condemns homosexual behavior in the strongest of terms: "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination" (Lev. 18:22). "If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death" (Lev. 20:13; cf. Rom. 1:26-28; 1 Cor. 6:9; etc.). The human rectum was not designed by God as a sex organ, but as a means of eliminating feces. This is one reason why homosexual behavior is wicked, perverted and disgusting.

environmental paganism this task is no longer appreciated nor understood (Gen. 1:28; 9:1). Children are only truly a blessing when they are raised in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). The consistent message to believers throughout Scripture is that children are a great blessing of the Lord; that Christian parents should seek large families that keep the covenant. “Behold, children *are* a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb *is* a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so *are* the children of one’s youth. Happy *is* the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate” (Ps. 127:3-5; see 128:1-6).

In the biblical worldview, children are not a burden, or a penalty, or a curse but a reward from God. Children are only viewed as a negative burden in a culture that is self-centered and focused on personal gratification instead of godly dominion. In the post-Christian cultures of Europe and America many couples have only a token child because it is the hip thing to do; or, even worse they have no children at all and focus all their attention on dogs or cats. To the serious believer, children are like arrows in the hands of a warrior. Godly children are helps in their parents’ desire to extend the kingdom of God. They will second their goals and lend themselves to their designs. They will serve the Lord and build a faithful heritage long after the parents are gone. “Let the Lord favour us with loyal, obedient, affectionate offspring, and we shall find them our best helpers. We shall see them shot forth into life to our comfort and delight, if we take care from the beginning that they are directed to the right point...When sons and daughters are arrows, it is well to have a quiver full of them; but if they are only sticks, knotty and useless, the fewer of them the better.”<sup>7</sup>

(2) Godly children are crucial for the preservation and continuity of future generations who will serve the Lord. While evangelism and church planting also play a key role in the furtherance of the faithful churches, we raise up our children as a godly seed; as spiritual heirs of the covenant of grace. The Lord made this point clear through Malachi: “The LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant. But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth” (2:14-16). In other words holy matrimony, based upon the creation of one male and one female brought together as one flesh, was intended to bless the social state of mankind. Believing families are a means of corporate sanctification. Each and every generation of believers is responsible to pass their love and dedication unto Christ on to the next generation. Both the continuity of the believing community physically and spiritually is dependent on “a godly seed”: “a seed that should bear the image of God, be employed in the service of God, and be devoted to his glory and honor.”<sup>8</sup> The raising of children is not for one’s own self-interest or autonomous desires but rather to bring up dominion men and women. Christians are to have a long term concern for history. While it is certainly true

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<sup>7</sup> C.H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: An Expository and Devotional Commentary on the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, [1882-1887] 1983), 7:30-31.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (McLean, VA: MacDonald, n. d.), 4:1490.

that we take our obedience one day at a time, there must also be a goal of Christian progress in leavening the world over time. The idea of history as linear, as moving toward an ultimate victory is distinctly Christian. Only an unbiblical pietism takes flight from the world and tries to place the teaching of God's law-word within a small, ecclesiastical box.

Raising up a godly seed is crucial because the future state of the church and the civil government is largely determined by the worldview and theology of each new generation. This is one reason why God has always dealt with families covenantally. The children of believers are visible members of the covenant people. The parents are obligated to catechize them in the faith and the children are obligated to believe in Jesus Christ and pass the Christian world and life view on to their children. God wants believers to think in terms of the future, to think generationally. The Christian self-government and discipline practiced in the home will affect all institutions.

Secular humanists and statisticians are aware of the importance of controlling children in order to control the future of society. Thus, state schools (i.e. the American "public school system") are adept at making children "good" citizens of the state. American public education is really a form of indoctrination in pluralism and secular humanism. Children are taught to look to the messianic state as savior and lord of society. They are taught that law and ethics are relative and determined by public opinion (e.g., community standards), majority vote or by an intellectual elite (e.g., Congress or Supreme Court). In other words, God's moral law is emphatically rejected in favor of human autonomy. The enemies of Christ and the gospel are fully aware that whoever controls the children controls the future. Unfortunately, the majority of professing Christians in America seem unaware of this crucial fact and thus place their children in state schools several hours a day, five days a week, to be indoctrinated by feminists, atheists and sodomites. On Sundays the thirty some hours of pagan indoctrination are supposedly countered with a forty-five minute, mediocre "Sunday School" class. Given this practice we should not be surprised that around seventy percent of evangelical children become completely apostate by the time they graduate from college. They simply have acted consistently with their *primary* education. "[T]he present decay of home life and family discipline threaten the stability of our nation today far more severely than does any foreign hostility."<sup>9</sup>

Third, marriage was instituted for the purpose of companionship and dominion. This point is established in Genesis 2:18: "And the LORD God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make a helper comparable to him.'" The idea here is not simply that Adam needed companionship so that he would not be lonely or so that he could have lawful sexual relations (although these things are certainly included), but rather Eve was given to Adam as a helper that corresponded to him in every way. When it comes to having a family or engaging in dominion, the woman completes the man and makes him whole. This point is brought out effectively by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:9: "Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man." In the created order, man (the husband) and woman (the wife) need each other. The man is created to multiply and exercise dominion and the wife is made to help him do what he

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<sup>9</sup> Arthur W. Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews*, 1127.

was created to do. Heterosexual marriage and the nuclear family are built right into the fabric of the created universe.

It is not by accident that the creation narrative leads up to the creation of the woman by first noting two critical things. (1) God notes that Adam in and of himself is incomplete and unsuited for a life of work and cultural progress. (“It is not good that man should be alone.” Gen. 2:18) The normal estate for a man is the state of marriage. The state of lifelong celibacy is an exception to this rule occasioned by the fall and sin. A man, if so called, can remain single for the sake of the kingdom of God (i.e. to preach the gospel and be a missionary, etc.); for the benefit of his spiritual family. But, apart from the fall, this would have been unnecessary. (2) God gives Adam an assignment of naming all the animals. In the Hebrew mindset names carried a special significance and were used to say something about the nature of the item named. Thus naming the animals was not arbitrary, but involved empirical observation and analysis. Adam was made keenly aware of his incompleteness in this process. The animals had mates, Adam did not. Adam could not carry on a conversation with the brute creatures. Moreover, while animals can be helpful (e.g., a dog, horse, oxen or donkey), they are not helpers “comparable” (the Hebrew literally translated is, “according to what is in front of him,” “as opposite him,” meaning “corresponding to him”). As a social creature Adam was only half of what he needed to be. Unlike the animals, Eve (although different) was Adam’s equal (ontologically, not functionally). She was not inferior. She had rationality, communication (human language), true righteousness and holiness, and the ability to glorify God through her divine calling. In fact, identity of being and purpose is emphasized by the fact the Eve is made out of the very stuff of Adam.

In the creation narrative we see that man’s calling in terms of tending or cultivating the garden (farming, agriculture) and naming the creatures (science, knowledge, the study of creation) while the woman’s calling is defined in terms of helping her husband and the family. After Eve is fashioned out of Adam, they are given the task of procreation and dominion. It is interesting that love is not the focus of the narrative. The emphasis falls upon working as a team (with the man as the leader, the covenant head) to subdue the creation to God’s glory. While love is important to marriage, biblical love flows from obedience to God’s law-word, not simply infatuation or physical attraction.

The task of godly dominion or the cultural mandate is given to Adam and Eve immediately after their marriage because private property, economic activity (business, agriculture, capital, etc.) and scientific progress rests not upon the church or the state, but with the family. “The family is the cultural custodian of *property* and of *children*, two basic aspects of any society. A healthy society is one which protects the family because it recognizes that its survival is at stake.”<sup>10</sup> The church has the means of grace and the keys of the kingdom and the state bears the sword of justice and defense, but neither is responsible for *direct* economic and scientific progress. The church may own facilities in which to meet for public worship and theological schools, but it is not an economic or scientific organization. The state, being responsible for civil defense and criminal justice has a scientific and economic interest in

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<sup>10</sup> Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1973), 396.

developing weapon systems and military/criminal justice training centers; but, the state, has no biblical mandate to engage in economic activity and own property outside of the limited parameters of civil justice and defense. God is the absolute owner of all property and His law-word limits the role of the church and the state over the family's present, historical title to property. When the state charges property taxes and gives itself the right to seize property, it is essentially proclaiming its own divinity over the economic sphere.

The married couple or family as a means of dominion has come under attack from humanists from essentially two different directions since the Enlightenment. The biblical model of a godly wife is a woman who works hard *out of her home* for the sake of her family. She not only manages the house, but also engages in business and is prosperous enough to purchase property (Prov. 31:16). She is so effective that her husband can rule in the gates without worry over the care of his household (Prov. 31:23). In the biblical model, women were involved in business and other economic affairs *under the care* of their loving covenant head. During the Enlightenment women of means were essentially viewed as weak, unstable creatures that existed to look beautiful and enjoy themselves. In the eighteenth century women lost many rights as intellectuals turned from the Bible to the idea that women were inferior and helpless.<sup>11</sup> As Rushdoony states,

The age of reason saw man as reason incarnate, and woman as emotion and will, and therefore inferior. The thesis of the Age of Reason has been that the government of all things should be committed to reason. The Age of Reason opposed the Age of Faith self-consciously. Religion was deemed to be woman's business, and, the more the Enlightenment spread, the more church life...came to be the domain of women and children. The more pronounced therefore the triumph of the Age of Reason in any culture, the more reduced the role of women became. Just as religion came to be regarded as a useless but sometimes charming ornament, so too women were similarly regarded.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, we see that contrary to modern thought, the turn from a biblical worldview to a secular humanistic perspective was not a great liberating force for women, but rather an enslaving force.

The other main attack comes from feminism, which views men as the enemy and family life under covenant headship as a form of bondage. While there is no question that there were legitimate abuses of women that needed to be addressed, modern feminists did not look to the Bible for direction and thus simply attempted to be like modern secular humanistic men. They set themselves against God's law by rejecting covenant headship and exalted having a "career" over the divine calling of managing a household. Their ideology and sinful nature want men to be somewhat irresponsible and effeminate, so they can assume the leadership role. All of this has come about because men have not looked to Scripture and led in a biblical, loving manner. The result is a high divorce rate; hedonistic-lawless children; and parents who are often miserable. Secular humanism leads to a war between the sexes because human autonomy is self-centered

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 349.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

and selfish while Jehovah's law is God-centered and fully accords with men and women's natures as created in Eden. When men and women do not follow God's Word, the pagan state is happy to take to itself the responsibilities of the covenantal sphere of the family. Thus in modern America, we exist under a form of statist fascism where the state has its tentacles in every area of life. Tragically, most husbands and wives gladly hand their parental responsibilities over to state subsidized daycare centers and state schools and the state is happy to train these children to be "good" little immoral statists.

In this study we have seen that marriage is a wonderful, blessed institution of God. It is indeed honorable as long as we define it biblically. Monogamous, heterosexual marriage with the husband as the covenant head and the wife as a helper suitable to her spouse is necessary for a vibrant church and Christian civilization. We must use this institution to serve Jesus Christ and glorify God by raising up a godly seed; use the marriage bed to fulfill our lawful sexual needs; pass on our resources and capital to faithful children; support a solid, Bible-believing Reformed church; and submit every aspect of our marriage to the glorified Redeemer. May God enable us to use this institution for His glory and kingdom.

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