

Between Covenant and Contract: Islamic Marriage Law from the Perspective of Matthew 19:4-6

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ABSTRACT

There are some similarities in views on marriage between Islam and Christianity, there are also several striking theological differences between the two religions. Some of the most striking differences concern the laws of marriage and divorce. The research was conducted using a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. Literature review was conducted on various academic sources, including books and journals discussing marriage in Islam and Christianity, as well as expositions of the text of Matthew 19:4-6. The results of the study indicate that the most striking difference between the theological views of Islam and Christianity is that the marriage bond is dissolvable in Islam but indissolvable in Christianity. Furthermore, Islam adheres to the ideal monogamy with the possibility of polygamy, while Christianity adheres to absolute monogamy.

INTRODUCTION

Based on KBBI, marriage refers to a sacred act or ceremony that formalizes the marriage bond in accordance with religious laws and teachings. This word is rooted in the verb *nikah*. Meanwhile, marriage is an active noun derived from the verb *marriage*, which more broadly means the union of a man and a woman to form a family. In essence, these two terms have a corresponding meaning, namely the union between men and women that is recognized legally and religiously. Marriage is seen as a sacred institution in any religion, not a humanitarian agreement and is therefore considered a ceremony that has neither theological nor spiritual elements. Thus a religion stipulates that marriage must take place involving God and man.

According to the theology of the Christian faith, a Christian marriage is a holy marriage with divinely ordained rules and initiated by God Himself. In this sacred marriage covenant, a man and a woman are united by His love and grace, with God as the Head of the Church (Eph. 5:22-33) where God has supreme authority in the relationship. Marriage in Christianity is a special relationship that is always bound until death separates. While in Islam, marriage is part of Islamic law known as *marriage* or *akad*, which is an *akad* (*izab qobul*) that legalizes a relationship between a man and a solid adult woman or *mitsaqan ghalizhan* where this *akad* is a form of obedience to Allah's commands and its implementation is considered as worship. In this contract, there are conditions and pillars of marriage based on Islamic sharia and the Quran that must be agreed upon by both parties.

In the context of marriage itself, several forms of marriage relationships are known. The most common form is monogamy, which is a marriage between one husband and one wife. Christianity openly and clearly adheres to this monogamous practice. However, in certain social practices, there is also a form of polygamy, which is a husband with more than one wife, or polyandry, which is a wife with more than one husband. Polygamy itself is still a debate in society. Many perceptions say that polygamy violates Human Rights (HAM) and acts that degrade the dignity of women and forms of oppression.

In the Christian view of marriage, the Bible adheres to monogamous marriage (Matt. 19:6; Rom. 7:2). The Bible affirms that every husband and wife are called to be faithful to their spouses and not to covet someone else's spouse (1 Tim. 3:2). This principle is in line with God's moral law which forbids adultery or adultery (Ex. 20:17). In the Islamic view, marriage adheres to monogamy in accordance with the Qur'an, but it does not close to performing polygamous marriage with provisions on the basis of hadith, sharia, the Qur'an and conditions that apply to both parties. Polygamy is limited, namely it cannot be more than four and must meet the conditions that have been set according to Islam.

This research aims to understand the concept of covenant in Christian marriage and the concept of covenant in Islamic marriage to identify comparisons, with the aim of making a theoretical and practical contribution.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the theology of the Christian faith, a Christian marriage is a holy marriage with divinely ordained rules and initiated by God Himself. In this sacred marriage covenant, a man and a woman are united by His love and grace, with God as the Head of the Church (Eph. 5:22-33) where God has supreme authority in the relationship. In the Christian view of marriage, the Bible adheres to monogamous marriage (Matt. 19:6; Rom. 7:2). The Bible affirms that every husband and wife are called to be faithful to their spouses and not to covet someone else's spouse (1 Tim. 3:2). In the Islamic view, marriage adheres to monogamy in accordance with the Qur'an, but it does not close to performing polygamous marriage with provisions on the basis of hadith, sharia, the Qur'an and conditions that apply to both parties. Polygamy is limited, namely it cannot be more than four and must meet the conditions that have been set according to Islam.

METHODOLOGY

The method used in this study is a descriptive method, with a qualitative approach. The author collected various reliable sources and conducted literature studies on various academic sources, namely books and journals that discuss marriage from an Islamic perspective, marriage from a Christian perspective, and exegesis from the text of Matthew 19:4-6. By analyzing various reviews of the existing literature, this study aims to reveal the similarities and some differences of view regarding marriage between Islamic and Christian beliefs. The analysis will focus on a conceptual comparison between covenant and contract, to uncover the fundamental differences between the two.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Marriage in Islamic Ethics

In Islamic ethics, marriage is seen not merely as a social contract (*mu'āmalah*), but as a religious institution loaded with moral and spiritual values. The Qur'an affirms that the purpose of marriage is to bring peace (*sakinah*), love (*mawaddah*), and mercy (*rahmah*) (Q.S. al-Rūm [30]:21). This shows that marriage is not only about individual interests, but also a means of forming a social order based on affection and justice. In other words, the marriage bond in Islam not only serves to meet biological needs, but also to maintain social order, strengthen family networks, and pass on the values of faith to the next generation.

Normatively, marriage is seen as worship. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized that marriage is the perfection of half religion, so that its implementation is not only horizontal between humans, but also vertical in relation to Allah. Marriage in Islam is a means of moral development, self-control, and the path to the purity of life. Therefore, marriage is not just an individual life choice, but part of religious ethics that leads humans to the perfection of faith. Within this framework, married couples are called to complement each other, counsel each other, and help each other on the way to God's pleasure.

From the *fiqh side*, the validity of marriage is determined by the existence of a marriage contract. However, the Qur'an emphasizes that the contract is not just a legal contract, but a *mīthāqan ghalīẓan* (a strong and great agreement) (Q.S. al-Nisā' :21). The term was previously used for very heavy covenants, such as the covenant of Allah with the prophets (Q.S. al-Aḥzāb:7), so its use in the context of marriage affirms the sacredness of the conjugal bond. Thus, the marriage contract is not an agreement that can be decided lightly, but a sacred promise before God that is binding morally, spiritually, and socially. This emphasis shows that Islam rejects the view of marriage solely as a private contract that can be decided at will, but instead requires a firm commitment, involving a great responsibility to Allah and society.

Marriage etiquette also emphasizes the balance between the rights and obligations of husband and wife. The husband is positioned as the leader of the family (*qawwām*), but his leadership must be manifested by compassion, deliberation, and responsibility, not by domination or oppression. The wife is seen as an equal partner who has the right to respect, alimony, and protection. From the perspective of Islamic ethics, the relationship between husband and wife is a *partnership*, not an absolute hierarchy. This principle is in line with the vision of Islam which places humans as caliphs on earth with the task of upholding justice, including in the scope of the household. Thus, marriage becomes an arena for ethical training: husbands and wives learn to manage differences, develop patience, and live the values of love and sacrifice.

Furthermore, marriage in Islamic ethics has the dimension of *maqāṣid al-shari'ah*. Jasser Auda emphasized that one of the purposes of the Shari'ah is to protect human life through the protection of the soul (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), offspring (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and honor (*ḥifẓ al-'ird*). Marriage fulfills these three purposes simultaneously: preserving the existence of generations, regulating sexual relations within a halal framework, and protecting the dignity of the individual from moral damage. Thus, marriage is not only beneficial to the couple themselves, but also to the sustainability of humanity. In addition, marriage in Islam is seen as a means of building a civilization based on ethics. The family is considered the smallest unit of society, and the quality of the family will determine the quality of the nation. Therefore, the Islamic household must reflect the values of justice, loyalty, honesty, and compassion. This is where marriage ethics plays an important role, because it requires couples to make domestic life a space for the actualization of faith. When the principles of Islamic ethics are applied in the household, a generation will be born with character, noble character, and ready to continue the noble ideals of the ummah. Thus, marriage in Islamic ethics is a sacred bond that unites legal, moral, and spiritual aspects. Akad is just the entrance to a broader ethical relationship, namely a commitment to building a household within the framework of worship, love, and responsibility. The ultimate goal is not only worldly happiness, but also the pleasure of Allah which is the highest orientation in all dimensions of Muslim life.

A Valid Marriage in an Islamic Perspective

Islam regulates permissible and unpermissible marriages. The first is the Islamic view that marriage adheres to ideal monogamy in accordance with the Qur'an, but it also does not close to carrying out polygamous marriages on various basis of hadith, sharia, the Qur'an and the conditions that apply to both parties. Marriage must be between a couple of the same religion, as stated in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 221. The bride and groom must also be a mature Muslim and have a good sense physically and spiritually they must agree to marry without any coercion from a third party. Marriage in Islam must be carried out with a guardian, marriage without a guardian is considered invalid. The marriage must be witnessed by a minimum of two witnesses treason must be given appropriately. Furthermore, *ijab qabul* must be done. *Ijab* is a statement from the bride to be, while *qabul* is a statement of acceptance from the man for the woman's *ijab*.

In addition to various provisions regarding the law when marriage, Islam also prohibits various forms of marriage. First, Islam prohibits marriages between men and women that are performed within a certain period of time. This means that the marriage is associated with a time limit or a contractual marriage that will end after the specified time has expired. Second, Islam also prohibits serial marriage. Article 2 paragraph 2 of the Marriage Law states that every marriage must be recorded according to laws and regulations, the purpose of which is so that the order of marriage can be guaranteed in people's lives. Article 6 further notes that the marriage must be carried out under the supervision of the marriage registrar. This official record must also be maintained in order to bring order in matters related to marriage, such as descendants, inheritance, and other things related to the family. Marriages without proof of registration or marriage series can be harmful when dealing with laws that require proof of marriage. Thus, Islam does not approve of contract marriage and serial marriage.

Marriage in a Christian Perspective

From a Christian perspective, marriage is not just a social bond or a legal contract, but a God-ordained sacred *covenant*, a call to reflect Christ's sacrificial love, forgiveness, and faithfulness. The Bible affirms that marriage reflects the relationship between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:25-33). Therefore, marriage is seen as sacred, lifelong, and characterized by love, fidelity, and spiritual unity. Thus, Christian marriage becomes not only a source of personal happiness, but also a witness of faith that lives in the midst of the world.

Man is the most noble creation of God because he was created in His image and likeness. In the creation order, humans occupy the leading position as God's representatives to manage and carry out His plan on earth. God's purpose in creating humans is so that they can take care of the earth, manage resources, and utilize everything He has provided. In carrying out this plan, Allah created humans in two genders, male and female, with the intention that they could love each other and fulfill the needs of life as a whole, including biological needs. Marriage is seen as a permanent partnership, based on a commitment between a man and a woman. The Bible confirms this in the text: "*Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.*"

Thus, they are no longer two, but one. Therefore, what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder" (cf. Rev. Mat. 19:5–6). Marriage is meant to be a means to form a prosperous and happy family, and to obtain God's blessing through the sacred bond. This can be seen from the blessing of marriage which is not just a tradition, but an affirmation of faith that marriage is a divine institution blessed by God.

Marriage is a divine institution designed and desired by God Himself. Genesis 1:27–28 and 2:19, 21–25 affirm that God acts actively in planning, uniting men and women, and blessing them to form a family. In general, marriage can be understood as a bond between a man and a woman who agree to live together legally as husband and wife. The validity of this marriage is marked by recognition from the family, society, and authorized institutions in accordance with the prevailing customs, and especially by Allah Himself. Therefore, marriage is seen as something sacred, holy, and of noble value. Marriage is understood as the full commitment between a man and a woman before Jesus Christ, which requires faithfulness and earnestness in living it. Verkuyl, in his work *Marriage and the Christian Family*, explains that marriage is a stage of life in which man and woman are united by God, legally bound by love, law, and protection, and given the right to enjoy sexual relations in a lawful bond. This bond is meant to last a lifetime as an existential union, where the husband and wife remain a couple until the end of life.

In the Old Testament, marriage is often understood as a covenant, reflecting God's relationship with His people. Marriage is not only a bond between a man and a woman, but also a sacred covenant with God. This bond is exclusive, where a man takes a woman to be his wife. In this unity, married couples are called to give to each other, trust, and grow towards a better quality of life together. In Gary Thomas's perspective, marriage is not just for personal happiness, but a sacred means for spiritual growth, character building, and likeness to Christ. In the New Testament, marriage is understood as a bond that comes with great responsibility (1 Cor. 7:28–35). The Apostle Paul emphasized that husband and wife are called to please each other and to care for each other's needs (vv. 33–34). Marriage is characterized by the willingness of each party to give to each other, surrender themselves, and even conquer themselves for their spouse (1 Cor. 7:3–4). Further, marriage is described as a reflection of Christ's relationship with His church (Eph. 5:22–23). Wives are called to submit to their husbands as heads of the family, just as the church is subject to Christ. In Jesus' teachings, marriage is reaffirmed as the union of two persons who become "*one flesh*" (Matt. 19:5–6). Jesus Himself described Himself as the Bridegroom (Matt. 25:1–13; Mark 2:19; Yoh. 2:1–11), which affirms the permanent nature of the Christian marriage bond.

From the beginning of creation, God established the marriage relationship as a divine institution. In His design, a man is united with a woman as a life partner. This decree affirms that marriage is intended to prevent people from infidelity and adultery, and to lead them to a life of mutual complementarity. This is confirmed in Genesis 2:24 which states that a man will leave his father and mother to be united to his wife, so that the two become one flesh. This verse shows that marriage is God's plan for humans to understand the meaning of living in a couple together. Further, Genesis 2:18 states that it is not good for humans to live alone. Therefore, God created a worthy helper, a woman, taken from Adam's own rib (Gen. 2:23). This shows that from the beginning God intended marriage as an intimate, mutually supportive, and equal relationship. Women were given by God to Adam to live with him as wives, helpers, and companions who could share their lives and plan a future together.

Christian marriage is God's design. From the beginning of creation, God established the marriage relationship as a divine institution. In His design, a man is united with a woman as a life partner. This decree affirms that marriage is intended to prevent people from infidelity and adultery, and to lead them to a life of mutual complementarity. This is confirmed in Genesis 2:24 which states that a man will leave his father and mother to be united to his wife, so that the two become one flesh. This verse shows that marriage is God's plan for humans to understand the meaning of living in a couple together. Further, Genesis 2:18 states that it is not good for humans to live alone. Therefore, God created a worthy helper, a woman, taken from Adam's own rib (Gen. 2:23). This shows that from the beginning God intended marriage as an intimate, mutually supportive, and equal relationship. Women were given by God to Adam to live with him as wives, helpers, and companions who could share their lives and plan a future together.

Christian marriage is also a means of witnessing to the gospel. In a social context, women are often seen as inferior to men. However, the Bible affirms that men and women have equal standing before God. In marriage, women are called as helpers, while men play the role of the head of the family. Paul in Ephesians 5:22–32 describes the relationship between husband and wife as a reflection of Christ's relationship with His church. Wives are called to submit to their husbands, just as the church is subject to Christ. On the contrary, husbands are required to love their wives with self-sacrificing love, just as Christ loved the church to the point of giving Himself. Christ's self-sacrificing love sets an example for husbands in treating their wives. Thus, Christian marriage is not only a personal bond, but also has a dimension of witness to faith. Through family life, believers are called to proclaim the gospel and pass on the values of faith to their children. Myron Charter in his work *Parenting: A Theological Model* emphasizes the seven dimensions of God the Father's love: care, responsibility, discipline, generosity, appreciation, recognition, and forgiveness that should be reflected in the life of the Christian family. Thus, the family becomes a forum for the formation of faith as well as a means of proclaiming God's love.

Christian marriage separates a person from his or her parents and unites a man and a woman. The principle contained in Genesis 2:24 confirms that a man is called to leave his father and mother when he marries, in order to build a new life with his wife. This does not mean breaking the relationship with parents, but rather putting marriage as the top priority in his life. The act of leaving one's parents shows a new responsibility and sacrifice that must be made, as well as a readiness to build an independent family. Nevertheless, the obligation to respect and love parents still applies, even if a child has built his own household. Thus, marriage demands a balance between a new commitment to a life partner and a permanent obligation to parents. The Bible affirms that marriage is God's design as a union between a man and a woman. In Genesis 2:18 it is affirmed that man is not good for living alone, so God provides a helper who is worthy of him. The principle of equivalence in question does not mean similarity, but compatibility in faith, character, and lifestyle. The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 6:14 warns that believers should not be paired with unbelievers. Thus, the ideal equivalence in a Christian marriage is when both parties live in repentance, have faith in Christ, and have a harmony of character that allows them to build a harmonious household.

Marriage in Christianity is also faithful and eternal. Fidelity is a fundamental element in Christian marriage. A negative example can be found in the story of Abraham (Genesis 12:11-20; 20:1-18) who failed to show loyalty to his wife. Therefore, the Christian marriage covenant binds the bride and groom in a promise to love each other and remain faithful in both good times and bad times. Loyalty is defined as obedience to promises and principles, while eternity refers to the continuation of a lifelong commitment. Christian marriage requires couples to hold fast to their promises, to stay united in the face of suffering, illness, or economic challenges, because without a foundation of faithfulness, the household will not last long. The Bible consistently teaches that marriage is defined as monogamy, one man and one woman (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:24). This principle is emphasized in the New Testament, as in 1 Corinthians 7:2 and 1 Timothy 3:2, which emphasize that each husband should have only one wife, and vice versa. Polygamy, which appears in certain accounts in the Old Testament, does not correspond to God's original plan, but rather reflects the sinfulness of man. Therefore, the principle of monogamy is understood as a decree of God that reflects the equality of dignity of men and women and the exclusive and permanent unity of love.

Marriage According to Matthew 19:4-6

Matthew 19:4-6 begins with the Pharisees' question about the legality of divorce, they ask, "*Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason?*" (Matt. 19:3). This verse is proposed because among the Pharisees themselves there were different interpretations of the law of divorce. The most popular view on divorce at that time was expressed by the two greatest rabbis, Hillel and Shammai. Rabbi Hillel argues that divorce can be done for any reason, referring to the verse in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. This verse reads: "*If a man takes a woman and becomes her husband, and if he does not like her any more, because he finds something indecent in her*". Rabbi Hillel interprets this "*indecent*" in a very broad scope, that is, "*for any*

reason". This is in contrast to the opinion of another great rabbi of Christ's time named Shammai, a rabbi known for his discipline in applying the law. He interpreted this "*indecent thing*" as adultery committed by a wife against her husband. This is the question that the Pharisees asked the Lord Jesus, recorded in Matthew 19. When the Pharisees tested God with the question of divorce, He reversed the situation to emphasize the eternity of marriage and correct their misunderstanding of the acceptable reasons for divorce. In this verse the Lord Jesus' answer goes beyond the existing debate by returning to the original commandment from creation (Gen. 2:24).

In the text of Matthew 19:1-12, the Lord Jesus actually revealed a truth that goes beyond divorce by discussing the purpose of marriage itself. The Lord makes six important points in this passage: The first is that marriage is something designed by God Himself, this is reflected in verse five with the word "His word". It means that it is God's will for a man to leave his father and mother to be one with his wife. Second, marriage is intended by God so that humans can complement each other, as in verse four it is recorded that God "*created man from the beginning . . . men and women*". Third, marriage is an institution that is meant to last permanently, for it is noted that, "*the two shall become one flesh.*" Fourth, marriage has an exclusive nature where one man can only marry one woman because they will become one. Fifth, marriage separates a man from his father and mother, meaning that there must be a fundamental transfer of loyalty from loyalty to parents to their spouse. The sixth is that marriage is not designed for everyone, as in verses ten to twelve God states that there are people who have the gift of celibacy, and it is a very beautiful thing to receive and practice with pleasure. Furthermore, the author will explore the truth contained in verses 4-6 more.

In the fourth verse God states that God created man and woman from the beginning, this can be confirmed from the creation story in Genesis 1-2. Instead of returning to the Book of Deuteronomy, the Lord Jesus returned to the Book of Genesis where God ordained the first marriage. In the story of the first marriage, we can see that God wants marriage to be a permanent institution, for we see that man and woman become one flesh. It is therefore impossible to separate what has become one. This verse also gives us the understanding that marriage can only be between a man and a woman, not a same-sex marriage. Further Matthew 19:5 refers to the verse of Genesis 2:24, where the first marriage is recorded. From the beginning Allah has said that a man will leave his parents and be united with his wife into one flesh, meaning that the permanent unity of marriage has indeed been designed from the beginning. Christ as the second person of the Triune God declares this creation truth, that divorce was not what God willed from the beginning. Divorce actually exists because of man's fall into sin. If we build the concept of marriage on the ideal pattern of God, then we need not worry about the law regarding divorce. The sixth verse further reaffirms that, "*what Allah has joined together, cannot be divorced by man*". The law of marriage between a man and a woman until death separates them is actually a law that is embedded in creation itself. The words "*what God has joined together*" also give us an understanding that marriage is not just an agreement between people, but a relationship ordained by

God. Married humans are actually united in a way that is different from all other human relationships.

So, the Bible, in this case the text of Matthew 19:4-6 clearly describes marriage as an everlasting covenant until death separates, which can be between one man and one woman as seen in the creation story. Adultery or polygamy in the Christian faith is therefore infidelity. R. C. Sproul stated that this sexual infidelity attacks the core of the marriage agreement between couples. Click or tap here to enter text. Man and woman were created to complement each other faithfully, neither man nor woman should be treated as property that can be disposed of or taken at will but as a couple bound in a sacred covenant. Thus Christianity adheres to monogamy and rejects the existence of adultery or the practice of polygamy.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Marriage is a bond between a man and a woman, which in both Islamic and Christian perspectives is seen as a bond that involves moral and religious dimensions. However, there are some differences in the views on marriage ethics between Islam and Christianity. One of the differences that can be seen is the difference in the concept of a marriage agreement. In Christianity, marriage is seen as a sacred covenant from God, involving a man and a woman with God as the sanctifying person. Marriage is something permanent and inseparable for humans, as recorded in Matthew 19:6 and Genesis 2:24, where from the beginning God designed marriage to be an inseparable bond until death separates. Thus, divorce is seen as a violation of God's plan from the beginning. On the other hand, in Islam marriage is seen as a legal contract (*izab qabul*), and although it is considered sacred, Islam still recognizes the possibility of divorce if certain conditions are met.

The next difference lies in the concepts of monogamy and polygamy. Christianity emphatically embraces monogamy, as emphasized in Genesis 2:24 and Matthew 19:4-6. Again, from the beginning God created one man and one woman to enter into a marriage relationship, so polygamy is a form of marriage that goes against God's design in creation. Polygamy arose because of the deviation of human sin, not God's design. Meanwhile, Islam views monogamy as an ideal form, but it opens up opportunities to practice polygamy with a maximum limit of four wives. In addition, Islam provides various requirements for polygamy, such as having to provide for all wives, being fair and providing protection. Thus Islam legalizes polygamy as a limited option, while Christianity rejects polygamy theologically. This rejection of this form of polygamy also occurs because Christianity views the family as a means to reflect God's love in it, just as Christ loves the church faithfully, so a husband is called to love his wife faithfully. His orientation is lifelong loyalty and testimony of faith and godliness to the world. Marriage in Christianity is not only sociologically purposeful, namely to build a good family, but theological, as a responsibility to God. Christianity emphasizes unity in the love of Christ, while Islam emphasizes the social structure of leadership in the household with the principles of justice and responsibility.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Still doing further research to learn more about Between Covenant and Contract: Islamic Marriage Law from the Perspective of Matthew 19:4-6

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