

In spite of the teaching of Christ, and the New Covenant to which all are now accountable (I Corinthians 9:21), our culture has seen all respect for the covenant of marriage virtually collapse. More marriages end in divorce than in death. Husbands have multiple wives. Wives have multiple husbands. Children have parents, step-parents, and “multiple visitation rights.” While men like Warren Jeffs are rightly vilianized—others like Brad Pitt, or Tom Cruise are celebrated as heroes! What is the difference before God? If Jesus teaches that “two become one flesh”—If Jesus commands, “**what God has joined together, let not man separate**” (Matthew 19:6)—If Christ, declares that unscriptural divorce and remarriage is committing “adultery,” how does that in any way differ from

polygamy? The only difference between the two is that the one, our culture has chosen to oppose with righteous indignation, while the other it has chosen to allow in order to satisfy its own desires!

By Kyle Pope



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# Faithful Sayings

## Olsen Park Church of Christ

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### Services

Sunday: 9:30 a.m.  
10:20 a.m.  
6:00 p.m.  
Wednesday: 7:00 p.m.

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## Culturally Sanctioned Polygamy

Since the arrest of the notorious polygamist leader Warren Jeffs, until the more recent seizure of children from the polygamist compound in Eldorado Texas, the news has been filled with commentary, analysis, and scorn for the behavior of this radical religious group. If charges of incest, sexual abuse, and relationships between adults and minors are true, anyone who respects Jesus Christ as Lord, must view such behavior as deplorable, inexcusable, and ungodly. While no Christian can look on such behavior with anything other than scorn, in watching our culture's response to these events one cannot help but see a little bit of *cultural schizophrenia* at work. That is, while our culture allows itself to feel moral outrage over these men taking more than one wife—for years now the exact same kind of behavior has been sanctioned, tolerated, and

between adults and minors are true, anyone who respects Jesus Christ as Lord, must view such behavior as deplorable, inexcusable, and ungodly. While no Christian can look on such behavior with anything other than scorn, in watching our



treated as normal while our culture thinks nothing of it. Let's consider, how this is the case.

The Bible teaches that God created the relationship of marriage as a bond by which, **“a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh”** (Genesis 2:24, NKJV). This bond was created as a covenant made between a man and woman, in which God Himself acted as “witness” (Malachi 2:14). In human imagination, very early man refused to be content with things as God designed them, and chose to take for himself more than one wife. Scripture tells us about, Lamech, who, **“took for himself two wives: the name of one was Adah, and the name of the second was Zillah”** (Genesis 4:19). From what Scripture reveals to us, God appears to have put up with this innovation during the days of the Patriarchs, and under the Law of Moses. Men like Jacob had two wives, and two “concubines” i.e. wives of secondary legal status (Genesis 35:22-23). David, who was subject to the Law of Moses, had many wives and concubines (II Samuel 5:13). While the Law of Moses

did set some marriage restrictions (Leviticus 18:6-18; Deuteronomy 24:4; Exodus 34) it clearly allowed Israelites to have more than one wife. Under the law if a man died with no children, his brother, was both allowed and expected to take his wife for himself in order to provide children for his brother's house. To refuse this duty was viewed with shame (Deuteronomy 25:5-10).

When Jesus came to earth, however, He revealed to us a number of things about the original desire of Deity on this matter. When questioned about divorce, he refers to the Mosaic provision which granted divorce and tells the Jewish leaders who questioned Him, that it was permitted **“because of the hardness of your hearts”** (Matthew 19:8a). He then goes on to say, **“but from the beginning it was not so”** (Matthew 19:8b). Jesus reveals that the plan of God from the beginning was that the bond between a man and woman was to be enduring. God was never pleased with the hard heart who would so easily cast off his or her mate. *But how does this relate to polygamy?* Before this, Jesus appealed to the very text we referred to above, which defines marriage:

Genesis 2:24. However, He used slightly different wording. Whereas, the wording of the Hebrew text of Genesis 2:24 read, **“and they shall become one flesh”**—Jesus quoted it to say **“and the two shall become one flesh”** (Matthew 19:5). This was not original, with Jesus. The Greek translation of the Old Testament, made long before Jesus came to earth, used the same wording. This reveals that others besides Jesus understood the words of the Hebrew text to express the idea of the *two* becoming one. Regardless of this, however, Jesus as God in the flesh, in using such words revealed that the very intention of Deity from the beginning was one man—one wife—for life!

Yet, Jesus in His coming, did not simply offer commentary on the Law of Moses. Instead He laid down for us the New Law—**“The law of Christ”** (Galatians 6:2). As such, in His discussion with the Jewish leaders He goes even further, to lay down the New Law on matters of marriage. He declares, **“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”** (Matthew 19:9). In this, Jesus lays down the monumental principle that marriage in all circumstances other than the stated exception is binding to such a degree that those who marry ones who have been divorced (or literally “put away”) commit “adultery.” In describing this as “adultery” Jesus makes it clear that before God, unscriptural divorce does not annul the covenant which He has witnessed—instead those who make additional covenants actually “commit adultery.” The significance of this doctrine is summarized in later New Testament Scripture by simply declaring, **“a wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives”** (I Corinthians 7:39).

