

# **Good News about Marriage**

## **The Coming, Ministry and Message of the Third Elijah**

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### **Organize and Lead Better Seminars**

Marriage today is an institution of choice. People choose to get married, how they want to get married, and some even choose how long they want to stay married. It was not an institution of choice for Adam, the first man God created. At the beginning, God saw that it was “not good that man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18). However, marriage is still the societal institution for the generation and perpetuation of life. The whole fabric of society is built on the foundation of marriage.

#### **Marriage Today and its Challenges**

Marriage as an institution is under serious attack in our society today. The institution has suffered perversion along the years that have eroded its sanctity and honor. Polygamy, co-habitation, homosexuality, and incest have changed the institution. Married people fear and may face death, divorce, separation, gender and transgender issues and in general the declining value of marriage in society.

These factors infringe on marriage and as a result children are caught in the crossfire as all these issues erode the honor and sanctity of marriage. Children born or growing up in marriages that deal with these issues are impacted by them and the results show in what these children become in society.

In spite of all the problems facing marriage today, it is still the foundation of society. The values that any society promotes are shaped and rooted in marriage where life begins.

#### **Marriage as it was Established**

God established marriage in the Garden of Eden when He created the world. As such, marriage cannot be defined without reference to God and the creation week. To appreciate and understand marriage, we must look at what and how God established back then. During the Creation week, God established two institutions. God established the Sabbath or the seventh day of rest as an institution defining His relationship to creation and man that He put in the garden of Eden. God also established marriage to define man’s relationship to God and all other creatures. These two institutions had significance in the creation week and beyond.

God saw that it was “not good that man should be alone,” and He created woman and presented her to the man as an equal companion for man to complete him in all his needs. Eve was presented to Adam as an equal partner and contributor in the marriage relationship. It is only in Genesis 2 that the details of the creation of the woman are presented. The ideal marriage is presented only in Genesis 2.

## **Elements of the Ideal Marriage in Genesis 2**

It is important to explore the elements of the ideal marriage as portrayed in Genesis 2. God's purpose for marriage was to populate the earth and eventually heaven. It is for this reason that He commanded our first parents to "be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it;" (Genesis 1:28). Marriage is based on the creation story of male and female. God created the woman as "helper" or "helpmeet" for the man. The language of helper in Hebrew does not suggest inferiority. It suggests equal partnership. In fact, in Hebrew thought, the helper is always superior to the one being helped. In the same chapter 2 the two become "one flesh"; to suggest God's mysterious union with humankind. When Adam and Eve were joined as "one flesh" they experienced "no shame". This suggests completeness. They did not lack anything.

The first couple was commanded to multiply and fill the earth (Genesis 1:28). This multiplication was based on the principle of gender – male and female. They were to be creative. This procreation could only be possible based on the male and female gender compatibility. Multiplication was to be only through marriage. There is no creativity in homosexuality. Homosexuality defeats the principle of multiplication through marriage. There are no gender roles defined in Genesis 2. The partners were equal. Their relationship to each other was based on equal origin, equal substance, equal respect, equal commitment, equal love for each other.

The happy relationship that Adam and Eve enjoyed in the garden of Eden did not last long. They disobeyed the instructions of God and sinned. The results of this choice were disastrous. Their face to face communication with their Creator was cut. They were disgracefully expelled from the garden of Eden.

## **Marriage and/after the Fall**

The Fall as it is referred to, changed the relationship between male and female. The oneness that Adam and Eve enjoyed between them before they sinned was forever changed. Their relationship with each other was fractured. They began to blame each other and God for the mistake they had made (Genesis 3:12,13).

In the pronouncement of the sentence of punishment that God gave to them because of their sin, much was said in regard to their relationship with each other and God. It is not in the scope of this paper to deal with all the ramifications of their sin. However, it is necessary to emphasize that it was their relationship to each other that changed the most. The Fall defined and changed their gender roles. Gender roles became an issue because their relationship with each other was fractured.

In their fractured relationship, multiplication to fill the earth (Genesis 1:28) was still God's purpose for them and their relationship. However, this multiplication would take place in and through the fractured relationship which would later in their offsprings, lead to polygamy, incest, divorce, co-habitation, homosexuality, and many more evils that plague marriage today.

## **Relationship in marriage**

The marriage relationship between Adam and Eve was unconditional. It was rooted in their love for each other and their oneness with God. This is what made it marriage. A oneness with male and female in God as a Partner. This relationship with each other was to rise above any circumstance in marriage. God came into their fractured relationship with a promise of grace, abundant enough to sustain their fractured relationship, a grace that would lead to a final perfect restoration of this fractured relationship in salvation for humankind. This grace to rebuild relationships in marriage was promised in the coming Messiah (Genesis 3:15).

The impossibility for man to rebuild marriage relationship without the grace of God was portrayed in the miraculous conception of the Messiah. “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son (Isaiah 7:14).” The work of restoring fractured relationship in marriage can only be achieved with divine grace and intervention as portrayed in God’s miraculous provision and conception of the Messiah through a marriage relationship that bypassed human male intervention.

### **Marriage Reform through the Ages**

After the Fall marriage reform focused on relationship more than on the model of marriage. The model had been perverted and relationship continued to deteriorate. But relationship in marriage from the beginning was meant to rise above circumstances. The plan of salvation as revealed to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden was to work out through faulty relationships. Prophets and kings would be born and work through faulty relationships in marriage as God’s plan was revealed and promised through the marriage institution. Throughout the intervening years, in the working of God’s plan of restoration of relationship in marriage, programs were executed that focused on the mission of restoration of marriage.

### **Elijah – Ministry and Message**

In the coming of prophets and kings, God’s consuming desire was to restore humankind to Himself working through family in the marriage relationship. Among the prominent messengers that God raised and sent was the prophet Elijah the Tishbite (1 Kings 17:1 ff.) from Gilead. Elijah was a reformer. After he rebuked king Ahab and his wife Jezebel who were in a bad marriage relationship, Elijah ran for his life as the king threatened to kill him. In his sojourn God sustained and protected Elijah and continued his ministry by sending him to Zarephath. At Zarephath Elijah ministered and modeled to a widow and her son in their home all the time that there was famine and drought.

In the whole experience of Elijah in the home of the widow of Zarephath, God’s message was to show that ministry takes place in the home and is tested in the home. The many widows and single mothers struggling to raise children without fathers, the church and its ministry is being challenged and tested.

In the dark ages before the coming of the Messiah, God promised through the prophet Malachi (Malachi 4:5,6) that He would send the prophet Elijah before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. His work would be to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the hearts of the children to their parents. There would be great marriage or family relationship reform before the day of the Messiah.

In New Testament times before the coming of Christ, God raised up John the Baptist to prepare the way of the Lord. John came in the spirit and power of Elijah. He was declared to be Elijah (the second Elijah) by Christ Himself when He talked about the work and ministry of John the Baptist (Luke 1:17; Matt. 11:14; 17:12, 13). John’s ministry was cut short. He was beheaded by king Herod because he rebuked Herod for his unlawful marriage with the wife of his brother. John’s message of repentance and reform focused on marriage.

“Our message must be as direct as was that of John. He rebuked kings for their iniquity.... Our work in this age must be as faithfully done.”

Ellen G. White comments on Malachi 4: 5,6.

“In this time of well-nigh universal apostasy, God calls upon His messengers to proclaim His law in the spirit and power of Elias. As John the Baptist, in preparing a people for

Christ's first advent, called their attention to the Ten Commandments, so we re to give, with no uncertain sound, the message: "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come." With the earnestness that characterized Elijah the prophet and John the Baptist, we are to strive to prepare the way for Christ's second advent. (SW March 1905).

### **The Third Elijah**

In these last days of earth's history, the church proclaims to the world the message of the nearness of the return of the Messiah. Central to the proclamation of this important message is the message about God as Creator. This message cannot be proclaimed without its companion truth about marriage which defines man's relationship with the Creator. While the Sabbath defines the authority of God as Creator, marriage defines man as the creature made in the image of God. The church cannot be champion defending creationism to the neglect of the importance of marriage. The role of the church in proclaiming the marriage teaching is crucial to the definition of man's relationship with the Creator.

The church becomes the Third Elijah sent to the widows of our time who are in fractured marriage relationships and need the mentoring model of the prophet Elijah to prepare people for the coming of the Lord.

### **Closing Work of the Third Elijah**

The work of the Third Elijah then becomes important as history draws to the close. The church must work in the spirit and power of both the first and second Elijah by focusing on reconciliation of parents to their children and children to their parents (Malachi 4:5,6) as the day of the coming of the Lord draws near. All the church's programs in family life should focus on relationships in marriage.

According to Malachi, the final phase of the ministry of both Elijah and the Messiah will be a ministry of intercession focusing on reconciliation of parents to their children and children to their parents.

### **Steps for Follow Up**

Since the church bears such a serious responsibility to the world, this paper proposes that the church should take three crucial steps in addressing the subject of marriage in these last days:

1. The church should clarify its message on all issues about marriage. This means that it should have clear positions on such issues as polygamy, incest, homosexuality, gay/lesbian marriage, divorce and re-marriage, separation in marriage, co-habitation, and other issues such as gender and transgender.
2. The church's marriage restorative programs should focus on relationship in marriage and modeling, knowing that family configurations have changed and cannot be defined in traditional ways.
3. The church should work to scale all marriage restorative programs. It should seek to find what works, where it works, and for whoever it works. Program resources such as books, videos, seminars, etc. should be equally scaled.

This program of scaling should be implemented at the corporate as well as at the local level of the church. **THIS IS THE THIRD ELIJAH!**

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