

## POLYGAMY

Written by Administrator

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## POLYGAMY

The most classic charge against the Mormons is that they are polygamists. The people who criticize us the most on this point do so because they think that the practice of polygamy is something that was practice strictly for sexual reasons. However, the kind of polygamy that the Lord teaches is quite different from what our critics accuse us of.

Many of the critics of polygamy say that God never endorse this kind of living, and that such a practice is an abomination to God. However, the Bible does show there were many holy men who practiced this form of marriage. The critics answer that God only tolerated it in ancient times because things were somehow different back then. Yet, as we study the Bible it becomes clear that God did give this law personally. In fact, this practice is mentioned quite clearly in the law of Moses.

In Leviticus 18:22-28 we read "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion. Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations; neither any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you: (For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled;) That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you." These are the kinds of things that God doesn't approved of. But notice that having more than one wife is not mentioned or even alluded to.

In Deuteronomy 21:15-17 we read, "If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the firstborn son be hers that was hated: Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, which is indeed the firstborn: But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the

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firstborn is his."

Right there, in the Law of Moses, we have a clear seal of approval to the practice of polygamy from God Himself. Considering how important the Law of Moses was, it is extremely hard to explain why God once permitted such a practice but then afterwards changed His mind because it was an abomination in His sight. To accept such a conclusion we would also have to believe God is fallacious and changeable in His laws. But if we say that God is unchanging and consistent in all that He does, then He could not have seen anything wrong with the practice of polygamy since He made provisions for it in the Law He gave to Moses. .

Abraham is known both among the Jews and Christians for his faithfulness and obedience to God's ways. But consider what happened when he went to Egypt. He said to his wife, "Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee. And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels. And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram's wife. And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go away" (Genesis 12:13-19).

The Pharaoh had many wives, but the Lord plagued him, not because he had more than one wife, but because he married someone else's wife. Even Abraham was aware of this. That's why he had Sarah say that she was not married. If the Pharaoh knew she was married, he would have killed Abraham, thereby freeing her to be married by him.

Consider also that Sarah gave Abraham another woman to bear his children. In Genesis 16:1-3 we read, "Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife."

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To say that since this happened in olden times makes it all right, doesn't make sense. Abraham was completely obedient to the Lord. If this was an abominable act, God would have stopped him like He did before killing Isaac. Since the Bible declares that God is the same yesterday, today and forever, (Hebrews 13:8) and He doesn't change (Malachi 3:6) therefore it's impossible for him to consider something an abomination in one generation and but perfectly acceptable in another.

The real question we need to ask is: WHY did Sarah give her husband another wife? The Bible clearly states, so he could HAVE OFFSPRING. That is the real principle behind the law of polygamy.

Let's consider the great lawgiver, Moses. He also had more than one wife. Certainly, he, more than anyone else, knew and kept the law which God gave on MT Sinai. Here's what the Bible tells us in Numbers 12:1-15: "And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.) And the Lord spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out.

"And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and he departed.

"And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous. And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb. And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee. And the LORD said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again. And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again."

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There are two interesting things to note about this story. The first is that Miriam was not angry because Moses had married another woman (having already taken Sephora for his wife). She was angry because he married an Ethiopian woman, who was not of the tribe of Israel. The second thing is that, although Miriam and Aaron complained about this, the Lord didn't. In fact, God punished Miriam because she complained about the second wife of Moses. If having more than one wife is truly an abomination before God, surely He would have condemned Moses for practicing it. In stead, God declared that Moses was "faithful in all mine house" (Numbers 12:7), even though he had two wives.

There's another place in the Bible where God Himself made a very special declaration regarding this topic. In 2 Samuel 11:2-4 we read, "And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house."

Here we have an adulterous act which ended in the murder of Uriah, the lawfull husband of Bathsheba. After David had Uriah deliberately killed in battle, "the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

"And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

"And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; And I GAVE thee thy master's house, and thy master's WIVES INTO THY BOSOM, and gave thee the house of Israel and of

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Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

"Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun" (2 Samuel 12:1-12, emphasis added).

The key to understanding the law of polygamy is found in this story. God told David, "And I GAVE thee thy master's house, and thy master's WIVES INTO THY BOSOM."

This sentence can't be misinterpreted or explained away. It was GOD who gave David all the wives that he had! As such, God approved, sanctioned, and blessed this practice! David's only sin was that he took a woman who was already married to another man. In other words, he took a woman without the consent of the Lord.

As we can see, the Bible clearly and unambiguously states that God condones and allows the practice of polygamy. It's true that several things in the law have changed because of Christ's atonement, but this doesn't mean that what has been changed is now considered an abomination in the eyes of God.

Some will still argue that such a practice was only valid during the Old Testament times. Then let's look at what Jesus had to say (or not say). Jesus spoke out rather harshly at times for the way the Pharisees and Sadducees miskept the law, and on several occasions He talked about divorce and marriage. But when it came to the subject of polygamy, there is no record of Him having utter one negative word. In Italy we have a saying that he who remain silent about something consents to it.

As Christians we believe that Jesus is Jehovah, and it was Jehovah who gave the law which the Jews obeyed. Could Jesus repudiate Himself?

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Speaking of the future the prophet: Isaiah prophesied, "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" (Isaiah 4:1).

When Isaiah says "in that day" he is referring to the future. But how far into the future is he referring to? In the very next verse he says, "In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel."

Obviously the day which Isaiah is referring to hasn't happened yet. But then he continues in the next verse saying, "And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem." The word Hebrew word for "holy" is the same word we translate as "saint" in the New Testament. That means, Isaiah prophesied that in that day it shall come to pass that those who remain in Jerusalem shall be called saints. Today's Christian churches claim that the first saints didn't practice polygamy. If they're correct, then this prophecy couldn't have been fulfilled during the time of Christ. And if that is so, then when will the saints practice polygamy as Isaiah prophesied?

Perhaps the answer can be found in Acts 3:19-21 when Peter declared, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."

If polygamy existed before the law was given to Moses and it was also contained in the Mosaic law, but it wasn't practiced among the early Christians, (although we can't be positively sure about that) then wouldn't this law be included at the time when all things will be restored?

Joseph Smith taught that the gospel of Christ was restored to the earth once more by God. Included in this restoration, was the knowledge concerning the law of polygamy. However, it was not an easy law to live. Joseph received this doctrine in the early years of the church, but he waited several years before he actually practiced it. Because of the enemies of the church who sought every way possible to prevent the saints from living it, God released the church

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from practicing this law for the time being, but, as Isaiah prophesied, it will one day become the law of the saints.

I firmly believe that it is not important to know why God promulgated this law, but it is important to know that He approved of it in the past. The scriptures give us a clear vision of the topic. We may chose to ignore those scriptures, but we can't erase them.