

Q. What is a real marriage? Can two members of the same sex really be married? Who has the right to declare what is or is not a marriage?

A. A few days ago, Barack Obama, the president of the United States, said, "Same-sex couples should be able to get married."

This gives rise to three, closely-related questions: 1. What is a real marriage? 2. Can two members of the same sex really be married? and 3. Who has the right to declare what is or is not a marriage?

1. What is a real marriage?

The first marriage was between the first two people—Adam and Eve. God made Adam first, and he was the only human. In Genesis 2:18, we read, "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." The word "meet" here means fitting or suitable—a counterpart. In verses 21-22, we read how God set about making this suitable helper: "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; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man."

The first thing to notice here is that God did not make another man. He made a woman. We do not have Adam and Steve. We have Adam and Eve. Now read the first instance of love at first sight and a very quick marriage: "And Adam said, 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. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Genesis 2:23-25).

Thus, the first marriage was between a man and a woman. But you may say that what was fine for Adam and Eve is not necessarily fine for everyone. But look again at verse 24: "Therefore shall a man leave

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his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." God can be called the Father of Adam and Eve. But this is an obvious reference to earthly, physical fathers and mothers. Adam and Eve did not have such a father and mother. This sentence is written as the definition of marriage for all mankind following Adam and Eve. A man is to leave his father and mother (notice that it is not mother and mother or father and father) and cleave to his wife (the Hebrew word means "woman"), and by that union—the union between a man and a woman—they become one flesh. Without this union, there is not really a marriage. And, as I have brought out in the article, "Is Sex Outside of Marriage Okay for Christians Today?" (<http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/outsidemarriage.htm>), other Scriptures show us that the union is to be covenanted before God (God created and brought Adam and Eve together, so they obviously had His approval), and the union is to be publicly witnessed (people are to know that you are married, that you have made that life-time commitment to each other). So, marriage is the covenanting or contracting before God and other people that a man and a woman are making a commitment to remain together as husband and wife for life. And it is the subsequent consummation of that marriage in intimate sexual union that makes the man and woman one flesh in God's sight.

2. Can two members of the same sex really be married?

Now let's jump ahead to the words of Jesus Christ, the God/Man whom all Christians are supposed to consider as Lord and whom they are to obey. In Matthew 19, we read that the Pharisees came to Jesus asking him a question about divorce: "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" (verse 3).

Jesus answers in verses 4-6: "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female. And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

Jesus is, of course, referring back to the account we have already read in Genesis. He is putting His stamp of approval on that account, saying that it is indeed authoritative. His summary helps us to see the pertinent points again, and He, acting by His authority, also adds a command and the end.

According to Jesus Christ, God made the first humans male and female (and the Greek words here are clearly words for male and female) and that it is "for this cause" that a man is to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, the two becoming one flesh. God purposely made the first humans male and female so that they could be married. Marriage is the very purpose of having the two sexes. These two sexes—male and female—become one flesh. The concept of marriage and the two sexes cannot be separated. God made them male and female so they could marry. They marry because they are male and female. Without there being a male and a female, there is no marriage.

3. Who has the right to declare what is or is not a marriage?

Let's look again at the command of Matthew 19:6: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Who joins two people together in marriage? God. This is a very clear Scripture. God joins two people—male and female—together in marriage. It makes no difference what religion the couple is, even whether they believe in God at all. A marriage is something that God created, and God joins a couple together in marriage whether they know it or not.

So, who has the right to declare what is or is not a marriage? God. And, what does God tell us in the Bible is a marriage? He says that a marriage is a life-time commitment between a man and a woman, witnessed by Him and other people, and that is consummated by sexual union that makes the man and woman one flesh.

While people are to witness the covenanting between the man and woman couple, and they can make this into a ceremony if they wish, the person standing before the couple—whether pastor, priest, pope, rabbi, judge, or justice of the peace—is not the one who is joining them. The One who is joining them is God. And God, who in the Bible has clearly defined what He created as marriage, does not join two people of the same sex. The state may permit them to "marry" and they may have a license and they may have a ceremony and they may then have the same legal benefits of the state as a married male and female couple. But in God's sight they are not married and it is thus not a real marriage.

Therefore, it is God and God alone who has the right to define a marriage. God has not given that right to the state or, for that matter, to the church. He has not given that authority to the president of the United States. Marriage is a direct relationship between God and the

couple being married. Frankly, God never gave the state the authority even to issue marriage licenses, but since it does not cause us to disobey God to obtain one, then we should obey the law and do so. The confusion arises, of course, when, because the state issues these licenses, it believes it therefore has the right to define marriage.

As Christians, we must realize that whatever states decide on this matter, it does not affect what God defines as a marriage. The issue here is really a legal and economic affair of the state. If states want to recognize same-sex couples as being married and extend to those couples the various legal and economic benefits of marriage, then that is the state's business. It does not have to confuse and upset us Christians. It does not truly change what a marriage is. The state does not have the authority to define a real marriage. As Christians, our job is to know the truth, to continue in the truth, to teach it to our children, and to preach it to all who will listen.

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