

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

“What God Has Joined Together”

By Bobby Witherington

“Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings, that He departed from Galilee and came to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there. The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?’ And He answered and said to them, ‘Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? and said, ‘for This reason a man shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? ‘So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate’” (Matt. 19:1-6).

In His earthy ministry Jesus spent considerable time teaching in Galilee, but now, having *“finished these sayings,”* He *“departed from Galilee”* (v. 1), and would not return to Galilee to meet with His disciples until after His resurrection (Matt. 26:31-32; 28:16-17). After Jesus departed Galilee and went to *“the region of Judea”* (v.1), *“great multitudes followed Him”* (v. 2), including *“the Pharisees”* (v. 3), who also came, but whose motives were less than genuine. They *“came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, Is it lawful for a man to divorce His wife for just any reason?”* They figured that this was their opportunity to put Jesus in a dilemma with regards to the people, for any answer He gave would be offensive to different ones. But Jesus, the Master Teacher, directed them back *“the beginning,”* stating that *“He who made them...made them male and female”* (v. 4), (there were only two genders *“in the beginning”*). Jesus referred to the creation of Adam and Eve (who was created from a rib taken from Adam’s side, (Gen. 2:21-24), at which time they were joined together in marriage, and God said, *“the two shall become one flesh”* (Matt. 19:5; Gen. 2:24). Jesus then stated a necessary conclusion regarding a scriptural marriage – that is they (the husband and wife) *“are no longer two but one flesh,”* and that *“what God has joined together let not man separate”* (Matt. 19:6).

From the above scripture, it becomes evident that there are some things which *“God has joined together,”* and mere **man** does not have the right to *“separate”* what *“God has joined together!”* This should be obvious, for man is the created, and God is the **Creator!** God is *“Almighty”* (Gen. 17:1); His *“understanding is infinite”* (Ps. 147:5); God is *“from everlasting to everlasting”* (Ps. 90:2); He is the *“Potter,”* we are *“the clay,”* and *“the Potter”* has *“power over the clay”* (Rom. 9:20-21). So who is man to try to undo what **God** has done; who is man to separate what *“God has joined together,”* especially since Jesus Himself said *“what God has joined together, let not man separate”* (Matt. 19:6)!

Hopefully, enough has been said for each one to get the message; man must not *“separate”* that which *“God has joined together!”* But what are some of the things which *“God has joined together?”*

God “Has joined together:”

1. A Husband and wife in a lawful marriage. There are three categories of people who have a right to marry: (1) responsible people who have never been married before, Heb. 13:4; 1 Cor. 7:2; Gen. 2:18, (2)

People formerly married, but whose mate has died (Rom. 7:2-3), and (3) People formerly married, who divorced their mate ***“for fornication”*** (Matt. 19:9). In reply to the Pharisees’ question, man cannot lawfully ***“divorce his wife for just any reason”*** (Matt. 19:3). Jesus gave one ***“reason”*** why one may divorce his/or her spouse and re-marry, that being ***“for fornication.”*** It is ***“for fornication”*** and ***only “for fornication,”*** whereby one may lawfully divorce his/or her spouse and remarry. A divorce for any other cause, and a subsequent remarriage constitutes an adulterous union (Matt. 19:9). Marriage, as God designed it, is a sacred union; man must not ***“separate what God has joined together”*** (Matt 19:6).

2. The words of Jesus and the rest of the New Testament. Many believe that the words of Jesus (written in red, in red letter editions of the Bible) are more important than the rest of the New Testament. However, they overlook the fact that Jesus ***“called the twelve disciples”*** or the twelve ***“apostles”*** (Matt. 10:1-2), to whom He gave ***“the words”*** which God the Father had given Him (John 16:8), and which they were commanded to proclaim to the world (Mark 16:15; Matt. 28:18-20). Jesus sent the Holy Spirit Who would bring to their ***“remembrance”*** all that Jesus had taught them (John 14:13), and Who would guide them ***“into all truth”*** (John 16:13). That which they proclaimed verbally and penned in words were ***“the commandments of the Lord”*** (1 Cor. 14:37), having been given to them ***“by inspiration of God”*** (2 Tim. 3:16), and which are contained in the ***“New Testament”*** of which Jesus is ***“the Mediator”*** (Heb. 9:15). Hence, God has joined together the words of Jesus with the rest of the New Testament, and Jesus said, ***“what God has joined together, let not man separate”*** (Matt. 19:6).

3. Faith and Obedience. Yes, faith is absolutely essential, for the Bible says ***“without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”*** (Heb. 11:6). However, obedience is also essential, for Jesus is ***“the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him”*** (Heb. 5:9). Sadly, however, multitudes maintain that we are justified by “faith alone,” even though an inspired writer plainly said ***“a man is justified by works, and not by faith only”*** (Jas. 2:24). It is noteworthy that the one time when the words ***“faith only”*** are mentioned in the Bible, we are told that one is ***“not”*** justified by ***“faith only!”*** Yes, we concur that no one can do enough good works so that he can merit salvation; in fact, when we have done the best we can we are still ***“unprofitable servants”*** (Luke 17:10). Were it not for the grace of God no one could be saved. However, let us remember that the gospel is ***“the power of God unto salvation”*** (Rom. 1:16), and the gospel is the ***“gospel of the grace of God”*** (Acts 20:4); however, those who refuse to obey the gospel shut themselves off from the grace of God, and will therefore ***“be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of God and from the glory of His power”*** (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

4. Baptism and Salvation. The religious world in general largely tries to negate the necessity of baptism for salvation. However, Jesus said ***“He who believes and is baptized shall be saved...”*** (Mark 16:16). On the day of Pentecost the apostle Peter commanded the pricked-in-the-heart Jews (whom he had charged with having crucified Jesus Christ) to ***“repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...”*** (Acts 2:38). Salvation is ***“in Christ”*** (2 Tim. 2:10), and baptism is the culminating act whereby one enters ***“into Christ”*** and puts ***“on Christ”*** (Gal. 3:27).

5. Faithfulness to God and salvation. Yes, to be saved, one has to obey the gospel of Christ (2 Thess. 1:7-9). However, after one’s sins have been washed away in baptism (Acts 22:16), and one is ***“added to the church”*** (Acts 2:47), he must still remain ***faithful*** to the Lord. It is possible to fall ***“from grace”*** (Gal. 5:4); hence, God’s people are charged with the responsibility to ***“be faithful unto death”*** (Rev. 2:10). Faithfulness includes godly living (Titus 2:11, 12), and also includes being regular and steadfast in the worship and service of God (1 Cor. 15:58; Acts 2:42; Heb. 10:25, etc.). Yes, there are many things which ***“God has joined together,”*** which man must ***“not separate.”*** Let us take note of these things, and act accordingly, for who are we to separate ***“what God has joined together?”*** ■