

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: GOD'S LAW OF MARRIAGE

Scripture: Book of Mormon, Jacob 2:31-33, 36-38.

The word of God burthens me because of your grosser crimes. For behold, thus saith the Lord, This people begin to wax in iniquity; they understand not the scriptures, for they seek to excuse themselves in committing whoredoms, because of the things which were written concerning David, and Solomon, his son. Behold, David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord. Wherefore, my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none: For I, the Lord God, delighteth in the chastity of women. Wherefore this people shall keep my commandments, saith the Lord of hosts, or cursed be the land for their sakes.

There shall not any man among you have save it be one wife;
and concubines he shall have none.

The statement is often made that man is by nature polygamous. By nature he is also carnal, sensual, and devilish, because of the fall and the inheritance of evil he has received from his fallen ancestor, Adam. Man's polygamous tendencies are a part of his fallen or evil nature. God does not will or desire that man should continue in this fallen and unregenerate state. He has provided the means of redemption and rebirth in the gift of his Son, whose atonement can free men from sin and death on conditions of repentance and complete surrender to God.

Usually women do not choose of their own free will to share their husbands with other women. Because woman is more dependent on the protection of her mate during periods of child bearing and child rearing, she desires the permanence, stability, and security of one man's love which is exclusively her own. It is usually man who is responsible for polygamy. Man is physically stronger than woman. Physically, he can subject her to his will. Very often in the history of the world's major wars and minor deperadations man has taken woman captive, has violated her rights as a person, has forced her into polygamy, concubinage, and slavery.

Because women are weaker than men, it is only in fable and fiction that we read of women making slaves of men. Very seldom does the ethnologist encounter a culture in which the woman has several husbands. She prefers not to divide her attentions among several men, no one of

whom is specifically obligated to her and to her children. There is much in the Old Testament condemning the immorality and lewdness of pagan and idolatrous worship, in which women committed sexual crimes outside of marriage, but little or nothing condemning the practice of one woman having several husbands at one time. Such prohibition was simply unnecessary.

The Bible does seem at times to accept polygamy, because the Bible is primarily a record of conditions as they existed. Yet at no time does the Bible ever condone or justify polygamy, nor did God ever command it. In the beginning, God made one woman, Eve, for one man, Adam, and decreed that "they twain (that is, two) shall be one flesh." Jesus and Paul both quote this command in New Testament scripture, indicating their sanction of God's law of marriage which is one husband, one wife. Malachi, in condemning adultery and polygamy in Israel refers to this first creation of one wife, inferring that God could easily have made more than one wife for Adam if that had been his will for man. (Mal. 2:14,15) With the whole earth waiting to be populated, God created one man and one woman, and bade them be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.

On the occasion when the earth was about to be emptied by the flood, Noah took both animals and human beings into the ark "two by two." (Gen. 7:9-15) Noah took into the ark only one wife for him-

self, and one wife each for his three sons. (Gen. 7:13)

When Abraham got impatient and couldn't wait for the promised son and heir by his legal wife, Sarah, he took Hagar. But God did not recognize Ishmael, Hagar's son, as the legal heir to the promises made to Abraham, and commanded that the bondmaid and her son be cast out. (Gen. 21:8) Jacob was tricked into marriage with Leah, but Rachel was his first love and was later regarded as his only legal wife. Jacob had children not only by Leah, but also twoslave girls, Zilpah, and Bilhah; and practically every child of those polygamous marriages caused him trouble. Eventually it was Joseph, the firstborn of Rachel, who received the birthright. (I Chron. 5:2)

David's adulterous marriage to Bathsheba set off a whole chain of other events that not only set a bad example for Solomon, his son, but later divided and destroyed his kingdom. No wonder the thing that David did "displeased the Lord!" (II Sam. 11:27) David's son, Solomon, with 700 wives and 300 concubines had little time to remember God. (I Kings 11:3,4) God was angry with him, too, and Solomon's glorious kingdom was destroyed.

Why are polygamy and concubinage wrong? Not just because God says so. Not because they violate some vague or venerable old customs which we dignify by calling "moral." Polygamy and concubinage are wrong because they are a denial of certain basic human rights. The first of these rights is the right of a woman to be regarded as a complete person, to have her personality respected on a par with man's, to have the right to control her own person and to choose her own conduct. She has the right, as a person, to demand from her husband the same standard of morality that he demands of her. She has a right to expect the full and undivided loyalty, fidelity, devotion, protection, support, and affection of the man of her choice -- the man who chooses her by mutual agreement with her -- the man who fathers her children and covenants to share with her the task of rearing them.

Polygamy and concubinage also deny certain basic human rights to children. Every family, and the children of every family, have a right to a full-time father. Every child has the right to belong to a family that is a stable, permanent single unit, bound together and made secure by love and loyalty -- not split asunder by jealousies between rival wives who set their children against each other and who vie with each other for the father's affection and money.

The Bible says very little about these aspects of polygamy, although much

can be inferred from its historical accounts of polygamous families. Not one polygamous family in Bible history was happy! Every one was torn by jealousies, hatred, and strifes -- many of which continue even until today. The hatred between Jew and Arab is hereditary and still implacable.

The Book of Mormon has more to say than the Bible about the denial of human rights in the evil and immoral institutions of polygamy and concubinage. Polygamy, concubinage, and whoredoms are lumped together in the Book of Mormon condemnations as "grosser crimes." The Book of Mormon says that David and Solomon truly had many wives and concubines, "which thing was abominable before me, saith the Lord." The human rights and human relations factors are the ones emphasized by the Book of Mormon. In the denunciation of polygamy, concubinage, and whoredoms in the second chapter of Jacob, the Lord says that he has seen the sorrow and heard the mourning of the daughters of his people -- that the men "shall not lead away captive the daughters of my people because of their tenderness" that is, their weakness and physical inability to resist. The men are further condemned "because ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you." They are warned that "ye may, because of your filthiness, bring your children unto destruction, and their sins be heaped upon your heads at the last day."

Because of other crimes, but particularly because of these crimes of polygamy, concubinage, and whoredoms, the Nephite people were eventually destroyed. The Lamanites, although a wicked, warlike, and savage people, nevertheless did keep God's law of marriage. Their husbands loved their wives, and their wives loved their husbands, and their husbands and their wives loved their children. "Wherefore, because of this the Lord will not destroy them, but will be merciful unto them, and one day they shall become a blessed people," the Lord has promised.

God's law of marriage as stated in the Bible, but even more specifically and strongly in the Book of Mormon, is that one man shall have one wife, and concubines he shall have none; that whoredoms are an abomination in the sight of God; that there is a single standard of morality for both men and women; and that God demands respect for all human personality and human rights, particularly those of women and children, who because of their physical weakness are often the unwilling and innocent victims of man's selfish and unregenerate nature.