

# At What Point Are a Man and Woman Bound Together As One Flesh?

By Maurice Barnett

God created the major division in the human race by making both male and female and, among other things, told them to be fruitful and multiply and fill up the earth, Genesis 1:27-28. Sexual difference was built into the human race in order to propagate the species. Thus, sexual intercourse is inherent in God's creation of humans. Jesus said, Matthew 19:4-6—

“ And he answered and said, Have ye not read, that he who made *them* from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? 6 So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

Because God made them male and female, certain rules of behavior had to apply. God would make the rules. God established the parameters of the kind of relationship that He wanted for man when He planned this world before the universe ever existed. He also determined how that relationship would be established. Because He made them male and female, God said that a man is to leave father and mother, cleave to his wife and become one flesh with her. God thus joins them together in a covenant, one with the other *and with Him*. Malachi 2:14-16—

“Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet *is* she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. 15 And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. 16 For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for *one* covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.”

As we will see in this paper, because sexual relations are built into and inherent within the race, sexual intercourse is essential to finalizing that covenant between a man and woman. Only sexual infidelity will allow putting away of one party by the other that would then allow remarriage for the one innocent of the fornication.

There are two other reasons for marrying. First, God said it was not good for man to be alone. He made a helper, a companion for him, to assist and help man in the duties God placed on him. The two would form a oneness that would be the center of a family. Second, because a sex drive is built into the human race in order to assure the propagation of the race, another reason for marrying is to satisfy that sexual desire in a *lawful* manner, I Corinthians 7:1-9. Man was not to be like the animals God made; he was not to act like dogs in the street; man is higher than that, created in the image of God. But, only those who marry in keeping with God's will have the right to sexual relations.

*Regardless of this*, the question before us involves the point at which the covenant between a man, a woman and God, is ratified, finalized, accomplished; at what point do they become one flesh? There are several terms that enter into this inquiry. We will point them out and define them as we progress.

## MARRIAGE AND BOND

A distinction must be made between these two words. The word “marriage” refers to a particular kind of relationship between a man and a woman. Two men cannot become one flesh and neither can two women, regardless of what they may do. The word, “Bond,” refers to an obligation of law.

(1) Some people are incapable of being bound in a marital relationship because they are incapable of a sexual relationship. Jesus said in Matthew 19:9-12—

“And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery. 10 The disciples say unto him, If the case of the man is so with his wife, it is not expedient to marry. 11 But he said unto them, Not all men can receive this saying, but they to whom it is given. 12 For there are eunuchs, that were so born from their mother’s womb: and there are eunuchs, that were made eunuchs by men: and there are eunuchs, that made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.”

The disciples exclaimed that if this is the only “case” (i.e., *cause*, see verse 3) whereby one could put away his wife and marry another, then it would be best not to marry in the first place. Jesus replies, “He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.” The rule of verse nine does not apply to everyone. *It does not apply to those incapable of sexual relations - eunuchs!* They are the only ones Jesus puts in that category so that the rules apply to everyone else. Two of those in the statement of Jesus are *physically* made eunuchs; they are *physically* unable to have sexual relations. The one who *makes himself* a eunuch for the Kingdom’s sake would be like Paul who chose not to marry. Well, the rules governing marriage, of verse 9, did not apply to Paul or the physical eunuchs. The rule of verse 9 applies only to those who can establish a bond to begin with, *which inherently involves sexual intercourse*. J.W. McGarvey, in his commentary on Matthew/Mark, pages 165-166, says it well—

“His entire speech to the Pharisees is a unit, and its point of unity is the remark that the married couple are *one flesh*. It is this which makes the marital relation more intimate than that of parent and child, and that makes it wrong to put asunder those whom God has thus joined together. (Verses 5,6.) Now Jesus says of this saying, ‘Not all men receive this saying, but they to whom it is given;’ that is, they to whom it is given to receive it. This implies that the greater part of men do, and that those who do not are the exceptions. Eunuchs are then introduced as an exceptional class. They can not receive the saying because a eunuch can not become ‘one flesh’ with a woman; and, seeing that his marriage would be a nullity, separation after such a marriage would not be the divorce which Jesus forbids, nor would subsequent marriage on the woman’s part be adultery.”

Further, in Matthew 19, adultery is committed *when* one marries another without proper cause. But, *adultery is unlawful sex* by definition. Thus unlawful

sex occurs when the remarriage takes place. Consequently, the marriage takes place when the sex takes place. *Just* obtaining a civil contract (the license) in a new marriage is not the adultery. *A marriage ceremony is not adultery!* Repeat: *adultery is sexual intercourse.* Two people can meet civil law and even go through a ceremony but *are not guilty of adultery until they have sexual relations.*

(2) Some people can establish a “marriage” but it is not acceptable to God. Herod had married Herodias, Mark 6:17-18, but it was unlawful. John told Herod, “It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife.” Though they had *married*, Herodias was still considered the “wife” of Philip, who was the brother of Herod. The word “marriage” refers to a particular kind of relationship that inherently involves sex but does not necessarily establish the “bond” of which God approves. The acceptability of the “marriage” may depend on the circumstances, such as this one. Here is Romans 7:2-3—

“For the woman that hath a husband is bound by law to the husband while he liveth; but if the husband die, she is discharged from the law of the husband. 3 So then if, while the husband liveth, she be joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if the husband die, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be joined to another man.”

The word “bound” is from the Greek word “deo.” The term means “an obligation of law or duty.” This passage says they are bound *by law*. The law of God is the authority. The word “joined” may refer to an acceptable relationship, depending on whether the first man, the husband, was dead or not. If the husband was dead, she could be “joined” to another man. If the husband was still alive, she could be joined to another man but would be an adulteress. She would not be an adulteress without sexual relations with the second man. The joining takes place when the sex does. A like idea is in I Corinthians 7:10-11—

“But unto the married I give charge, *yea* not I, but the Lord, That the wife depart not from her husband 11 (but should she depart, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband); and that the husband leave not his wife.”

Here, the “departing” meant she became “unmarried,” i.e., the *relationship* was broken. She is to remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. The “bond” still existed though the marriage, the physical relationship, was gone, as in Romans 7:2-4.

Thus, “Marriage” and “bond” are not the same. You can have a marriage without a bond as well as have a bond without a marriage. What God wants is for two people to be married and bound to one another at the same time. We must be careful not to take modern American usage or definitions and force them on Bible words. In civil law, “marriage” is a legal contract. On the other hand, society may have built up certain traditional practices that define these terms according to popular usage, public opinion or prejudice. The only guide to the true facts is the Bible.

This is also important when we confront the word “wife.” The term comes from the Hebrew word, *ishshah*, in the Old Testament and the Greek word, *gunai*, in the New Testament. Both Hebrew and Greek words mean a *woman, a female, a*

*wife*. It may be translated by any of these words, depending on the context. The way these original terms are translated may be due to the views of the translators. However, “wife” has a particular connotation in our modern usage that we force onto the Biblical text when it may be intended to be simply “woman.” Modern thought is that “wife” and “husband” mean that the purposes and vows have been completed with the two setting up a household as a “married couple.” Thus, some insist that where these terms exist, the bond exists as well so that they are one flesh. So, when the word “wife” is found as in Matthew 1:20 or 19:5 it means that the marriage and bond existed before and without sexual intercourse. This is a mistake. It overlooks figurative usage and accommodative language of first century Greek. They were husband and wife in prospect. It was assuredly to happen because it was *part of God’s plan*. This will become clearer, when we look at the facts concerning Joseph and Mary.

Some take the position that the marriage and bond take place when the agreement is made between a man and woman that they will marry. The promise to one another binds them before God. As we have seen and will see, this, also, is not true. This is like believing in Christ and determining to serve Him. At that point, there is no relationship established with Christ—until baptism. The consummating act must follow.

(3) Matthew 19:5-6 - “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? 6 So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

“His wife” only indicates the woman he has chosen and is pledged to. Each step taken gives one the right to take the next one. Before “leaving and cleaving” takes place, she is only “wife” *in prospect*. The marriage has not occurred; the bond has not been established. “Cleave” means “to join fast to, to glue together.” In doing this, they become “one flesh.” If the woman is his “wife” in the sense some people want the word to mean, then she is his “wife” before their being glued together, without being one flesh. God does not join them together, until the “cleaving,” the gluing together, takes place between two people who have the right to be joined. Some may follow the process though they don’t have the right to marry and to thus be “joined” together; God may not approve any of it. Again, look at Herod and Herodias.

I Corinthians 6:13-18 discusses fornication. Verse 16: “*Or know ye not that he that is joined to a harlot is one body? for, The twain, saith he, shall become one flesh.*” Notice the same phrase from Genesis 2:24 and Matthew 19 above. Obviously, such a union as mentioned here was lawfully established at some time before or there could not have been a one flesh, bond, between the man and the woman. One could not *become* one flesh with a prostitute any more than he could continue the relationship with one. At some point, in this particular circumstance, the woman had become a prostitute and the husband was continuing the relationship. This passage refers specifically to sexual relations, but relations that were not lawful. Yet, the man is “one body” with the harlot, in keeping with what

God said that “the twain shall become one flesh.” This joining with the woman had followed the process at one time, but was not lawful; just as the woman in Romans 7:2-3 “joined” another man while her husband was alive and was an adulteress as a result. *Notice in that passage that “joining” with another was adultery, but adultery is sexual relations, therefore “joining” requires sexual relations.* This is clearly taught in Matthew 19, Romans 7 and I Corinthians 6.

Further, after discussing Romans 7, note verse 4 - “*Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ; that ye should be joined to another, even to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God.*” The same word translated “joined,” is found in all of these passages. In this verse, one is *joined* to Christ and thus brings forth fruit unto God. This is a *figurative* reference to the sexual relations by which children are the fruit of physical union. The fact of our being “joined” with Christ is found also in Ephesians 5:28-33, about our relationship with Christ; the church being the bride of Christ, we are married to Him in baptism. Genesis 2:24 is quoted in Ephesians 5:31 to describe that; look at the context. This establishes that the “marriage” union with Christ cannot be accomplished without faith, repentance, confession and finally, baptism as the consummative act. To repeat, becoming acquainted with Him, placing faith in Him, forsaking all others in repentance, publicly proclaiming our fidelity to Him are just preliminary acts. They mean nothing without the consummative act of baptism. It is the same with two people becoming “joined” in one flesh; it is a *process* that leads to a consummation.

## Joseph and Mary

A perfect example of this is Joseph and Mary and the birth of Jesus. Matthew 1:18ff tells us that Mary had been *betrothed* to Joseph. She is referred to as his “wife” as Joseph is called her “husband,” in keeping with *betrothal practices of the time*. They were husband and wife in prospect because they had openly been *promised* to one another. Here is the entry on the subject from Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary, along with other definitions that follow—

“The selection of the bride was followed by the betrothal, not to be entirely equated with the modern concept of engagement. A betrothal was undertaken by a friend or agent representing the bridegroom and by the parents representing the bride. It was confirmed by oaths and was accompanied with presents to the bride and often to the bride's parents. The betrothal was celebrated by a feast. In some instances, it was customary for the bridegroom to place a ring, a token of love and fidelity, on the bride's finger. In Hebrew custom, betrothal was actually part of the marriage process. A change of intention by one of the partners after he or she was betrothed was a serious matter, subject in some instances to penalty by fine. The most important instance of betrothal in the Bible is the one between Joseph and Mary (Matt 1:18-19). A Jewish betrothal could be dissolved only by the man's giving the woman a certificate of divorce. A betrothal usually lasted for one year. During that year the couple was known as husband and wife, although they did not have the right to be united sexually. Betrothal was much more closely linked with marriage than our modern engagement. But the actual marriage took place only when the bridegroom took the bride to his home and the marriage was consummated in the sexual union.”

“ESPOUSE (properly, 2 Sam 3:14, to betroth, as elsewhere rendered; Matt 1:18; Luke 1:27; 2:5...2 Cor 11:2, to cause to be married, i.e., negotiate the match). Espousal was a ceremony of betrothing, or coming under obligation for the purpose of marriage, and was a mutual agreement between the two parties which usually preceded the marriage some considerable time. The reader will do well carefully to attend to the distinction between espousals and marriage, as espousals in the East are frequently contracted years before the parties are married, and sometimes in very early youth.” McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia.

“ΜΝΕμSTEUΟμ (mnhsteuvw , (3423)), in the Active Voice, signifies to woo a woman and ask for her in marriage; in the N.T., only in the Passive Voice, to be promised in marriage, to be betrothed, Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:27; 2:5, R.V., ‘betrothed.’” W.E. Vine, Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words.

“I. Mary’s espousal to Joseph. Mary, the mother of our Lord, was espoused to Joseph, not completely married, but contracted; a purpose of marriage solemnly declared in words de futuro—that regarding the future, and a promise of it made if God permit. We read of a man who has betrothed a wife and has not taken her, Deu. 20:7. Christ was born of a virgin, but a betrothed virgin.” Matthew Henry’s Commentary.

All of these authorities agree that the betrothal was not the marriage but was the negotiated promise to marry. It has been argued that there were different betrothal customs in that period, and thus, it has no bearing on “marriage” today. Not so. Please note the comments above. Betrothal was *a step in the process*, a magnified form of “engagement” as we know it. But, notice that the marriage was not consummated until sexual union! No one was considered “married” without sexual intercourse. Regardless of the customs surrounding it, betrothal was still only the agreement, the promise to marry. Look at the evidence.

How strange was the custom with Isaac and Rebekah? They went through a process of steps like every other couple who married. Those steps were hidden in the customs of the time, when there was very little formality. Whatever the extraneous trappings of various customs, there is the common process in all instances that continue in our present customs—there is the intent to marry, the agreement to marry and then the consummation of the agreement. If there is civil law, as in our country, then that is thrown into the mix and we must meet it because God said so; but that is part of our modern U.S. customs. Other countries in our modern world have different customs surrounding the process, but the *underlying process* is the same.

What we see in the term is the meaning of “betrothed” in regard to Joseph and Mary, which is simply stated. *This is the Holy Spirit talking*, informing us of God’s view of when a marriage is consummated. Taking it in the meaning of the customs of the time, she was just *promised* in marriage until after the birth of Jesus. Joseph knew her not UNTIL she gave birth to Jesus; there were no sexual relations between them until after His birth.

All the way from before her miraculous conception to just before the birth of Jesus, she is referred to as Joseph’s *betrothed*. Note Luke 2:5 - “...to enroll himself with Mary, who was betrothed to him, being great with child.” After Joseph was instructed by the angel to take her into his home, he did so. This meant only to set up housekeeping. As far as the community around them was concerned, Mary became pregnant by Joseph and Jesus was his son. This

removed any stigma of illegitimacy from Jesus and spared Mary. This is why Luke 3:23 says of Jesus “being the son (as it was supposed) of Joseph.” Yet, *after living with Joseph for at least eight months, as far as the community was concerned, as his wife in fact*, she is still referred to by the Holy Spirit as his *betrothed — promised in marriage*. The reason for this is that Joseph had no sexual relations with Mary until after the birth of Jesus. They had not become one flesh, one body, until they consummated. They had not been joined together by God until then. They were not “bound” until then.

Let’s fine tune this fact. And to do that we must take a look at some Greek Grammar. It is more precise than English and gives us information on passages that’s lost in translation. Note the following introduction.

“The New Testament was written in the language used in the Greek-speaking world from about 300 B.C. to A.D. 500. It was known as Koine or ‘common’ Greek because it was street language—the language of the people—as opposed to the classical Greek of literature.

Koine Greek was devised by Alexander the Great for one reason: to conquer the world. When Alexander first began pulling together an army from the Greek city-states over which he had won ascendancy, he found he had a serious problem. When his drill sergeants bellowed, ‘Left face, forward march,’ every soldier moved in a different direction. There was no one Greek language. The men of Athens spoke with the classical eloquence of Attic Greek; the Spartans communicated in the monosyllabic grunts of Doric Greek.

Before he could ever hope to conquer the world, Alexander had to conquer the tongue. His Greeks had to have one clear, easy-to-understand language. The language through which God would communicate the New Testament message was originally designed to be so clear, so exact, that in a combat situation, every person on the battlefield would immediately understand his commanding officer’s instructions.

Alexander had been taught by his tutor, Aristotle, to think with mathematical precision. When Alexander’s desire for accuracy and clarity in language met with his mathematical mindset, Koine Greek was the result. It was the perfect language in which to communicate absolute truth!

Nowhere is the potential for accuracy more clear than in the Greek system of verbs. Every Greek verb has a three-fold fix so the reader can know exactly what the verb means. The three ‘fixes’ are tense, voice, and mood.”

In Luke 1:27 and 2:5, the word “betrothed” in the Greek text is a *perfect, passive, participle*. But what does that mean? Well, the meaning of the Perfect tense is easy to understand. Moulton, in his grammar, says the perfect tense “is the most important, exegetically, of all the Greek tenses.” The perfect is used less frequently than the present, aorist, future, or imperfect; when it is used, there is usually *a deliberate choice on the part of the writer*, in this instance, the Holy Spirit.

Now to the meaning: Machen’s Grammar says, “The Greek perfect tense denotes the present state resultant upon a past action.” “It is written” does not mean it was, it had been or it is being written. It means it was written in the past and stands in a written state now. In Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ” is literally, “I am in a present state of having been crucified with Christ.” Not only was I crucified with Christ in the past, but I am now in that present condition. Unlike the English perfect tense, which indicates a completed past

action, the Greek perfect tense indicates the continuation and present state of a completed past action.

The Perfect tense requires we understand that at a point in the past, Mary was betrothed to Joseph before the miracle of the Holy Spirit and *she is still just betrothed to him nine months later!* She was still just “promised in marriage,” not actually one flesh with him. That state would not be true until their sexual union after the birth of Jesus. This is why the text uses the word “betroth” instead of “wife.” The Holy Spirit wanted us to know for certain what the facts were

Other passages emphasize the importance of sexual relations. I Corinthians 7:3-5 is specific that each party in a marriage is to render the other what is due them, specifically, sex. Each body belongs to the other. To withhold that from the other is to “defraud” them. This responsibility is part of the vow made in the wedding ceremony. They know what they are getting into.

Hebrews 13:4 says that marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the bed undefiled, because fornicators and adulterers will be judged. “Marriage” and “bed” form a parallelism in this verse. It is an emphasis on sexual responsibility and fidelity to each other. That is a fulfillment of the promise, vow, made in the wedding ceremony.

Here is what Isaac did, Genesis 24:67—

“And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife. And he loved her. And Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.”

Abraham arranged this. He sent a servant to Mesopotamia who was to find a woman, any woman, out of Abraham’s relatives. It turned out to be Rebekah. She agreed to go with the servant and marry Isaac. Isaac had agreed to marry whomever the servant brought. He had never seen Rebekah nor even heard of her. They were complete strangers. This was an arranged marriage, agreeable to all parties. Of necessity, there had to be intent to marry on both their parts. It was not forced. Isaac brought Rebekah to his late mother’s tent, which was now his own, and **TOOK her**. What does it mean that he took her? It does not say that “he took her into the tent.” *He had already done that*. The verb here is not transitive, requiring an object. It stands alone to indicate something particular and special. It does not say Isaac took her somewhere. Notice: And Isaac brought her **INTO** his mother’s tent.” *After that* he “took her.” That meant he had sex with her. This is followed with, “and she became his wife.” She was not his wife until he brought her **INTO** the tent and **TOOK** her while in the tent and **THEN** she became his wife. Different cultures have a different way of doing things from U.S. law but all *the essential elements are there* both then and now.

Notice this passage—

“And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? Let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her.” Deuteronomy 20:7. King James Version

“Has anyone become pledged to a woman and not married her? Let him go home, or he may die in battle and someone else marry her.” New International Version

“And who is the man that is engaged to a woman and has not married her? Let him depart and return to his house, otherwise he might die in the battle and another man would marry her.”  
New American Standard Version

In addition to these Bible translations, and there are others just as pointed, note the comments by just a couple of authorities—

“It was customary among the Jews to contract matrimony, espouse, or betroth, and for a considerable time to leave the parties in the houses of the respective parents; and when the bridegroom had made proper preparations, then the bride was brought home to his house, and the marriage consummated.” Treasury of Scripture Knowledge.

The betrothal of a wife, which was always a considerable time before marriage. It was deemed a great hardship to leave a house unfinished, a new property half cultivated, and a recently contracted marriage; and the exemptions allowed in these cases were founded on the principle that a man's heart being deeply engrossed by something at a distance, he would not be very enthusiastic in the public service. Critical Commentary by Robert Jamieson

It should be obvious to any reader that Deuteronomy 20:7 refers to being “betrothed” to a woman but not having had sexual intercourse with her. “Taken her” in this verse means the same in Genesis 24:67 that Isaac “took her” after bringing her into the tent, “his house.” The *betrothal* was *not* the marriage, the joining, the cleaving. The same facts are stated in the Patriarchal period and the Law of Moses, as well. We have seen that this is also true in regard to Joseph and Mary. It makes a distinction between an agreement, even a formal ceremony with vows exchanged and the actual marriage which required the consummation of sexual intercourse.

Additionally, even civil law calls for a consummation of the marriage in sexual intercourse. In Arizona, there is a two year limit. If it can be shown in that first two years that no sexual relations have occurred, the marriage can be annulled, treated as though the marriage never took place. After two years, the law ASSUMES that intercourse has taken place and one must go through the divorce court to legally sever the relationship. Ohio and many other states also view a marriage as consummated at sexual intercourse.

Consider, if a man throws a party where he surprises his girlfriend with a ring before all present, asks her if she will be his wife and she says yes, then they have exchanged vows of marriage. If they are bound as one flesh at the very moment they exchange vows, they should be allowed to go into the next room and have sex.

## VOWS

It has been argued that the “bond,” “becoming one flesh,” takes place at the point of exchanging vows in the wedding ceremony. Well, vows are solemn promises to do something. We have the interesting case of Jephthah, who vowed to God as follows—

“Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.” Judges 11:31

It turned out to be his daughter who came out first. He could not fulfill that vow as it would violate God's law against human sacrifice, Deuteronomy 12:31-32. And, *it was not Jephthah who suggested what followed.* It was his daughter who came up with a substitute idea for being a burnt offering to God. She remained a virgin for all her life; Jephthah agreed to it. Though verse 39 says that he did with her according to his vow, he did not strictly keep it for he did not offer her as a burnt offering on an altar.

Webster says a vow is simply "A solemn promise or assertion: *specifically* : one by which a person is bound to act, service or condition." The New Testament word means, when the vow is directed toward God, "a promise to God that one will do something." If the vow is toward another person, involving only one person's vow or mutual vows, the nature of a vow is the same. *Vows are promises to do something.* However, *the promise to do something is not the doing of what is promised.* The Bible says we are to *fulfill* our vows. But, the vows mean nothing until and unless they are fulfilled. *A promise to marry is still not marriage.*

Usually, preachers, in a wedding ceremony, will present the purpose and responsibilities of marriage so that the couple will fully understand what they are promising to do. These purposes and responsibilities of marriage are laid out for us in God's word—

A man promises to his wife that he will love (Eph. 5:25), nourish, cherish (Eph. 5:29) and honor (1 Pet. 3:7) her. He promises to provide for her protection, sustenance (1 Tim. 5:8), companionship (Mal. 2:14; Prov. 2:17) and sexual intimacy (1 Cor. 7:2-5).

A woman promises her husband that she will provide help (Gen. 2:18), companionship (Prov. 2:17) and sexual intimacy (1 Cor. 7:2-5). That she will love (Tit. 2:4), reverence (Eph. 5:33), obey (1 Pet. 3:6) and submit to her husband (Eph. 5:22).

An additional point might be made regarding fatherly and motherly duties (Eph. 6:4; 1 Tim. 2:15; 5:14).

Not one of those responsibilities has been done until consummation. They have only been promised. They become one body, one flesh, but that first requires leaving father and mother, cleaving to (gluing to) the woman, JOINING WITH her and only THEN the two "SHALL BECOME one flesh."

To illustrate our point, let's note our relationship with Christ. The New Testament tells us that we have to be IN Christ. In being in Christ, we are JOINED with Him, we are MARRIED with Him, we are ONE with Him, we are MEMBERS of Him, have FELLOWSHIP with Him and as a result are expected to "bring forth fruit unto God." Romans 7:3-4, Ephesians 5:22-33, I Corinthians 6:15-16.

How do we get into that relationship? By faith only? Faith is essential but we also must repent of our sins. Anything more? Yes, we must openly confess that faith, a *promise* to serve Him. It is a vow. It is a determination to please and serve Him. Now, Baptists insist that this is all that puts us into Christ. Belief and

repentance may produce one's vows of dedication to the Lord, but he has never consummated that dedication by being baptized. No, we cannot be joined with Him, be in Him, be married to Him, be members of Christ until we are baptized. Why would not just a vow to serve Him be enough? Because God said there is more to being in Christ than just faith, repentance and a vow.

Just so, there is more to do for two people to be one flesh, joined in one body. Like Baptism is the point of union with Christ, so joining of the sex organs is the point of union between a man and woman. Please note, *the Bible has drawn that likeness* of Christ and human marriage for us in Romans 7:2-4, Ephesians 5:22ff.

### Sexual Intercourse

Another dodge used to counter what has been presented here is to ask “what is sexual intercourse?” Will just putting the penis head in the vagina only, leaving it there without movement, qualify as intercourse? Or, does it have to be placed in the vagina all the way? Or, must the male move it in and out to be intercourse? Or, must both parties have an orgasm or maybe just one has to? If neither climax, does that mean it is not intercourse?

It is strange that anyone would question this. It is precisely what the ancient Jewish Rabbis argued over. They all agreed that intercourse was necessary to consummate the union but could not agree on what intercourse was. Check the Talmud. They argued over exactly what is described in the first paragraph above. It is like the arguments of medieval Monks over how many angels could fit on the head of a pin.

Does anyone really have a problem understanding what adultery is? Matthew 19:9 says that if a person puts away his spouse without the cause of fornication and then marries another, they both commit adultery. Adultery is committed when the marriage takes place. Could a man and woman in such circumstance just lie together with only the head of his penis in her vagina and that not be adultery? Could he insert it all the way in as long as it is not moved in and out and that would not be adultery? Is it only adultery when it is moved in and out? Or, does one or both have to climax in order for it to be adultery?

Adultery is defined as “unlawful intercourse with the spouse of another,” Vine. The English definition of intercourse is “penetration of the vagina by the penis.” Now, what does “penetration” mean? Well, regardless of how far in, duration, movement or orgasm, intercourse still involves the joining of the male and female sex organs. And, the initial joining of the sex organs, following all preceding requirements, is the final act that joins a man and woman as one flesh.

If one marries someone whom he has no right to marry, he commits adultery, Matthew 19:6. The adultery takes place when the marriage takes place. Two people may go through civil courts and get a license to marry but if they never have sexual intercourse, they never commit adultery. With the “vows” argument, we would have to conclude that when two people exchange vows that adultery takes place *at the altar when they say, “I do.”* So, sexual intercourse has nothing

to do with committing adultery and the definitions of the word are totally wrong. If it takes more than an “I do” to commit adultery, then it takes more than an “I do” to become one flesh.

There are actually some well known preachers who have contended in public debate that adultery does not refer to sexual relations. Their position is that when you say “I do” in the wedding ceremony, you commit adultery. It is spiritual and not physical. Why would that not also be true regarding the vows only position? One commits adultery when he unlawfully marries. If the marriage takes place when you say “I do” how then will you define “adultery?”