

Sunday January 20th 2008
Laying the Foundations
The Picture of Marriage Continued
Getting Practical 4 – ‘Become One Flesh’

1). In our previous weeks of study we have seen the significance of the action of leaving with respect to the marriage relationship – we have looked at the various facets of this idea through Adam and the Woman, Rebekah and Isaac, Ruth and Boaz, Abraham and the nation of Israel – all pointing to, and coming to fulfillment in, Christ and His Bride.

a). And the purpose behind leaving has always been the same – a land, descendants, an inheritance and rulership - Ge 22:17 *"blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."*

b). And for us, of course, the same is true – we are to leave the land of our birth, this world and the things of this world, everything connected with our first birth – that which scripture calls, ‘our old man’, ‘the flesh’, ‘the body of this death’ – in effect our sin nature – and make the journey to the land of our calling – the heavenly land which we are promised, being led by, and walking in, the Spirit.

2). And last week we saw the significance of the action of cleaving with respect to the marriage relationship – again finding its fulfillment in Christ and His Bride and again having to do with a land, descendants, an inheritance and rulership.

a). We saw how Adam’s action of cleaving to his wife in her fallen state was a picture for us of Christ cleaving to His wife in her fallen state. And in both instances the action of cleaving had to do with redemption – the only perfect, God given way, to deal with sin so as to bring about the accomplishment of God’s plans and purposes for the ages with respect to the land, descendants, an inheritance and rulership.

3). This week then, we come to look at the third part of the process set out in Genesis Chapter 2 – ‘becoming one flesh’ – As always let’s go to our foundational scripture - Eph 5:31 *"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."* 32 *This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

a). Again, let us review for a moment – firstly, the process. First must come leaving in order to be joined to, to cleave. Second comes cleaving, something that

can only follow leaving and thirdly is becoming one flesh, something that can only happen as a result of the leaving and cleaving.

b). Secondly, the quotation from Genesis Chapter 2 in verse 31 is a ‘great mystery.....concerning Christ and the church’.

c). The whole idea set forth in leaving, cleaving and becoming one flesh is then a process directly connected to Christ and His Bride.

4). As we have already seen, we are to leave everything connected with our first birth in order to cleave to, to cling to Christ.

a). And our cleaving to Christ is synonymous with cleaving to the written word, as Christ is this very written word who became flesh – the Living Word is written and the written word is Alive - Joh 1:14 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

i/ As the Word became flesh so we cannot become ‘one flesh’ with Him without becoming one with the word.

b). And this is exactly what scripture shows to us - 1Pe 2:1 ¶ *Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, 2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow in respect to salvation, [NASB]*

c). Jas 1:21 *Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.*

d). We are to lay aside the actions of our old man in order that we may cling to the Living Word – and note the end result in both our scriptures. The laying aside, the leaving, must come first before the cleaving can take place.

5). Now have you ever wondered why the scripture says, ‘For this reason a man shall...’? Why is it that the man is specifically mentioned in the scripture when we know full well that the woman must leave, cleave and become one flesh also?

a). And once again we will find the answer in the mystery concerning Christ and the church.

b). Once we see this statement in respect of Christ and His Bride it will become very obvious for us.

c). Since Adam we have all been born dead in trespasses and sin and therefore separated from the purpose for our creation. In order to fulfill God’s purpose Christ had to leave His Father and mother, God the Father and Israel, in order to become sin for us, in the antitype of Adam - 2Co 5:21 *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

d). Without Christ becoming sin for us and shedding His own blood there could be no redemption for us.

e). From the efforts of Adam and the Woman to cover themselves with fig leaves onwards, scripture clearly teaches the complete futility of man's attempts to provide for his own redemption.

f). Redemption is only and can only ever be, as a result of the action of God Himself - Eph 2:8 *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

g). Concurrent with His cleaving to His wife by becoming sin for her, Christ also becomes one flesh with her.

h). Firstly, in the sense of taking on a human body - Php 2:7 *but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man,*

i). Heb 2:14 ¶ *Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same,*

j). And secondly, as we have already seen, by taking on Himself our sin – that which scripture describes as our ‘flesh’ - Ro 8:3 *For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

k). In this way then we can see Christ becoming ‘one flesh’ with His wife.

l). Without Christ leaving in order to cleave to His wife in her fallen state, and thereby becoming one flesh with her by taking on the likeness of sinful flesh and paying sin's price on the cross there could be no eternal redemption.

m). Without that sovereign act of God on our behalf to provide that eternal redemption, enabling us to pass from spiritual death into spiritual life it would be quite impossible for us to leave the things of our first birth behind, impossible for us to cleave to the Word of God and impossible for us to become one flesh with Him – 1Co 2:14 *But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

n). Hence it is the Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is specifically mentioned in the action of leaving, cleaving and becoming one flesh. Without the Man, Christ, being first in the process, there would be no process for us to follow.

6). With this in mind then we would need to ask exactly what would it look like for us to become ‘one flesh’ with Christ? What is it that Christ has made possible for us to do?

7). Well we would need to look at this in several different ways.

a). The fulfillment of becoming ‘one flesh’ with Him must wait until that future Day until we stand before the Lord at His Judgment Seat.

b). Although His body in that Day will be gathered together from the dust of the earth and all Christians will stand before Him as the body of Christ – becoming ‘one flesh’ with Him is something exclusive to the marriage relationship – and the marriage relationship is not something that will be experienced by all Christians.

c). So out of His body will come those who will fulfill the picture of becoming ‘one flesh’ with Him - *1Jo 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*

d). However, as we have seen so many times before, the ultimate fulfillment of the picture is preceded by a present, continuous action on our part involving the very thing that will in that day come to fulfillment.

e). In other words, there is a present, continuous action of becoming ‘one flesh’ with Christ that must be experienced by all those who in that day will walk in the fulfillment of it as Christ’s wife.

f). And this process of becoming ‘one flesh’ with Him cannot be separated from the process of our cleaving to the Word.

g). As we would cleave, so a change takes place in us as we become more like Him.

8). This is something we have seen before, but let’s revisit it now from our current perspective - *Ro 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

a). We are, of course, looking at the metamorphosis, the inward change that is to take place in us that can only come through the work of the Spirit as a result of our engagement with the Word.

b). And once again, notice the order of events in our Romans scripture – ‘do not be conformed to this world’ – in other words leave – ‘but be transformed’ and as a result of leaving be changed on the inside.

c). *Col 3:9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,*

d). Our scripture here in Colossians describes to us how our mind is to be renewed as seen in Romans 12:2.

e). Once more we have the same order – putting off the old man with his deeds – leaving – putting on the new man who is renewed in knowledge – cleaving

– being transformed according to the image of Him who created him – becoming ‘one flesh’.

f). The more we separate ourselves from this world and the things of this world and instead cling to and live by the truth of scripture the more we will find ourselves in the image of Christ, the more we will become ‘one flesh’ with Him.

g). Not only will this mean that we will become more ‘Christ like’ – which has to be a self evident truth in relation to our character and nature – but it will also mean the focusing of our thoughts and the governing of our actions in accord with Christ’s focus - Heb 12:2 *looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

h). God’s focus from eternity past has been rulership for His Son and His joint heirs over the earth during the 7th Day.

i). It is quite impossible to separate the character and nature of God from the purpose of God.

j). We cannot become one flesh with Him apart from our purpose being as His is.

9). Scripture has many examples of us being transformed into the image of Christ - Ro 8:29 ¶ *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

a). Now please remember that the word ‘predestined’ here has nothing to do with an arbitrary Divine selection, but rather in the sense of foreknowing those to whom this scripture would apply as God sees the end from the beginning.

b). If we take this back to our foundation in Genesis, God knows already who those are who will leave, cleave and become one flesh in the image of His Son.

c). Interestingly the word ‘predestined’ = Greek – *proorizo* = means not only to predetermine, but can also mean to limit in advance.

d). In other words we can see that God limited in advance those who would be conformed to the image of His Son to those who would go through the leaving and cleaving process – it is the process that is predetermined not those who will individually participate in it.

e). The word conformed = Greek – *summorphos* = fashioned like unto

f). And here, we have a different word for conformed than in Romans 12:2, - in Romans 12:2 the word is – *suschematizo* – meaning to follow the pattern of. In Romans 12 it appears to be a patterning that we choose to follow, but here in Romans 8 we see a work of God in us - we have echoes of the Woman in Genesis being fashioned from Adam’s rib – being made one flesh with him.

g). And echoes of Christ building His church from Matthew 16:18

h). And the living stones being built into a spiritual house in 1 Peter 2:5

10). 1Co 15:49 *And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.*

a). Just as we were at one time conformed to this world, in the image of the man of dust, so as we are to be transformed by the renewing of our mind so that we shall bear the image of the heavenly Man. A present process with a future fulfillment.

11). And here we see exactly the same thing presented to us in - 2Co 3:18 *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

a). Here once more the metamorphosis, the transformation into the image of the One we behold – from glory to glory – all brought about by the work of the Spirit.

12). 2Pe 1:3 *as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, 4 by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

a). And here in 2 Peter we can see that ‘having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust’ – leaving this behind, we can be partakers of, or companions of the divine nature.

b). There is then, very clearly for us to see, a present continuous process that we are to be involved in as we become ‘one flesh’ with the Lord.

c). And this present process will have a future fulfillment expressed in a marriage relationship through Christ and His Bride.

13). Now if we return for a moment to our foundation in Genesis we will recall that the purpose behind Adam’s cleaving to his wife was redemption, and as a result of them becoming ‘one flesh’ in a physical sense, redemption did come through the Seed of the Woman.

a). 1Ti 2:14 *And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. 15 Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing [literally – through the bearing of a child] if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.*

b). Seth of course is the seed of the Woman from whose lineage the Seed of the Woman would come, born some 4000 years later to a virgin in Bethlehem, the City of David.

c). And no doubt we will remember how this occurred - Lu 1:35 *And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 "Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. 37 "For with God nothing will be impossible." 38 Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant [literally – bond slave] of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.*

d). The angel has already related to Mary the purpose of God by drawing on the O/T scriptures in respect of David's descendant as prophesied in 2 Samuel 7.

e). In our scripture here it is by the power of the Holy Spirit that Christ will be formed in her, according to the angel.

f). And Mary's response is one of unwavering faith as she voluntarily gives herself as a bond slave or bond servant to the Lord.

g). Could it be that in her total acceptance of God's purpose for her and her obedience to His will that she can be seen to become 'one flesh' with Him?

h). The result of course is the birth of the Redeemer, who would bring the promised redemption.

i). Now look at what Paul writes in - Ga 4:19 ¶ *My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,*

j). Now Christ is not literally formed in us as we saw with Mary, rather we would understand this figuratively, and it is the work of the Spirit in us that begins with the antitype of Genesis 1:2b-3 and then continues through the filling of the Spirit as we allow the word of Christ to dwell in us richly in all wisdom that will bring about the metamorphosis, transforming us into the image of Christ, making us 'one flesh' with Him – in this sense Christ is formed in us – it is a birth from above - 1Pe 1:22 *Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, 23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,*

i/ Joh 1:12 *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

k). And in exactly the same way as Mary, it will be our total acceptance of God's purpose for us and our obedience to His will, becoming His bond servant, that will make this a reality.

l). And as we do this there is an ongoing process of our being ‘born from above’ - 1Jo 5:4 *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith.*

m). So we would need to understand this in two ways, both of which are giving a different perspective on exactly the same thing.

n). Firstly, we are born from above over and over again as a continual process as the word of God is opened to us – and every time we are ‘born again’ we take on more and more of the character and nature of Christ – this would be synonymous with being filled with the Spirit.

o). And secondly, we are in the process of giving birth as it were, to Christ, who is being formed in us – I hope this is not too difficult to grasp.

14). Now if we can hold on to this thought for a moment, let’s go back into the foundation again. Bearing in mind that the Woman is a type of the Bride of Christ look what God says to her in respect of her part in the leaving, cleaving and becoming one flesh process - Ge 3:16 ¶ *To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you."*

a). Please hear this with the ear of the Bride of Christ. And remember that this statement comes immediately after the promise of redemption through the Seed of the Woman – redemption through childbirth – remember 1 Timothy 2:15

b). Isn’t this exactly our experience?

c). Whether from the perspective of our birth from above, or Christ being formed in us, which are really one and the same, the process is not without pain – how could it be otherwise?

d). To become more Christ like, to become ‘one flesh’ with Him must of necessity mean the death of our own ‘flesh’ that we may walk in the Spirit. Because of sin and our sin nature this painful conflict will continue throughout the course of our Christian experience - Ga 4:29 *But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now.*

e). Ac 14:22b..... *"We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."*

f). Ro 8:17 ¶ *and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

g). Heb 12:11 *Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

h). The word desire in our Genesis 3:16 scripture is the Hebrew word – *tashuwqah* = to stretch out after, which has its root in a word that means to run

after, in the sense of pursuing. Isn't this exactly what we looked at last week in our pursuit of Christ, who is to be our husband?

i). And He is the One who is to rule over us – He is our Master and we are to be His bondservants.

j). And in the very idea of a bondservant, which we have already seen with regards to Mary, we have the complete setting aside of our own will in order to embrace wholeheartedly the will of our Master – again as our will is His will we can be seen as 'one flesh' with Him.

k). Ex 21:5 *"But if the servant plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,' 6 "then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever.*

l). Tit 1:1 ¶ *Paul, a bondservant of God*

m). Jas 1:1 ¶ *James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,*

n). 2Pe 1:1 ¶ *Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ,*

o). Jude 1:1 ¶ *Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ,*

p). Ga 2:20 *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;*

q). We can understand this in the same way that the ministry of angels on God's behalf, following exactly His will and purpose, is described as if God Himself were performing the action – a good example of this would be the destruction of the cities of the plain.

15). And finally one last visit to the foundation - Ge 1:28 *Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful [literally – bring forth fruit] and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion.*

a). Within the process of the marriage relationship, leaving, cleaving and becoming one flesh with a view to rulership the Man and the Woman were to bring forth fruit.

b). God gives the same command to Noah after the flood, with the same end in view - Ge 9:1 ¶ *So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.*

c). And to Jacob on the day his name is changed to Israel – he who will rule with God - Ge 35:10 *And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name." So He called his name Israel. 11 Also God said to him: "I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. 12 "The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land."*

d). And what has God said in respect of us? - Mt 21:43 *"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.*

e). Joh 15:4 *"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.*

f). Us abiding in Him and His word abiding in us is the same thought as cleaving and becoming 'one flesh'.

g). As we will do that so we will be transformed into His image, so we will be born from above and as a result we will be fruitful and bring forth fruit, give birth to fruit as it were – for without Him we can do nothing.

h). In this way we will enter into the marriage relationship with Him and the Kingdom of the Heavens will be ours and God's plans and purposes for the ages will be complete.

i). Eph 5:31 *"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*