

The Marriage Ceremony

Part 2

Last time we saw that marriage was a divine institution to prepare us as God's created children to have an intimate relationship with Him as a husband and wife experience in physical marriage.

The love that cements this union is something that grows by working constantly at improving it. Love is not physical attraction but helpful in the loving relationship of marriage. In God's sight men and women are equal spiritually and mentally but have different roles to play in a successful marriage.

Continuing in the text of the marriage ceremony:-

***“As marriage is a divine God-given institution it is not just man who joins a husband and wife together but also God. Therefore let us now consider the laws of God governing this union of [man's name] and [woman's name], as recorded in the Holy Scriptures.*”**

Ephesians 5:21 [NIV] *“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”*

Submission is **not** just the wife to the husband within marriage.

Continuing in the text of the marriage ceremony:-

***“The sacred marriage covenant calls upon you to yield yourselves to God and to one another. To hold each other in high esteem, giving honour and respect to one another, with love and devotion. Always giving preference to the welfare of the other.”*”**

“Outgoing concern is the foundation of the marriage relationship.”

Acts 20:35 [NIV] *“...It is more blessed to give than to receive.”*

The Handbook For Life, the Christian Bible, always says that true love is an outgoing concern for the one who is loved. It is of little use just saying that we love our partner, love is shown by how we treat and relate to them.

Love is **not** love unless it is demonstrated, by an outward going concern for the welfare of our partner.

Continuing the text of the marriage ceremony:-

Ephesians 5:25-29 [NIV] ***“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church...”*”**

This is a sacrifice that the husband is commanded to make for his wife just as Jesus Christ sacrificed His body and life for the Church.

Ephesians 5:33 [NIV] ***“However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.”*”**

The wife also has responsibilities.

Ephesians 5:22 [King James] *“Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”*

The word “*own*” is left out in some modern translations but it should be there.

This scripture is **not** a command for women to submit to all men, **only** their own husband.

There are some men around who think that men are some superior species and that all women should submit to their will; such an attitude is **totally out of line**.

Ephesians 5:23-24 [NIV] *“For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.”*

When it says “*everything*” it means “*everything in the Lord,*” as we would Christ, this is the context of this scripture.

So if a husband tells his wife to supplement her housekeeping by shoplifting she doesn't submit to such a demand.

The husband has authority over his wife in as much as God has given him authority and no more.

The standard given is “*as Jesus Christ would for His Church.*”

Ephesians 5:21-33 [Message Bible] *“Out of respect for Christ, be courteously reverent to one another.”*

*“Wives, understand and support your husbands in ways that show your support for Christ. The husband provides leadership to his wife the way Christ does to His church, **not** by domineering but by cherishing. So just as the church submits to Christ as He exercises such leadership, wives should likewise submit to their husbands.”*

“Husbands, go all out in your love for your wives, exactly as Christ did for the church, a love marked by giving, not getting Christ's love makes the church whole. His words evoke her beauty. Everything He does and says is designed to bring the best out of her, dressing her in dazzling white silk, radiant with holiness. And that is how husbands ought to love their wives. They're really doing themselves a favour, since they're already “one” in marriage.”

“No one abuses his own body, does he? No, he feeds and pampers it. That's how Christ treats us, the church, since we are part of His body. And this is why a man leaves father and mother and cherishes his wife. No longer two, they become “one flesh.” This is a huge mystery, and I don't pretend to understand it all. What is clearest to me is the way Christ treats the church. And this provides a good picture of how each husband is to treat his wife, loving himself in loving her, and how each wife is to honour her husband.”

1 Peter 3:7 [NIV] *“Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as **heirs with you** of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.”*

There is a “*sting in the tail*” to this verse; if husbands do not treat their wives in this way their prayers will be hindered.

The Greek word translated “*hindered*” is “*ekkopto*” [ek-kop-to] meaning to cut down, such as cutting down a tree or to break up the road to hinder our progress.

Galatians 5:7 [NIV] *“You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?”*

The same word is here translated “to cut in on you.”

This shows just how serious God looks on the husband’s right treatment of his wife, his prayers will be broken-up.

This works the other way also if the wife doesn’t fulfil her responsibilities her prayers will also be broken-up.

Continuing in the text of the marriage ceremony:-

The essential qualities of a happy and successful marriage are those that express an ever-growing Godly love as described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 [NIV] “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”

Note “love keeps no record of wrongs”.

It is an adversary system of government we have in the world today, where both sides, opposition and government, bring up past wrongs and mistakes each has made to batter each other over the head.

This is Satan’s way, Satan is the accuser of the brethren [**Revelation 12:11**].

When we bring up past wrongs and mistakes of our partner to use as a club against them we are doing Satan’s work for him.

We should never beat our partner verbally with their past errors or weaknesses, for this can be even more damaging than if we hit them with a physical club.

Continuing in the text of the marriage ceremony:-

“So we see that the loving relationship in marriage is a type of the relationship between Christ and His Church, and it is in your submission in love to God’s Law that this marriage will be strengthened and protected.”

Make no mistake, when marriages break down sin is always present, sin being the transgression of the law [**1 John 3:4**] and coming short of the glory of God [**Romans 3:23**], that is **not** fulfilling God’s Love in that relationship. **There is always faults on both sides**, perhaps more on one side than the other, but no-one is perfect.

Continuing in the text of the marriage ceremony:-

“God wants us to be happy in this life and to this end God has given you [the woman’s first name] and you [the man’s first name] the gift of marriage. Because marriage is a divine institution and we are asking God to join you as husband and wife it is fitting that each of you should faithfully promise before God, to accept the sacred marriage covenant according to the divinely ordained conditions established by Almighty God. Do you then [the man’s first name] faithfully promise and covenant with God and these witnesses to take [the woman’s first name] to be your lawful wedded wife, for as long as you both shall live, to love her, to cherish her and honour her and provide for her? [Pause for the man to say “I do.”]”

Do you know where this comes from?

It is from the covenant between God and His people Israel, which was a marriage covenant where promises were made by both parties.

Exodus 23:20, 22, 25-28, 31 [NIV] *“See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared.” ... “If you listen carefully to what he says and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you.” ... “Worship the LORD your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you, and none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span. “I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter. I will make all your enemies turn their backs and run. I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way.” ... “I will establish your borders from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the desert to the River. I will hand over to you the people who live in the land and you will drive them out before you.”*

Here was God the husband saying I will do these things if you will enter into this covenant with me.

Exodus 24:1-3 [NIV] *“Then he said to Moses, “Come up to the LORD, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. You are to worship at a distance, but Moses alone is to approach the LORD; the others must not come near. And the people may not come up with him.” When Moses went and told the people all the LORD's words and laws, they responded with one voice, “Everything the LORD has said **we will do.**”*

All the people said “we will do.”

Exodus 24:4-7 [NIV] *“Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said. He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the LORD. Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, “We will do everything the LORD has said; **we will obey.**”*

This was the book of the covenant **not** the ten commandments and the people replied the second time “we will obey.”

Exodus 24:8-11 [NIV] *“Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, “This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.” Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself. But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank.”*

God appeared in a form that was recognisable but which did not show His full glory or else they would not have lived, to show just how serious He considered this covenant.

When a couple stand before the minister and take these vows God is present listening to what is being said.

Continuing with text of marriage ceremony:-

“And do you [the woman’s first name] faithfully promise and covenant with God in the presence of these witness to take [the man’s first name] to be your lawful wedded husband for as long as you both shall live, to love him, to cherish him, to honour him and as God has ordained to submit yourself to him.” [Pause for the woman to say “I do.”] “Would you please join your right hands and with the laying on of my hands I ask the Eternal God to unite you as man and wife.”

With this joining of hands we will all kneel before God and ask for His blessing on this union.

In the prayer I will mention what each must do for that blessing to be given by God, God will bless us in the measure that we yield to Him.

Continuing with the text of the marriage ceremony:-

Then I will say, ***“By the authority given me by Jesus Christ, I pronounce you husband and wife, you may now exchange rings which are an outward symbol of your marriage state and of your love and devotion to each other.”***

Then the bit everyone has been waiting for; ***“You may now kiss the bride,”*** and I start timing.

If you do enter into marriage it is the second most important decision you ever make; the first being baptism.

Although it is a very serious decision, it is also a time of great rejoicing.

I want to conclude by reading again a paragraph of the text of the wedding 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 unchanging.”