

First Things

Genesis 2:18-24

“With This Rib, I Thee Wed”

1. GOD’S WISDOM IN THE CONCEPTION OF MARRIAGE

A. What God discerned about man

B. What God decided for man

2. GOD’S WORK IN THE CREATION OF MARRIAGE

A. What God taught to Adam

B. What God took from Adam

3. GOD’S WILL IN THE CONTINUATION OF MARRIAGE

A. The principle declared by this union

B. The picture demonstrated by this union

1. On Saturday, July 1, 2010, the attention of many people in America was focused on the little town of Rhinebeck, NY.

2. There, on a sprawling estate that once belonged to the Astor Family, Chelsea Clinton, daughter of former president Bill Clinton, and secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, was married to Mark Mezvinsky.

3. The wedding was “lightly” shrouded in secrecy and mystery, which only added to the media hype. More than one commentator dubbed it “the wedding of the century”.

4. I was not invited to the festivities, so I cannot judge the relative merits of Chelsea’s wedding in comparison to the numerous other weddings I have attended in my life.

5. I do know this; there has never been another wedding quite like the first wedding. The latter half of Genesis 2 records for us the beginning of the first marriage.

6. Other than the animals in the garden, there were no guests at this wedding. Jehovah God gave the bride away *and* conducted the service.

7. Rather than a ring, Adam gave Eve a rib as a token of His connection with her. His vows to her are the first recorded words from man in the Bible.

8. When Adam first laid eyes on his newly formed bride, he proclaimed, *“This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”* (2:23)

9. The story of the creation of Eve, and her union with Adam is a wonderful picture of the love of God for mankind, as well as the plan of God for marriage.

10. We are also pointed here to our heavenly Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus, and what He has done for us as His bride.

11. Look at this wonderful passage with me, and notice that here we see:

I. GOD'S WISDOM IN THE CONCEPTION OF MARRIAGE

1. There are those today who would contend that marriage is merely a human institution, a construct of society and culture.
2. For that reason, they would argue that marriage can be redefined, or even abandoned altogether, if a society should choose to do so.
3. Contrary to that modern notion, the Word of God reveals that marriage was not man's idea; it was God's. The whole concept of marriage came from the Lord.
4. Genesis 2:18 says, "*And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.*"
5. The Holy Spirit records for us God's work in conceiving the plan of marriage. Notice a couple of things about this concept that originated in the mind of God. Notice first of all:

A. What God discerned about man

1. Verse 18 tells us that God discerned something about Adam's condition in the garden. We are told that God said of him, "*It is not good that the man should be alone...*"
2. Seven times in the opening chapter of Genesis, we are told that God surveyed what He created, and saw that it was good.
3. Here now, we find a previously unknown concept. God sees something that is *not* good. What is it? It is man's singleness – his aloneness.
4. Some of the ladies may read this and say, "See, man is no good without a woman!" To some degree, I guess that is right.
5. The reality is that God saw that Adam was incomplete. As wonderful as man was in his original state, he still needed something that could only be provided by the woman who would become his partner, his match, his mate.
6. We do not read that Adam came to God with this need. Adam did not even know he was incomplete. God discerned Adam's need before Adam even knew he had a need.
7. We are reminded that our Lord knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows best what is best for us.

8. Before you ever knew that you needed a Savior, Jesus was already the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. God knows what is best for us!

9. Consider here, in the God's conception of marriage, not only what God discerned about man, but notice also further:

B. What God decided for man

1. Look again at verse 18. God said, "*It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.*"

2. God not only had the insight to see what man needed, but He also took the initiative to create what man needed.

3. God decided that He would make for Adam, a "help meet". That is an interesting phrase.

4. One translation renders it as, "a helper comparable to him."ⁱ The *ESV* translates it as, "a helper fit for him."

5. The idea is of a partner who would be like Adam, and yet different from him as well. The word "helper" does not mean that Eve was created to be Adam's servant, but rather to be Adam's partner, his "complementary other".

6. God decided that he would make a perfect fit for Adam. It truly was Adam's "other half".

7. I like the way preacher and author, R. Kent Hughes explains it. He says, "The woman would be a corresponding counterpart...his matching opposite, [and] she would supply what was lacking in him."ⁱⁱ

8. Most of you have seen the commercials for the online dating site that boasts of its compatibility tests, and urges singles to log on in order to find, "their perfect match."

9. I assure you, there has never been a more perfect match than when God created Eve for Adam.

10. He knew what Adam needed, and he conceived the principle of marriage even before He created the woman Adam would marry.

11. Looking at this text, we see clearly *God's wisdom in the conception of marriage*. As we look further in this passage, we also see:

II. GOD'S WORK IN THE CREATION OF MARRIAGE

1. While we don't always do the will of God, when God decides to do something, He always does it. He accomplishes His will.
2. He decided that He would make a partner fit for Adam, and the text tells us with some detail how He achieved this work.
3. It is interesting to read the account the Spirit gives to us of the origin of the woman, and the work God did in preparing Eve for Adam and Adam for Eve.
4. Look with me at the text, and notice:

A. What God taught to Adam

1. If you are reading through Genesis 2, there seems to be an interruption in the narrative between verse 18, where God decided to make a wife for Adam, and verse 21, where God actually created Eve.
2. Look at verse 19. The Bible says, *"And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof."*
3. Verse 20 continues, *"And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field..."*
4. Though it seems strange that God went from contemplating matrimony, to instituting zoology, the reality is that God was teaching Adam something very important.
5. As all the animals paraded before the first man, submitting to his dominion over them, and receiving from him their names, Adam's keen mind picked up on something about all the species he named.
6. A creature with a long neck trotted before Adam, and after close inspection, Adam labeled him as the giraffe. He noticed though, that there were two types of giraffe.
7. Likewise, there were two types of elephant, two types of dog, two types of horse, and two types of all the animals.
8. What Adam didn't realize is that he was seeing that the animals had a corresponding partner. There was a Mr. Hippo, and there was also a Mrs. Hippo.

9. The last phrase of verse 20 says, "...*but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.*" Adam discovered that he was the only creature who did not have that mate – that "matching opposite".

10. You may be thinking, "Why did God do all that to teach Adam about his need for a woman? Why didn't he just sit Adam down and explain it to him?"

11. Think about it. We have had thousands of years with women, and we men still don't understand them. Can you imagine trying to explain a woman to a man who had never even seen one?

12. As we think about God's work in the creation of marriage, consider not only what God taught to Adam, but consider also:

B. What God took from Adam

1. Look with me now at verse 21. This is a remarkable scene, as God, the Great Physician performs the first surgery in His work of creating Eve.

2. It says, "*And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof.*"

3. We are told that with that rib, God made Eve. There are several significant truths relayed to us in this verse. Consider a couple of them. For instance, consider *why God did this operation*.

4. Why not just take some dirt and make another person, like He had done with Adam? The answer is that for Eve to be a match and the completion of Adam, she had to come from Adam.

5. After this work of God, man would only be complete when he was united with his wife. Eve was the missing piece of Adam, and their marriage was the union that made man into mankind.

6. Consider not only why God did this operation, but also *where God did this operation*.

7. I can't improve upon saintly Matthew Henry's comments on this section. Nearly everyone I read on this passage quoted him.

8. He says, "...the woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved."ⁱⁱⁱ

9. The rib that God took from Adam and turned into Eve is a sign of the meaning and importance of marriage. God created a woman for the man, and together they would become one.

10. I love verse 22, especially the last phrase. Look at it. "*And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, **and brought her unto the man.***" (emphasis added)

11. Like a proud father with his daughter, God walked Eve down the middle of the garden, and presented her to Adam.

12. What was Adam's reaction? In the *ESV*, verse 23 says:

"This at last is bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man."

13. *All good marriages are the work of a good God, but none quite so clearly as this first marriage.*

14. We see in this text *God's wisdom in the conception of marriage, as well as God's work in the creation of marriage.* Lastly, as we study this passage, we see:

III. GOD'S WILL IN THE CONTINUATION OF MARRIAGE

1. In verse 24, the Holy Spirit includes a commentary statement that Jesus Himself would quote in the New Testament regarding the issue of marriage.

2. Verse 24 says, "*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*"

3. This passage that includes the miraculous creation of woman is the foundation for our understanding of marriage as an institution given by the will of God.

4. Consider with me a couple of things about marriage as it is established here, and also as it is explained throughout the Bible.

5. First of all, notice:

A. The principle declared by this union

1. God presented Adam with his newly formed bride. Based on their union, the Word of God says, "*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*"
2. The definition of marriage is not up for debate. Our government may try to redefine marriage, but God has already declared what a marriage union involves.
3. He declared the *components* involved in a marriage. They are a man and his wife. There can be no legitimate same-sex marriage, because marriage, as God ordained it, is between a male and female.
4. He declared the *commitment* involved in a marriage. The man is to leave his mother and father, and he is to *cleave* to his wife.
5. The idea of cleaving is to be glued to something, so that two things are actually one. It is a permanent bond that is created by the marriage union.
6. Speaking of that bond, Jesus said, "*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*" (Mark 10:9)
7. Chuck Swindoll tells about a sign in the store window of a Hollywood jewelry store. In bold letters it read, "WE RENT WEDDING RINGS".^{iv}
8. Adam did not merely loan his rib to Eve, and God intends that individual marriages are to be permanent, and likewise the institution of marriage was established a continual one.
9. God's will is that the first marriage be the model for all marriages that follow, and His will has not changed, even for this sinful society.
10. In considering God's will for marriage, we are mindful not only of the principle declared by this union, but we are also reminded of:

B. The picture demonstrated by this union

1. The New Testament raises even further our understanding and reverence for marriage when it reveals that marriage is a picture of Christ's relationship with His church.
2. We are told that the church is the bride of Christ (Revelation 21:9). We are told that husbands are to love their wives even as Christ loves the church, and gave himself for it (Ephesians 5:25).

3. When we take the lenses of spiritual insight given to us by the New Testament, and we use them to view this passage in Genesis 2, a wonderful picture emerges.
 4. Looking at this text, in light of the gospel, we are reminded of how the Lord Jesus endured the sleep of death on our behalf when He died on the cross for our sins.
 5. We are reminded that a spear pierced His side, and from that wound flowed the very blood that would be used to give us life.
 6. We are reminded that when we are united with Christ, we become one with Him in his death and resurrection. We are reminded that we have left first parents, Adam and Eve, and we have cleaved to another!
 7. We are reminded also, that there is a coming a great wedding feast – a marriage supper of the Lamb, to which we have been invited and are even now waiting for the day when our Bridegroom will come and take us to His home.
 8. Our marriages glorify God, and fulfill His will, not only when they reflect the relationship God created for Adam and Eve, but even more so when they reflect the relationship Christ has established with His bride – the church.
 9. Those of us who know Christ ought to desire not just to have a good marriage, but a gospel marriage as well. That is, one that reflects the truth of Jesus and His love for us.
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1. Every man who reads this text in Genesis 2 ought to see his wife for what she truly is, a gift and blessing from God.
 2. This text points us to the goodness of our God in giving us the blessing and gift of marriage.
 3. It reminds us that without the Lord God, Adam and Eve's marriage could never have happened. Likewise, our marriages are not possible apart from the help and grace of God.
 4. My prayer is that in looking at this text, our hearts have been pointed to Jesus, and filled with praise to Him for who He is, and what He has given to us, both in the covenant of our salvation, as well as the covenant of marriage.

ⁱ NKJV

ⁱⁱ Hughes, R. Kent, Genesis: Beginning and Blessing, (Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL, 2004), p. 58

ⁱⁱⁱ Henry, Matthew, Matthew Henry's Commentaries: Vol. 1, (Fleming H. Revell, Old Tappan, NJ), p. 20

^{iv} Swindoll, Charles, The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart, (Word Publishing, Nashville, 1998), p. 361