

## THE MORMON ISSUE OF POLYGAMY

This doctrine for early Mormons was as a result of a “revelation” supposedly given to Joseph Smith in 1843 and was a reversal of the previous Mormon position. The revelation was supposed to have been of a new and everlasting covenant and is recorded in the Mormon book called *The Doctrine and Covenants*. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints no longer teach or practice this doctrine. However, some break away groups do hold to this early teaching.

### POLYGAMY WAS NOT FROM GOD

The biblical record shows that only Lamech (*a manslayer Gen. 4:24, 25.*), Abraham, Jacob and Solomon had more than one wife. For some of these situations there were extenuating circumstances:

- Abraham took Hagar as a second wife only after Sarah persuaded him so that she might get a child.
- Jacob sought only Rachel for his wife but was tricked by his father-in-law so that he first married Leah.
- Solomon, by taking many wives, broke God’s law for the king: “you may indeed set a king over you ... And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away...” (Deut. 17:17). Solomon’s breaking of God’s law led him fully away from God.

Although such polygamy among His people was tolerated by God He was not the originator of it and so it was not the standard He wished for His people.

### JESUS RESTATES GOD’S STANDARD

Even though Mormons claim that Jesus was a polygamist, there is no biblical or real historical evidence for this and his teaching contradicts such a proposal:

- ❖ “He answered, ‘Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them **male and female**, and said, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his **wife**, and they shall become one flesh”? So they are no longer **two** but **one flesh**. What therefore God has joined together **let not man separate**’” (*Matt. 19:4-6 ESV*).

Polygamy was still practiced in Judea in Jesus’ time but was becoming increasingly frowned upon. Many rabbis used Genesis as the basis for condemning polygamy even though some Pharisees were still polygamists. Jesus was simply showing where he stood on this vital issue. So Jesus was saying what other rabbis were also saying, namely: **God’s standard was of yoking only two people together** in marriage. In doing this Jesus showed that polygamy was not God’s standard.

NOTE: The term “*the two*” is not in Genesis 2:24 but only in a variant Hebrew text (*also in the Septuagint*) which draws on Genesis 1:27 (“male and female he created him”) also note the fact that even the animals were gathered “two by two (Gen. 7:9).”

### THE STANDARD FOR CHRISTIANS

- ❖ “A **bishop** then must be blameless, the *husband of one wife*, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; “Let the **deacons** be the *husbands of one wife*, ruling their children and their own houses well” (*1Tim. 3:2, 12*).
- ❖ “For the husband is the head of **the wife**, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own

husbands in every thing. <sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth **his wife** loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto **his wife**, and they *two shall be one flesh*. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love **his wife** even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband” (Eph. 5:23-33).

#### MISAPPLIED TEXT

*Isaiah 4:1* KJV:

“And in that day **seven women** shall take hold of **one man**, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only *let us be called by thy name*, to take away our reproach”

This is a prophecy concerning **an extreme situation** in the future when Israel would lose many men in battle so that there would be a severe imbalance in the ratio of men to women. The earlier words of 3:16 describe the arrogance and materialism of the well-to-do women; yet 4:1 shows a reversal of their fortunes so that they would be desperate just to be “*called by [a man’s] name, to take away [their] reproach.*” They are so desperate that they are willing to forego the proper basis for a marriage which is that the marriage vows would have to include the husband’s responsibility to provide ‘bread and clothes’ (Ex. 21:10). But the extremeness of this situation moves them to offer to give up that right and to be willing to “*eat [their] own bread, and wear [their] own apparel.*” In fact, this prophecy begins with 1:2 of Isaiah and concerns the **future great tribulation** and so cannot be used to advocate polygamy as the normal arrangement for men and women.

#### CONCLUSION

Clearly Joseph Smith’s revelation in *The Doctrine and Covenants* is in contradiction of God’s consistent standard as recorded in the Bible.

*By Raymond C. Faircloth*  
www.biblicaltruthseekers.co.uk

§