



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Biblical Design of Gender, Part 32”

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Informed. Insightful. Intelligent.



The Biblical Design of Gender, Part 32

Numbers 27:1-4

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2 And they stood before Moses, before Eleazar the priest, and before the leaders and all the congregation, by the doorway of the tabernacle of meeting, saying:

3 “Our father died in the wilderness; but he was not in the company of those who gathered together against the LORD, in company with Korah, but he died in his own sin; and he had no sons.

4 Why should the name of our father be removed from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father’s brothers.”

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

Our takeaway point in this series on the Biblical Design of Gender is that God has designed man as the cooperative coalition of husband and wife so that man can successfully achieve the objective that God has given us to exercise dominion over the earth, developing wisdom and knowledge in preparation for further responsibility in our eternal life.

In our last lesson, we chronicled the plague among the Israelites which was caused by the Moabite and Midianite women using their sexual attractiveness to seduce the Israelite men into worshipping the idol god Baal. Let’s go over the idea of idolatry.

The major occupation in the societies which we are discussing was farming. In an agricultural society, fertility is the most important thing that a farmer can have. A farmer needs fertile production from his field so that the harvest will be abundant enough to feed the farmer’s family until the next harvest. A farmer needs fertile production from his livestock so that the number of animals in his flock will grow although he kills some of the animals to feed his family. A farmer needs his wife to be fertile and produce sons for him to provide him sons to help him take care of his land and livestock. God has so designed life that fertility is the most important attribute. God himself says, in **Genesis 1:27-28**:



27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

And God promised fertility to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob if they continued to follow Him. God made His promise good by giving Abraham, Isaac and Jacob fertile harvests and flocks, and, in the descendents of Jacob, who was also named Israel, God gave them fertility in their production of children. From the time that God gave Israel's son Joseph the rule over Egypt until God called Moses to lead Joseph's father Jacob's descendents, the children of Israel, out of Egypt, God increased the numbers of the children of Israel from 70 to over 2 million people.

So even in our generation, after Creation, God's primary blessing to man is the fertility required to reproduce resources while consuming them. God blessed the farmer's land with the fertility to produce a large enough crop to both feed the farmer's family and to have seed to plant to produce another crop the following year.

But Jesus says of God, in the “b” portion of **Matthew 5:45**:

45 He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

Jesus tells us that not only do those that worship God receive the blessing of fertility, but that God has designed fertility as a general blessing that He bestows on everyone, good, evil, just or unjust. Before the plagues in Egypt, the crops of the Egyptians grew as well as did those of the Israelites. The people living in the land that God promised to Israel at the time that the Israelites were leaving Egypt enjoyed the fertility of the land as the Israelites enjoyed the fertility of Egypt, but the people living in Palestine chose to not worship the God that was actually responsible for the fertility that they enjoyed. And God did not appreciate their ungratefulness, as **Romans 1:18-23** tells us:

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

20 For since the creation of the world [God's] invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even [God's] eternal power and Godhead, so that [men] are without excuse,

21 because, although [men] knew God, they did not glorify [God] as God, nor were [they] thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,

23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like



corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

Paul's point in this passage of Scripture is that the grace of God as shown in the fertility of His creation is obvious to anyone that will look honestly at it, but foolish people men choose to deny God in order avoid having to worship and glorify Him. The most sincere expression of our worship and glorification of God is our keeping of God's commandments, but, since the first time God gave man a commandment in the garden, man has disliked the concept of obedience to God. Of course, if we choose to deny the existence of God, we can then make up our own commandments, which suits us much better. This choice is the basis of idolatry, which is man's worship of himself or that which man himself has created, as opposed to man worshipping God.

Exodus 32 tells us that while Moses was on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments from God for the Israelites, the Israelites were in the valley worshipping a golden calf that Aaron fashioned from the earrings that they had in their ears. The golden calf that Aaron made did not tell the Israelites to worship it as God told the Israelites to worship Him; the one that decided that the Israelites should worship the calf was the one that created the calf, which was Aaron. And that was idolatry; man's worship of himself or that which man himself has created, as opposed to man worshipping God.

We can see idolatry in our society. Several hundred years ago, a man named Charles Darwin developed the "theory of evolution". Darwin theorized that the life on earth was caused by a fortuitous string of accidental circumstances, rather than by God's creative power. Since **Genesis 1:1** tells us that in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and Genesis goes on to explain the rest of creation, Darwin's theory of evolution is an idolatrous assault on the truth of the Bible and is man's worship of the evolutionary idol that man has created himself, as opposed to man worshipping God.

The summer after my son completed the sixth grade, he was given the opportunity to attend a National Science Foundation summer camp at Michigan State University. He came home after the first day and told me that the seventh grade class, of which he was a member, was studying the theory of evolution. "Good", I replied. "Let me give you some information for the class." I went to my library and pulled out a book by Dr. Duane Gish entitled, "Evolution: The Fossils say No!"

Paul and I spent some time reviewing the information so that he could be ready for the next day's class, and I gave him the book so that he could refer to it in the discussion. When Paul came home that day, he handed me the book. "Dad", Paul said, "after the teacher started talking, he saw me pull out your book. He asked me if he could see what I was reading, and I showed it to him. Then, they decided to put me in the eighth grade class, so now I'm not studying evolution."

"Of course", I replied, "they don't want to look like fools in their own class."



The purpose of the Exodus and the reason that God delivered the Israelites from the Egyptians was to give the children of Israel the possession of the geographical area which we currently call “Palestine”, which God called the Promised Land, because he promised Abraham that his descendents would live there. God is giving Israel possession of the Promised Land and dispossessing the seven nations living there because those nations worship idols. And God does not want the Israelites to become idolaters. Moses explains to the Israelites in **Deuteronomy 7:1-2**:

1 “When the LORD your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you, 2 and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them.

God commanded the Israelites to destroy the idolaters living in the Promised Land because the worship of idol gods is so seductive. Why? Since idolatry is man made, has no real substance or power, and obviously has nothing to do with the actual worship of a Divine Supreme being, men that develop idolatry have to make idolatrous rituals as attractive as possible to get other men to participate. Those that developed idolatry made sexual intercourse with a ritual prostitute part of their worship, teaching that the joining of the man and the prostitute represents the joining of the man with the idol god purported to be creating fertility on the man’s farm. God is actually the author of fertility, but since fertility is a general blessing that God gives to both the good and to the evil, the evil can credit any god they wish with the ability to grant fertility without fear of contradiction.

God tells us, in **Exodus 20:14**:

14 “You shall not commit adultery.

Since satan originated the idea of idolatry and transmitted it to man, satan also incited man to disregard God’s commandment, ignoring God’s prohibition against adultery and making adultery an integral part of man’s worship of himself. And, as I said earlier, if we choose to deny the existence of God, we can make up our own commandments, which suits us much better. But although we like to make up commandments, God prohibits us from doing so, which is why God prohibited Israel from coexisting with idolaters, in **Deuteronomy 7:2-5**:

2 and when the LORD your God delivers [the idolaters in the Promised Land] over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them.

3 Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son.

4 For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods;



so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly.

5 But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire.

God destroyed the land of Egypt and brought the children of Israel out from there, and then sent Israel into the Promised Land to destroy the idols of those that lived there and that worshipped them, to turn the land into a sanctuary for the worship of God. This should give us some idea of how God feels about the worship of idol gods.

In preparation for the war required to remove the seven nations from the land, **Numbers 26:1-2** tells us:

1 And it came to pass, after the plague [that killed the 24,000], that the LORD spoke to Moses and

Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, saying:

2 “Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel from twenty years old and above, by their fathers’ houses, all who are able to go to war in Israel.”

God wanted Moses to know the size of the available Israelite fighting force. The results of the census and God’s further instructions are given in **Numbers 26:51-56**:

51 These are those who were numbered of the children of Israel: six hundred and one thousand seven hundred and thirty.

52 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

53 “To these the land shall be divided as an inheritance, according to the number of names.

54 To a large tribe you shall give a larger inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a smaller inheritance. Each shall be given its inheritance according to those who were numbered of them.

55 But the land shall be divided by lot; they shall inherit according to the names of the tribes of their fathers.

56 According to the lot their inheritance shall be divided between the larger and the smaller.”

God decreed that the Promised Land was to be divided to give a farm to each of the 601,730 Israelite warriors and their families. But one particular set of Israelites took exception to God’s pronouncement. Our text, **Numbers 27:1-4**, tells us:

1 Then came the daughters of Zelophehad the son of Hephher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, from the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph; and these were the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

2 And they stood before Moses, before Eleazar the priest, and before the



leaders and all the congregation, by the doorway of the tabernacle of meeting, saying:

3 “Our father died in the wilderness; but he was not in the company of those who gathered together against the LORD, in company with Korah, but he died in his own sin; and he had no sons.

4 Why should the name of our father be removed from among his family because he had no son? Give us a possession among our father’s brothers.”

Five women came to Moses asking for a possession in the land, since their deceased father was a loyal worshipper of God and not an idolater. Now, Moses could have given them two reasons why they could not receive a possession.

First, God commanded Moses to give possessions to those able to go to war. The daughters of Zelophehad were ineligible to serve in the Israelite army. God is giving the land to those that can perform the warrior function in order to eradicate idolatry in the land. A man that has served as a warrior would be less likely to become an idolater, since he shed the blood of idolaters in order to receive his inheritance.

Second, a woman could not be the head of her household. To have a household, she would have to accept a proposal of marriage, and would become her husband’s helper, no longer part of her father’s family. If a woman did not accept a proposal of marriage, she could not legitimately have a family of which she could be the head. There were scriptural inheritance provisions for the care of widows to be taken over by their husband’s family, but there were no scriptural provisions to provide an inheritance for orphaned women that remained unmarried by choice. Women really had no individual rights in the Israelite society, but only existed as the function of a father/daughter or a wife/widow relationship.

But although Moses had these two legitimate reasons to reject the request of Zelophehad’s daughters, Moses, being a humble man, decided not to presume as to that which God would want, but rather inquired of God so that God could speak for Himself. **Numbers 27:5-11** records:

5 So Moses brought their case before the LORD.

6 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

7 “The daughters of Zelophehad speak what is right; you shall surely give them a possession of inheritance among their father’s brothers, and cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them.

8 And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘If a man dies and has no son, then you shall cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter.

9 If he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers.

10 If he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father’s brothers.



11 And if his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to the relative closest to him in his family, and he shall possess it.' ” And it shall be to the children of Israel a statute of judgment, just as the LORD commanded Moses.

While the inheritance was designed for warriors, God recognized that the holy women that respected His Word were as likely to continue their worship of him as were the men that fought on their behalf. God also recognized that whether or not a woman had a family, she would require sustenance in the Promised Land, and if she had neither father nor land, she would have no place to benefit from the agricultural fertility of the land. Zelophehad's daughters asserted their independence from their father's brothers, becoming the first women in the Bible that God respected for asserting their independence. **Psalm 68:5-6** tells us:

5 A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, Is God in His holy habitation.

6 God sets the solitary in families; He brings out those who are bound into prosperity; But the rebellious dwell in a dry land.

But the major division of Israel was not by individual families. Each inheritance that an individual family received in the Land was a portion of the land belonging to the tribe of their forefather. Zelophehad was part of the tribe of Manasseh, and his daughters were to receive land within the inheritance of Manasseh. Having an independent female landowner in the land confused this situation, as **Numbers 36:1-3** records:

1 Now the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of the sons of Joseph, came near and spoke before Moses and before the leaders, the chief fathers of the children of Israel.

2 And they said: “The LORD commanded my lord Moses to give the land as an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel, and my lord was commanded by the LORD to give the inheritance of our brother Zelophehad to his daughters.

3 Now if they are married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the children of Israel, then their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of our fathers, and it will be added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry; so it will be taken from the lot of our inheritance.

The problem of Zelophehad's daughters is similar to one of the problems that we currently have with illegal immigration, that being the desire of Mexicans to reclaim the land of the American Southwest that Mexico lost during the Mexican-American war of 1846-1848. There is a currently a town in California that has a population of Mexican-American citizens and illegal Mexican immigrants. The town government has voted to become a sanctuary city for illegal immigration, one in which the immigration laws of the United States will not



be enforced. The town is, in effect, a Mexican city in the United States of America, and the residents of the town, for the most part, do not see themselves as citizens of the US, but rather as Mexicans that are part of the Mexican state of Aztlan, descended from the Aztecs. Such situations develop when the citizens of one country occupy the territory of another.

Zelophehad's daughters are, by birth, part of the tribe of Manasseh and the inheritance that they received was in the area of the Promised Land that was part of land of the tribe of Manasseh. If, however, one of Zelophehad's daughters decided to marry a man from the tribe of Asher, for instance, upon her death her property would pass to her husband and children, and her land would become that of the tribe of Asher. Thus the land of the tribe of Asher would be increased and the land of the tribe of Manasseh would be decreased. So God developed a solution to keep the inheritance of women in one tribe from being inherited by another by marriage, in **Numbers 36:5-9**:

5 Then Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the LORD, saying: "What the tribe of the sons of Joseph speaks is right.

6 This is what the LORD commands concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, 'Let them marry whom they think best, but they may marry only within the family of their father's tribe.'

7 So the inheritance of the children of Israel shall not change hands from tribe to tribe, for every one of the children of Israel shall keep the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.

8 And every daughter who possesses an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel shall be the wife of one of the family of her father's tribe, so that the children of Israel each may possess the inheritance of his fathers.

9 Thus no inheritance shall change hands from one tribe to another, but every tribe of the children of Israel shall keep its own inheritance."

Thus, Zelophehad's daughters were eligible to receive an inheritance, but when they did so, they had to marry within their own tribe so that the land would not change hands from tribe to tribe.

The independence of Zelophehad's daughters was circumscribed by marriage. As long as they chose not to marry, they could maintain their independence. Interestingly, in the New Testament parallel, women can be independent as were Zelophehad's daughters. God does not make women subordinate to men, but wives subordinate to husbands, as **Ephesians 5:22-23** describes:

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

Both men and women can maintain their independence as long as they decide to not marry. But, **Genesis 2:18** tells us:



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18 And the LORD God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.”

There are three ordinances in the New Testament Church which bind us to someone. The first is marriage, which makes us one with our spouse, the second is baptism and the third is the Lord's Supper, both of which make us one with Jesus Christ. God desires that we be one both with one another and with His Son, and so, He links the relationships of marriage and salvation in the passage of Scripture that we have just read, making our marital relationship analogous to our relationship with Jesus Christ.

In God's economy, independence is analogous to immaturity, as we are born into independence and rebellion, and only as we mature do we learn and develop interdependence and cooperation. Self-centeredness is a function of immaturity, but the epitome of maturity is the Christ, who chose to suffer for the good of those whom He came to save. The Christ did not want to suffer, nor did He enjoy His suffering, but He chose to suffer, that the will of God might be done on earth, even as it is in Heaven.

And because Jesus chose to suffer the painful agony of the Cross, which was the will of God for His life, Jesus saved us, and became one with the Father that wanted us to be saved by doing His will. Jesus tells us, in **John 10:27-30**:

27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.

30 I and My Father are one.”

Why can we hear Jesus' voice and why can we not be snatched from Him? Because He gave His life for us on Calvary, and, in the process, became one with God, as God tells us, in **John 3:16-17**:

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

And there is a Divine inheritance for each one that resolves to do as Jesus says and follow the commandment of God, which is how we worship and glorify God. Those in the world that do not know the Lord will offer us alternatives based upon their own imaginations and the prompting of the devil, but our allegiance to God is shown through our decision to follow the commandments of God, even as those in the Word endeavor to make us suffer for doing so. God sent Jesus to suffer on Calvary, and He sends us to suffer in the world. Jesus told His disciples, in **John 16:1-4**:

1 “These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble.



2 They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.

3 And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me.

4 But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them.”

So, there are trials and tribulations for those of us that take on the mantle of God in the world and rejection for those that work to spread the Gospel. But then Jesus tells us, in **Revelation 2:10-11:**

10 Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

11 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” ’

So there is a reward for faithfulness. There is no reward for independence, but there is a reward for faithfulness. Human death is inevitable for all of us, but there is also a second death in hell, which we can avoid by being a believer and follower of and witness of Christ. Yes, we live in a day in which the idolatry of evolution is preached, and the devil will make sure that we are ridiculed for standing for the Lord, but Jesus says that there is a crown of life for those who withstand, even as He withstood on Calvary, and are faithful unto death.

There is an inheritance for us in the Promised Land. Let us prepare for the battle that will allow us to receive it, recognize that the Lord is with us in the battle, and let us be faithful to reject the word of the world and follow the Lord's commandments until death, that we may receive the crown of life.

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