

# Fulton County Gospel News

*Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World*

“... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

Established 1953

September-October 2013

Vol. 47 / No. 5

## IS MARRIAGE BECOMING OBSOLETE?

by Lee Moses

The above question is being increasingly raised. This is not tremendously surprising, since marriage — especially one-man-and-one-woman-for-life-marriage — is indeed on the decline in America. Many more women are having children outside of wedlock — often intentionally. About 29 percent of children under 18 now live with an unmarried parent or parents — **5 times more** than in 1960. Fifteen percent of children live with a divorced or separated parent, and 14 percent have parents who never married. The 29 percent does not include children who live with divorced and remarried parents.

Efforts to impute to marriage indefinite definitions (including two men, two women, or any numerical arrangement of one or both) obscure the purpose and necessity of marriage. Many couples — and singles — defiantly insist that they are perfectly capable of rearing children and enjoying all the benefits of marriage without the obligation that comes with marriage.

So it is clear that marriage is becoming less and less the norm. But is marriage becoming obsolete?

**Marriage still provides a companionship incomparable to any other human relationship.** When God first created man, God brought the different animals to him to allow him to name them. But God had another purpose in this as well. “*And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air; and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not*

*found an help meet for him*” (Genesis 2:20; emph. LM). Here “*meet*” literally means, “that which is opposite, that which corresponds,” and thus a help **proper for him**.<sup>1</sup> God had already made an observation and determination: “*And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him*” (verse 18). An animal would not be suitable for this purpose. Another male human being would not be suitable for this purpose. Multiple women would not be suitable for this purpose, either strung out individually or together at the same time. God made one woman for Adam and brought her to him (verse 22). To rectify man’s loneliness and to provide a corresponding partner required one man and one woman. Adam observed, “*This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh*” (Genesis 2:23-24). To this Jesus added, “*Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*” (Matthew 19:6). God joins a married couple together as “one flesh.” Of what other human relationship could this be said? No boyfriend/girlfriend relationship approaches this, much less the perverted relationships finding increased favor today.

There is, however, a **spiritual** relationship worthy of comparison with marriage. When considering the

unsurpassed love and intimate relationship Christ has with His cherished church, the Holy Spirit found **marriage** a worthwhile comparison (Luke 5:34-35; II Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 19:7-9). When considering a love that involves the greatest sacrificial love, the Holy Spirit chose marriage as its parallel. When considering a relationship guaranteed to exist into eternity, the Holy Spirit chose marriage as its parallel. Regardless of the abandonment of marriage by many, marriage still provides a companionship incomparable to any other human relationship.

**Marriage is still a valuable guard against fornication.** Mankind was created to procreate (Genesis 1:28; 4:1). As such, it is wholly natural and expected that mankind has sexual desires. However, those desires were intended to be gratified **only in marriage**. Fornication, sexual intercourse between people not married to each other, has caused people to go for years, if not the remainder of their lives, with filthy diseases. Those diseases have also shortened the lives of many fornicators. But far worse, fornication repulses the God who created them and blessed them with the possibility of marital intimacy.

*For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel [body] in sanctification and honour; Not in*

**FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS**

USPS Publication #211780

. . . is a Periodical publication issued monthly by the church of Christ at Third and Bethel (P.O. Box 251), Mammoth Spring, AR 72554-0251. **POSTMASTER: Please mail all changes of address to the above address.**

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**FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS**

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*the lust of concupiscence [‘passion of lust,’ American Standard Version], even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter [specifically in this matter of fornication/adultery]: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8, emph. LM).*

*Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body (1 Corinthians 6:18).*

So if we are to use our bodies in a way that is pleasing to God, if we are going to use our bodies to fulfill their intended purpose, we are going to abstain from; yea, **flee** from, fornication.

But we have degenerated into a society **obsessed** with fornication.

Sexual images are splashed across television advertisements, magazine covers at the grocery store, and everywhere in between. Popular television shows and films are geared entirely around themes of fornication and adultery. One disgusting company whose sole business is to set up adulterous liaisons even advertises by the slogan, “Life is short. Have an affair.” Women commonly dress in revealing attire only a prostitute would have worn publicly a few decades ago. Both men and women are far more brazen in their suggestive remarks, if not outright propositions, to each other.

The growing temptations to fornication make marriage **all the more relevant** – not obsolete.

*Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband . . . But if they cannot contain [restrain their sexual passions], let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn [‘burn with passion,’ New King James Version] (1 Corinthians 7:1-2, 9).*

For those Scripturally eligible with prospects of a suitable mate, marriage is the God-provided answer to temptations to commit fornication.

**Marriage still provides the best opportunities for success.** Poverty is much more widespread in single-parent homes than it is in married families. When a child is reared in a married family, the likelihood of that child growing up in poverty **drops 82 percent.**<sup>2</sup> As one Washington think tank was forced to conclude, “Marriage is the strongest factor in reducing child poverty in the U.S.”<sup>3</sup> Married men earn much more than their single counterparts, and that goes up the longer one is married.

Success is certainly not defined altogether by one’s financial well-being. But by numerous other

measures – health, the likelihood of violence, mental stability, even the arbitrary measure of “happiness” – marriage provides the clear advantage. *“Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord” (Proverbs 18:22). “Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies” (Proverbs 31:10).*

**Marriage still provides the best environment for children.** Children reared in arrangements other than by their two biological parents, or by two loving adoptive parents, suffer for it. According to studies performed by Swedish researchers, children raised by single parents have been found to suffer from serious psychiatric illnesses and addictions later in life. These studies also showed that girls are three times more likely to become drug addicts if they lived with a single parent, and boys are four times more likely.

Children are far more likely to become juvenile delinquents and go on to lead lives of crime when reared in single-parent homes. Many lament the high crime rates found in black communities – however, the high crime rates have nothing to do with the residents’ skin color, and very little to do with their culture or even their poverty. According to a study by the Progressive Policy Institute, after controlling for single motherhood, the difference in black and white crime rates **disappeared**. So why are the crime rates higher in black communities? At least one major answer comes from the predominance of single parenthood in those communities. *“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).*

**Marriage is still God’s plan.** The world may say, “A couple doesn’t need the commitment of marriage to live together and rear children

successfully.” The **world** may say, “Society can broadly define marriage, and it won’t negatively affect society.” We have considered just a few of many reasons why this is not true. But even if marriage were not so obviously superior in those aspects, the most important reason why marriage is not obsolete is because marriage is God’s plan. *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts”* (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Current societal trends and current societal sentiments may seem to suggest that marriage is on its way out. However, regardless of what society at large chooses to do, marriage will **never** become obsolete in the sight of God or of His people.

<sup>1</sup> s.v. *neged*, in Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. Johann Jakob Stam, trans. M. E. J. Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2007–2009. <[http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_09\\_3YR\\_S1702&prodType=table](http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_09_3YR_S1702&prodType=table)>.

<sup>3</sup> The Heritage Foundation, “Marriage Reduces Child Poverty.” <<http://www.heritage.org/childpoverty>>.

## “WITHOUT EXCUSE”

### Part Three

by Lee Moses

God seeks to reconcile the sinful world to Himself that all mankind might have eternal life, yet not all the world will be reconciled to Him (2 Corinthians 5:18-21; John 5:40). Sadly, many perpetuate their failures to be reconciled to Him by conjuring up excuses, perhaps even believing that those excuses will carry them through on the Day of Judgment. However, excuses for failing to know and obey God do not excuse and will not stand.

**“Everybody else is doing it” is not an excuse.** This is an attempted excuse that children learn at a fairly young age: “All the other kids’ parents let them stay up until ten o’clock”; “All the other kids’ parents let them watch R-rated movies”; “All the other girls are wearing short shorts”; “All the other kids are going to this dance/drinking party.” This continues into adulthood, as people continue to make excuses to themselves and to God: “Everybody else fudges a little on their taxes”; “Everybody else drives at least 10 m.p.h. over the legally mandated speed limit”; “Everybody else drinks at office parties”; “Everybody else is shacking up before getting married”; “Everybody else sleeps in on Sunday mornings instead of going to Bible class.” Church leaders attempt this excuse to justify introducing religious practices of human origin: “All the denominations use instrumental music and drama to make worship services more exciting”; “So many brethren are building gymnasiums and dividing assemblies for ‘children’s church,’ why can’t we?”

However, is the legitimacy of an action established by the number of people who **do** that action? If a little girl falls into a river, and a large crowd standing by does nothing, are they all right to do nothing? What if another man finally walks up, observes the situation, and jumps in and saves the girl – did he do wrong? After all, he did not do what everyone else was doing – or not doing, as the case may be.

The Lord told Israel, *“Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment”* (Exodus 23:2). This implies that the “multitude” can very well be on the side of evil, and that the “many” can be in favor of perverting justice. But we are not to stand where they stand, or to do what they do. We are exhorted time and again to be **holy** – set apart, distinct, and consecrated to God (2

Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 1:14-16; et al.). God admonishes us, “You’re **not supposed** to do what everybody else is doing.” As Jesus warned,

*Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Matthew 7:13-14).*

It is not the people doing an action, or the number of people doing an action, that makes that action right or wrong. The action is right or wrong based on what **God** has said about the action (2 Timothy 3:16-17). “If a thing is wrong, it is still wrong even if everybody does do it. If it is right, it is still right even if nobody does it.”<sup>1</sup>

*For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged (Romans 3:3-4).*

God is right. His word is right (Psalm 33:4). Anybody who suggests that one should follow the crowd rather than God is a liar. And anyone who “loveth” or “maketh” the lies of the multitude rather than the truth of God will be excluded from His heavenly city (Revelation 22:15).

**“Everybody else is doing worse” is not an excuse.** Others, some well aware that the way of the multitude is the way of destruction, find assurance of their salvation simply because they are not as wicked as others are. They view themselves as good, decent people, and thus believe that heaven is theirs. They often contrast their own goodness with the worst of humanity, such as Hitler, Stalin, or Osama bin Laden. They may even be able to correctly esteem their own morality and generosity above that of many

*continued from page three*

professed Christians they know. However, no human being other than Jesus Christ will ever enter final glory on the basis of his own moral goodness, as *“all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23).

To consider oneself pleasing to God based upon his moral superiority to others is to manifest the haughty spirit and flawed understanding of a certain Pharisee: *“The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess”* (Luke 18:11-12). The claims he made for himself were evidently true. His morality exceeded all those others he named, at least regarding those particular matters. Nonetheless, Jesus said that this Pharisee returned from his prayer unjustified, with his future expectation being a deserved humbling at the hand of a displeased God (verse

14). This is not to diminish the importance of righteous living (Ephesians 4:22-32; Titus 2:12-14; 1 Peter 2:11-12), but true righteousness is never measured relative to the unrighteousness of others.

To consider oneself pleasing to God based upon his moral superiority to others is to use a flawed standard. God’s word is the only correct standard of righteousness (Psalm 119:172; John 12:48; Romans 10:3-4). And it is only by obeying that standard that one can be found in Jesus Christ, and thereby set right with God (Romans 6:17; Galatians 3:26-27; 6:15-16; Hebrews 5:8-9).

*For we dare not make ourselves of the number; or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise (2 Corinthians 10:12).*

*To Be Continued*

<sup>1</sup> Albert Gardner, “Not Who but What.” *The Beacon*, Bellview Church of Christ, Pensacola, FL. Nov 18, 1982.

**GOD’S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP  
– COLOSSIANS 3:17 –**

1. **LORD’S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 11:23-24; 16:1-2).
2. **PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7, I Thessalonians 5:17-18).
3. **SINGING** - God’s word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
4. **GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; I Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
5. **PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men’s doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; I Corinthians 1:18-23).

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