



Scriptures and Doctrine :: Polygamy, Slavery, why was God silent?

Polygamy, Slavery, why was God silent? - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/2/5 7:17

crsschk wrote
Hi Ron.

Been meaning to bring up some related issues along these lines. Something that has puzzled me in a number of cases in the OT regarding the taking or of having more than one wife.
Later on David took Abigail to be his wife along with his remaining wives.
Other examples like Solomon did likewise.
How do we reconcile this, if a man is to be of one wife and why would God be silent on the matter and even bless David in this situation?

Maybe we could open this up under the Scriptural Debates section...

Done!

Re: Polygamy, Slavery, why was God silent? - posted by moreofHim (), on: 2004/2/5 9:47

Yes, I could say that was one point that did disappoint me- but I just figured that that's the way things were done in the old testament.

I was thinking to myself that I was glad that I didn't have to live back then- but then again- it was probably normal and I wouldn't have thought twice about it.

~Chanin

Re: Polygamy, Slavery, why was God silent? - posted by InTheLight (), on: 2004/2/5 10:08

Quote:
-----How do we reconcile this, if a man is to be of one wife and why would God be silent on the matter and even bless David in this situation?

God never blessed anyone for having more than one wife - all it did was bring cursing. God blessed them for other reasons but that wasn't one of them. God stated His will back in Genesis, one man, one woman, for life.

We don't get blessed for our sin but in spite of it. God was gracious and patient with David and many others in the OT. Abraham is a perfect example, he was blessed but he also had a very painful life, the child he had with Hagar haunted him all his life and the Jewish race ever since.

Solomon is another great example, what did he have 600 some wives? Just read through Ecclesiastes and see that there were times in his life when he was anything but blessed.

In Christ,

Ron

Re: - posted by Jason, on: 2004/2/5 11:52

Let's remember that sin is lawlessness; technically, polygamy is not sin (it is not against the Law). Neither is slavery.

Can they be done in sin? Yes, and I would argue that they are most of the time.

As far as slavery is concerned, it continues today in much the same form as it had then -- just under a different name. In those days, a slave was someone for whom you provided housing, food, and sometimes family in return for his working for you.

Nowadays we just call that a job.

Re: - posted by Chosen7Stone (), on: 2004/2/5 12:55

Jason said, "*Nowadays we just call that a job.*" lol :-D So true, brother!

Building on what he said in regards to, "*Can they be done in sin? Yes, and I would argue that they are most of the time.*"

Modern examples are a perfect example...the slavery preceding the Civil War was *much* different than the slavery of Biblical times.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/2/5 14:17

They say to him, Why then did Moses command to give a letter of divorce and to send her away?

He says to them, Moses, in view of your hardheartedness, allowed you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not thus. Matt 19:7,8 Darby Version

I think these verses are key to understanding much of the OT law. These things were 'allowed', not because they were God's perfect will, but because of hardness of heart. Notice how the Lord changed their word 'command' to 'allow'.

God only ever commands what is perfect, but He sometimes allowed things that were imperfect. If we read of the 'wild west' conditions of the conquest of the land, we see something of the barbarism of those days, and the hardness of men's hearts. Sometimes things that seem like terrible permissions were actually the less of two possible evils.

The other key is 'from the beginning it was not so'. The time of the law already represents a condition which is not as it was intended at the beginning. The eye for an eye instruction is instructive. We often hear people say it was barbaric, but what was the alternative given the violence of those days and the hardness of men's hearts?

Natural rage and revenge will cause a man to hurt more than he has been hurt. See Lamech's reaction in Gen 4:23,24. God's apparent harshness really limits this kind of wild revenge. If the offence has caused the loss of an eye, the natural reaction is to do more damage to the offender; God says 'no' justice must be balanced; the punishment must fit the crime. It is better then to 'allow' one eye to be forfeited than both be taken out by the one seeking revenge. In our culture these patterns may seem harsh, but in those days it was designed as damage limitation.

Why did God allow these imperfect ways? Because the alternatives would have been much worse.

Re: - posted by Agent001 (), on: 2004/2/6 9:28

I think Philologos summarised it well. Thank you!

I will also add that in the OT narratives, God does not always explicitly comment on the merits or demerits of the biblical figures.

The fact that the OT says nothing about Rahab's lying to protect the Israelite spy does not necessarily mean that God approved of her lying.

Sometimes, God's view is implicit in the consequences of the narratives. For instance, the Bible says nothing about Jacob marrying Leah and Rachel, and bear children through their concubines. However, the consequence of Jacob's marriages is an extremely dysfunctional family. There is even a humorous account of how Jacob could not decide where he goes to sleep, because his wives would be making the decision for him!

The consequence of Solomon's multiple marriages was to lead the Israelites to idolatry. In fact, the problem that he started persisted until the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (after the Babylonian captivity)!

Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2004/2/6 16:21

Yes, thanks Ron and to all for your replys.

I had originally asked the question and I think I was focused in a bit more on David.

Did some digging around on the net and came to pretty much the same conclusion as what is here.

Maybe I was hoping there was something more explicit in reconciling this issue with our modern thought and with New Testament instruction.

I am sure if I was to go back and study the culture of the times that would shed some more light on it.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/2/9 6:14

Hi Mike

you wrote I had originally asked the question and I think I was focused in a bit more on David.

Did some digging around on the net and came to pretty much the same conclusion as what is here.

Maybe I was hoping there was something more explicit in reconciling this issue with our modern thought and with New Testament instruction.

Here are some New Testament precepts.

1 Corinthians 6:12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. {expedient: or, profitable}

1 Corinthians 10:23 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. {expedient: or, profitable}

David, was a great saint. He was, however, living in an era where God had declared many things 'unlawful'. That didn't mean that all 'lawful' things were expedient or edifying. It just meant that during that time they were not unlawful.

Polygamy and slavery are not specifically declared as 'unlawful' in the New Testament either. However, we have a 'law of Christ' revealed in the New Testament that we do to others as we would have them do to us. This 'ticking time bomb' was to be the death of polygamy and slavery. Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon as a slave. However, he set this time bomb ticking... receive him... not now as a bond-slave... but as a brother... receive him as myself. How long could slavery continue in Philemon's household with this attitude abroad? Similarly Christ's monogamous love for His bride was to be the death of polygamy; Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ...(I shortened this quote purposely to make the next point).

The early Christians were to live 'as Christ'. It is no accident that it was devout evangelical Christians who made slave trading illegal and who transformed conditions in prisons. For the Christian, the law of Christ, is genuinely summed up in one word "thou shalt love". Everything else is consequential.

Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2004/2/9 7:30

Thanks Ron,

Curious though about Jesus saying "...from the beginning it was not so."

Mat 19:5 and said, For this cause a man shall leave father and mother and shall cling to his **wife**, (singular) and **the two of them shall be one flesh?**

Mat 19:6 Therefore they are **no longer two, but one flesh**. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.

I know 'allowance' or 'permitted' comes into play.

Perhaps better yet is this:

Mat 5:17 Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to destroy but to fulfill.