

Is Biblical Marriage between One Man and One Woman Only?

The Sadducees Ask About the Resurrection:

Luke 20:27-36

27 There came to him some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection, 28 and they asked him a question, saying, “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife but no children, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. 29 Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife, and died without children. 30 And the second 31 and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died. 32 Afterward the woman also died. 33 In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife.”

34 And Jesus said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, 35 but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, 36 for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

The Creation of Man, Woman and Marriage:

Genesis 2:24-25

[ESV] 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

[NASB] 24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked, but they were not ashamed.

[KJV] 24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. 25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

[NKJV] 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Laws Concerning Levirate Marriage:

Deuteronomy 25:5-10

5 “If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. **Her husband’s brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her.** 6 And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. 7 And if the man does not wish to take his brother’s wife, then his brother’s wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, ‘My husband’s brother refuses to perpetuate his brother’s name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband’s brother to me.’ 8 Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him, and if he persists, saying, ‘I do not wish to take her,’ 9 then his brother’s wife shall go up to him in the presence of the elders and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face. And she shall answer and say, ‘So shall it be done to the man who does not build up his brother’s house.’ 10 And the name of his house shall be called in Israel, ‘The house of him who had his sandal pulled off.’

Judah and Tamar:

Genesis 38:1-11

38 It happened at that time that Judah went down from his brothers and turned aside to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. 2 There Judah saw the daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua. He took her and went in to her, 3 and she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Er. 4 She conceived again and bore a son, and she called his name Onan. 5 Yet again she bore a son, and she called his name Shelah. Judah was in Chezib when she bore him.

6 And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. 7 **But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord put him to death.** 8 Then Judah said to Onan, “Go in to your brother's wife and perform the duty of a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother.” 9 But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his. **So whenever he went in to his brother's wife he would waste the semen on the ground, so as not to give offspring to his brother.** 10 **And what he did was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and he put him to death also.** 11 Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, “Remain a widow in your father's house, till Shelah my son grows up”—for he feared that he would die, like his brothers. So Tamar went and remained in her father's house.

Punishments for Sexual Immorality:

Leviticus 20:10-21

10 “If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. 11 If a man lies with his father's wife, he has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them. 12 If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death; they have committed perversion; their blood is upon them. 13 If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them. 14 If a man takes a woman and her mother also, it is depravity; he and they shall be burned with fire, that there may be no depravity among you. 15 If a man lies with an animal, he shall surely be put to death, and you shall kill the animal. 16 If a woman approaches any animal and lies with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.

17 “If a man takes his sister, a daughter of his father or a daughter of his mother, and sees her nakedness, and she sees his nakedness, it is a disgrace, and they shall be cut off in the sight of the children of their people. He has uncovered his sister's nakedness, and he shall bear his iniquity. 18 If a man lies with a woman during her menstrual period and uncovers her nakedness, he has made naked her fountain, and she has uncovered the fountain of her blood. Both of them shall be cut off from among their people. 19 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister or of your father's sister, for that is to make naked one's relative; they shall bear their iniquity. 20 If a man lies with his uncle's wife, he has uncovered his uncle's nakedness; they shall bear their sin; they shall die childless. 21 **If a man takes his brother's wife, it is impurity. He has uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless.**

The Kinsman Redeemer: *(In Ruth, Boaz is the Kinsman Redeemer)*

Ruth 1:12-13

12 Turn back, my daughters; go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons, 13 would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me.”

Ruth 3:9

9 He said, “Who are you?” And she answered, “I am Ruth, your servant. Spread your wings over your servant, for you are a redeemer.”

Ruth 4:1-2

1 Now Boaz had gone up to the gate and sat down there. And behold, the redeemer, of whom Boaz had spoken, came by. So Boaz said, “Turn aside, friend; sit down here.” And he turned aside and sat down. 2 And he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, “Sit down here.” So they sat down.

Ruth 4:6

6 Then the redeemer said, “I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it.”

Ruth 4:10

10 Also Ruth the Moabite, the widow of Mahlon, I have bought to be my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead in his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his native place. You are witnesses this day.”

Final question: Should we re-think the idea that biblical marriage is ONLY between one man and one woman? Or is God’s ultimate purpose and heart towards His created, redemption?