

The Marriage Ceremony

Part 1

Revelation 19:7-9 [NIV] *“Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”*

The wedding of lamb [Jesus Christ] with His bride the church.

Marriage is a divine institution and I am going to use the text of the Christian Church’s Marriage Ceremony in this presentation on marriage itself.

Within this text we find many keys to a successful and happy marriage.

The text reads as follows:-

“Having grown to love each other [the man’s first name] and [the woman’s first name] have chosen to commit their lives to each other in marriage and so today they are asking God to unite them as husband and wife.”

Two points we need to notice in this text.

*“Having **grown** to love one another.”*

Love is a process.

Love, as God sees it, is somewhat different to how the world sees love.

We can have attraction at first sight, but we cannot have Godly love at first sight.

We have heard of the expression *“love at first sight”* but what we mean is *“attraction”*.

God’s love by definition needs time to grow, and will take the rest of the marriage to grow.

Attraction and *“chemistry”* can be at first sight but **not** the love God mentions in the marriage ceremony, the *“agapé”* love of the Christian Bible, His Handbook for Life.

Godly love is **not** easy; it would be wrong if it was easily come by.

If people are attracted to one another instantly and nothing grows from that, it remains purely physical.

The words of an old *“pop song”* describe what happens in such a union, *“I don’t know where the feeling’s gone but I can’t get it back again.”*

The basis of that relationship was a feeling, a chemical attraction, and they married on the strength of that feeling but because nothing else was present, there was no enduring love, it was just a feeling that fades with the passing of time.

Godly love grows and will continue to grow for eternity, continually becoming deeper and more fulfilling.

Don't confuse love with attraction, but having said that there should be attraction in a relationship, something special about the other person.

There should be something that makes the heart beat a little faster.

There is a true story of one young man who was admitted to hospital and they could not understand why his blood pressure used to fluctuate, then they figured out that it always rose higher when it was taken by one certain young nurse; this nurse had an affect on this young man's heartbeat.

They are now happily married.

God built into men and women the possibility of such an attraction, but love has to grow in the relationship if the marriage is to succeed.

The marriage ceremony continues to state:-

*"They have **chosen** to commit their lives to each other in marriage."*

Marriage is a choice, to marry or not to marry is a choice.

Marriage is not necessary for eternal life; if this was so, God would have commanded it in His Word.

Marriage is not essential for eternal life but the marriage union is the highest physical expression of the family of God.

A physical type of the family of God.

Marriage is the physical expression of the spiritual union of Christ and His Church.

Marriage is a choice and as with all major choices in our lives we need to exercise a certain amount of caution, deliberation and wisdom before the choice is made.

God will **not** make the choice for us, marriages are **not** made in heaven, even though marriage is a heavenly ordained institution.

We can look into God's Word and find very few examples of where God arranged for certain people to marry and always it was always for major reasons in the fulfilment of His Master Plan for mankind as a whole.

Only in such circumstances did God make the choice of who was to marry whom and these could be counted on one hand.

It is **not** true that there is only one person whom you should marry to have a happy and fulfilled marriage.

When I state this I am talking to those who do not as yet have a partner.

This doesn't mean we shouldn't give thanks to God for our mate, our spouse.

I do, I don't know if my wife does!

I just hope she does.

We need to pray to God for wisdom in our choice of a partner.

There are also certain principles in God's Word that can help us make a wise choice.

For example, do they pray and study?

Do they have a personal relationship with their Creator?

Are they dedicated to the Work of God?

Are they concerned for the welfare of others or are they insular?

There are **no** scriptures telling us directly how to choose a mate, but there is a wealth of guidance in God's Word about married life.

God expects us to pray to Him for wisdom in our choice and to seek wise council from others who can give good experiential advice: ministers, parents, happily married friends but still the final choice is ours.

This way, if we marry someone and then they get up and leave the Church, we will **not** be able to say to Jesus Christ in our day of judgement, *"God, you picked the wrong one for me to marry."*

Continuing in the text of the marriage ceremony:-

"Surely there can be no greater human joy than that of a happy marriage, one that is filled with giving and sharing. No deeper friendship than that attained by a husband and wife. Marriage is not only a physical union, it is a divine institution. Marriage was established not by man but by the Eternal God at creation. Marriage derives its authority from the divine laws of God, immutable and unchangeable."

In other words, marriage did not evolve.

Marriage is a divine institution, it is **not** something that man thought up.

Continuing in the text of the marriage ceremony:-

"When God created life on the earth He made humans the pinnacle of His creation, fashioned in His own image. He gave men and women creative minds with the ability to make choices, to develop plans and build their lives upon those plans."

When we make the choice of a mate we together make plans and then build our lives together on those plans.

In a sense we go ahead together and make our plans come to fruition.

Philippians 2:12-13 [NIV] *"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."*

God, through Paul, tells us to work out our future but always remember to involve God in the future.

Continuing in the text of the marriage ceremony:-

"Men and women were created with the marvellous potential of eternal life in the family of God, and as a Loving Father God gave us the institution of marriage. God also gave us the blessing of family life that we may learn to love one another as He loves us."

Notice the emphasis that we may learn to love one another.

Love is a process.

This does **not** mean we should enter a marriage relationship without love being there already.

The two people should already be loving each other.

This love should then grow so that when we look back we see that our original love was not as deep as that love we now have for each other.

That first love was only the beginning of what we now experience in our day-to-day life together.

True love does grow stronger and deeper.

True love is a learning process and at times it can be very hard work to love our partner, to exercise that Godly love.

Remember Godly love is a love that is spontaneous, irrespective of any “rights” we have or the response of the recipient of that love.

This is an attitude of mind that is the direct opposite of our natural human reactions.

It is hard work at times to love our children.

It is easy to love them when they are young, sweet and snugly asleep.

But when they grow up and have attitude problems, loving them is very difficult.

We can face the same difficulties in a marriage relationship.

There are times when it is difficult to exercise true love.

Continuing in the text of the marriage ceremony:-

“After God had created the first man from the dust of the ground God said “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” [Genesis 2:18] The woman was made equal to the man in both mental capacity and spiritual potential. The perfect compliment to her husband.”

Genesis 1:27 [NIV] *“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”*

Male and female are both in the image of God.

It is **not** just the man who is in the image of God.

Jesus was a male but God is **not** male nor female.

God is spirit and in that sense to our understanding genderless.

We may be surprised when we see God, for we have never seen spirit, but when we become spirit we will see Him as He is.

1 John 3:2 [NIV] *“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”*

Where does a woman get her feminine characteristics from?

From God.

I'm not saying God is feminine, He is not, but every quality that makes a woman feminine comes from God who also made the man to be in His likeness.

When we see a woman tenderly nursing a child, as only a woman can, she received that ability from the ultimate being, God.

There are references in The Bible to the feminine qualities of God.

Matthew 23:37 [NIV] *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.”*

1 Thessalonians 2:6-7 [NIV] *“...As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.”*

We know that all the qualities of a man are from God but we tend to forget that all the qualities of a woman are also equally from God.

The tenderness, the gentleness, the ability to relate to those in need and pain.

A woman is equal to the man spiritually and mentally.

Continuing in the text of the marriage ceremony:-

“To emphasise His purpose to Adam and Eve the Creator God did not make the woman directly from the dust but from the very bones of the man. When the woman was presented to him Adam said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.” [Genesis 2:23]

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” [Genesis 2:24]

In the Hebrew the words for woman and man are very similar.

God took the woman from the man to go back to the man, to be complete in the marriage relationship.

This is the only time you have 1+1 = 1 in God’s Eyes.

We shouldn’t be surprised at this because Jesus Christ said later in times there is oneness in the God family.

John 10:30 [NIV] *“I and the Father are one.”*

John 14:20 [NIV] *“On that day you will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”*

The oneness in marriage is a type of oneness of the Triune God, and in the church.

There is a reason that a married couple should leave the family home and set up their own home and a new family unit.

Genesis 1:28 [NIV] *“God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”*

This directive to be fruitful is **not** given to every couple on the earth, there was a specific reason for such a command at that time for the only people existing were Adam and Eve.

The other times this command was given was after the flood to Noah's sons and to Abraham, that was to fulfil God's purpose Abraham should have sons and daughters, this was physically and spiritually goal.

Galatians 3:7 [NIV] *“Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.”*

Also prophetic statements about the world tomorrow give the same command, this is not strange when also prophesied is a decimation of the human race.

This *“go and increase”* is **not** a law for everyone, it is a personal choice, and we should **not** pressure couples into having a family.

We will continue with the Marriage Ceremony in the next presentation with its additional guidelines to a successful marriage.