

# Life of David

A Man After God's Own Heart

## Polygamy

- Polygamy: a marriage in which a spouse of either sex may have more than one mate at the same time (Polyandry or Polygyny).
  - Polyandry: the state or practice of having more than one husband or male mate at one time.
  - Polygyny: the state or practice of having more than one wife or female mate at one time.
- The institution of marriage was established by God as being between one man and one woman [Gen 2:18-24].
  - The Lord supplies all our needs perfectly [Ph 4:19; Jas 1:17] and God supplies the mate to fulfill our needs [Prov 12:4; 18:22; 19:14; 31:10-31].
  - Thus, polygamy is an expression of dissatisfaction with God's perfect provision.
  - Scripture records instances where men practiced polygamy, but in none of those instances did the polygamy produce satisfaction/happiness.
  - Polygamy in the Bible is a clear exception and not the rule of life for believers/unbelievers alike.
- The first recorded instance of polygamy in the Bible was Lamech [Gen 4:19].
  - His wives were Adah (ornament) and Zillah (shade).
  - Lamech was certainly someone who followed the "way of Cain" [Gen 4:23-24; Jude 11].
- The second recorded instance of polygamy in the Bible was Abraham [Gen 16:1-16].
  - Abraham entered into the polygamous relationship in an attempt to bring about the promise of God through human effort.
  - This polygamous relationship immediately revealed the problem of jealousy in such relationships.
  - The mental attitude sin of jealousy resulted in overt sins of harsh treatment against Hagar.
  - The Lord directed Hagar to return to the troubled home and submit to the test she was facing.
  - Ultimately, the Lord directed Abraham to send Hagar away [Gen 21:9-13].
- Isaac learned from the mistakes of Abraham and had a monogamous relationship with Rebekah, but their two sons, Esau and Jacob, became polygamists.
  - Esau [Gen 26:34-35; 28:8-9].
  - Jacob [Gen 29:23-29; 30:4-9].
- Other Old Testament polygamists...
  - Gideon [Jdgs 8:30-31]
  - Elkanah [1 Sam 1:1-2]
  - Saul [2 Sam 3:7]
  - David [2 Sam 5:13]
  - Solomon [1 Kgs 11:3]
  - Rehoboam [2 Chr 11:21]
  - Belshazzar [Dan 5:2-3]
  - Ahaseurus [Est 2:2-3, 12-14]

- New Testament polygamy...
  - The Jewish Mishnah and Talmud allow for polygamy and indications are that it was still practiced in some instances.
    - ✦ The Mishnah allowed up to four wives.
    - ✦ The Talmud allowed up to four wives or, if you were a king, up to eighteen wives.
  - Josephus recorded that Herod had ten wives.
- Biblical commands that presuppose that polygamy was not strictly prohibited...
  - A man who chose to be a polygamist could not reduce his support of previous wives [Ex 21:10].
  - A man could not take a woman and her female relatives as wives [Lev 18:17-18].
  - A man who chose to be a polygamist could not show favoritism in his inheritance [De 21:15-17].
  - Kings were prohibited from multiplying wives for themselves [Deut 17:14-17].
    - ✦ This seems to permit polygamy for common people.
    - ✦ The danger highlighted is the turning away of the heart.
  - A man whose brother died was *required* to be a polygamist [Gen 38:6-8; Deut 25:5-9].
- For us today, the New Testament teaching regarding the ideal shows that marriage is a beautiful portrayal of Christ and the Church [Matt 19:4-6; Eph 5:22-33].
- Conclusion: God's perfect design for marriage is between one man and one woman and is part of His perfect provision for our needs.