

POLYGAMY (#1)

Request: “Does the Bible teach against polygamy? How do we explain why so many of the spiritual leaders of the OT were either bigamist or polygamist?”

Research tells us that polygamy is a growing practice among many third world countries. “There are many plural marriages in Africa, in the Middle East, and in Asia.” (Salt Lake Tribune, 9/20/08)

There is no biblical Hebrew or Greek word for polygamy. However the English word consist of a compound Greek word (polus / many) and (gamos / to marry).

The literal interpretation of polygamy is “many marriages” rather than “many wives.” The world would like us to believe that it is one marriage with many wives. But the truth is that it is actually many marriages. This is because a biblical marriage is between one husband and one wife – “For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.” (Gen.2:24)

Today’s lesson will study six aspects of the biblical history of polygamy and its attack upon the divine institution of marriage.

1. Monogamy is one of the laws of divine establishment of marriage, DI #3

There are five biblical divine institutions mentioned in Genesis. We will list them based on their order in the Book of Genesis.

- DI #1 Freedom Gen.1:26-27
- DI #2 Employment Gen.2:15; 3:17-19
- DI #3 Marriage Gen.2:18-25
- DI #4 Family Gen.1:28; 3:16; 4:1
- DI #5 Nation Gen.10-11

Marriage is one of the oldest divine institutions established by God for the human race. I believe the plurality of marriage attacks the sanctity of monogamy.

Once again, it appears that the devil is attacking the plan of God in Christ through the divine institution of marriage as he did in the Garden of Eden (Gen.3).

2. Monogamy is based on God’s design of the human soul as zakar (male) and neqebah (female).

(Gen.1:27) “And God created (Bara / out of non-existing material) man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

(Gen.2:18) “It is not good for the man (ha adam) to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable (ezer beneqed / soul mate) for him.”

(Gen.2:23) “This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman (ishah), because she was taken out of man (ish).”

(Gen.2:25) “And the man (ha adam) and his wife (ishah) were both naked and not ashamed.”

Relationship with God is after the order of monogamy, therefore God is jealous of this relationship (Ex.20:3-5; 34:14).

3. The first biblical recorded case of bigamy occurred in the Antediluvian period, (prior to the flood) (Gen.4:16-24).

It was committed by Lamech of the seventh generation in the lineage of Cain from Adam (Gen.4:19-21) “Cain, who was of the evil one, and slew his brother.” (1 John 3:12)

Being of the antichrist lineage explains the attack upon the marriage as a divine institution representing Christ.

God sent the flood upon Cainites as well as the Nephilim and unbelieving Sethites. It was sent upon everyone but Noah and the members of his family (Gen.6-9; Matt.24:37-39). It is interesting that four marriages or human pairs were spared (Gen.6:32; 7:13).

4. The first recorded biblical case of bigamy in Post Diluvian period (after the flood) was by Jacob and not by Abraham.

Abraham and Sarah used Hagar as a surrogate mother and not wife (Gen.16; 21).

Jacob running from the will of the Lord landed out of the geographical will of God in the land of his mother’s relatives (Paddan-aram) (Gen.28:2).

It was here that Jacob fell in love with Rachel but was deceived by his mother’s brother, Laban, and given Leah in marriage. And once again, Jacob was unsatisfied with the will of God and worked another seven years for his second wife, Rachel. In the end, Jacob will have two wives (Leah and Rachel) and two surrogate mothers (Zilpah and Bilhah) (Gen.29:16-18, 24-30; 31:41-42; 32:22).

5. When we come to the Mosaic period, we have two important legal cases regarding polygamy.

First legal case (Deut.17:14-17) It was one of four specific things were forbidden the king of the priest-nation of Israel – “Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away.” (Deut.17:17)

King Solomon violated all of them (1 Kings 4:26; 11:1-4; Neh.13:26-27).

Second legal case (Deut.21:15-17) This law governed the unloved wife of bigamy. Most Bible scholars believe this to protect marriages like Leah (Gen.29) and Hannah (1 Sam).

I believe this law was designed for the same reason as the law of divorce – “Because of your **hardness of heart**, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way.” (Matt.19:8)

6. For New Covenant (NC) believers, Christ and the church is compared to monogamous marriage (Eph.5:22-33; Rom.7:3-4; 1 Cor.7:1-2; 33-35).

“For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy, for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.” (2 Cor.11:2)

“And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, came and spoke with me, saying, ‘Come here, I shall show you the **bride, the wife of the Lamb.**’” (Rev.21:9)

One qualification for spiritual gifted communicators of the church and deacons is “the husband of one wife.” (1 Tim.3:2, 12; Titus 1:6) [**For me, this is the end of the discussion!**]