



Psalms 78:2-4

I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old... We will not conceal them.

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This issue of PARABLES BOOKSHELF contains chapters 7-8 of *The Marriage Covenant*.

The Christian life is one of meeting injustice with forgiveness and kindness. A Christian will respond to the slings and arrows of his enemies with blessings.

Has this been the pattern of your life? It was the pattern of Christ. Even as He was being crucified and mocked, as people were hurling insults at Him as His life blood was ebbing away, He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

Responding to the world as Christ did is a

rarity, even among Christians. Many professing believers make excuses for their lack of forgiveness and humility. The flesh and the soul of man does not want to suffer at the hands of others and return a blessing in return.

This present life is designed to fit us for the life to come when God will bestow a marvelous glory and honor upon His sons and daughters. The more one humbles themselves now, the greater will be the honor to be bestowed upon them later. This is what Christ declared when He spoke the following words.

Matthew 20:16

"Thus the last shall be first, and the first last."

If you will not humble yourself now, you are insuring that you will not be exalted in the ages to come.

The Christian life is one of many opposites. We must die to live. We must become as a servant to be greater than all.

What do all these things reveal? They reveal that God is humble, and He desires humility in His sons and daughters. To the extent that we share His character we will share in His glory.

Food for Thought

"People are often unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered; Forgive them anyway. If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives; Be kind anyway... If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you; Be honest and frank anyway... The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow; Do good anyway... You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God; It was never between you and them anyway."

Kent M. Keith

Scripture Memory

Matthew 5:44-45

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.

Parables Newsletter

- Series 1.11.4
- *The Marriage Covenant*
- Chapters 7-8

The Marriage Covenant

Foundation Stone Five - The Polluted Land



We observed previously that Yahweh uses parables to provide understanding to His people. We looked at the parable of the soul in its two halves, as it is manifested in the cutting of a blood covenant. We observed many truths as we looked at the parable of the body being a temple of God. With the laying of this fifth foundation stone we will look at the truths that are revealed through the parable of the land being a married woman.

We should not be surprised that Yahweh compares the bodies of men and women to a portion of the earth, for man's body was formed of the dust of the earth.

Genesis 2:7

Then Yahweh God formed man of dust from the ground...

Genesis 3:19

"For you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Let us begin by looking at a Scripture where Yahweh compares the land of Israel to His wife.

Isaiah 62:1-5

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not keep quiet... It will no longer be said to you, "Forsaken," Nor to your land will it any longer be said, "Desolate"; But you will be called, "My delight is in her," **And your land, "Married"**; For Yahweh delights in you, and **to Him your land will be married...** And **as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so your God will rejoice over you.**

If God uses the imagery of His being married to the land of Israel, then there must also be a parallel image between man and his bride, for man was created to be the image and likeness of God. We find this parallel in Scriptures, for a man's wife is at times spoken of through the analogy of land.

Jeremiah 3:1

God says, "If a husband divorces **his wife**, and she goes from him, and belongs to another man, will he still return to her? **Will not that land be completely polluted?**

When the Holy Spirit inspired Jeremiah to write of land being polluted, we understand that **land** is a metaphor for a man's wife. To this day it is still common to refer to a nation in terms of a woman. The following picture is of Lady Columbia, the female personification of America.

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Lady Columbia

I do not think that Yahweh would depict America as a beautiful woman dressed in white. The land of America has truly become polluted by the grievous sins committed in the land. The blood of more than 50 million babies has stained the land, and the stain cannot be washed away.

Numbers 35:33-34

So you shall not pollute the land where you are; for blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it. Therefore do not defile the land which you inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell; for I Yahweh dwell among the children of Israel."

Describing the land as a married woman is a well utilized device used by Yahweh in the Scriptures. There is benefit in examining these passages, for they reveal many things, including Yahweh's abhorrence of sexual defilement, as well as the grounds for divorce, and the restoration of one who

has been divorced.

In the following passage we see Yahweh describing the adulterous behavior of His wives, Israel and Judah. He speaks of divorcing Israel and sending her away from His presence, for she had stained herself with the pollution of her adultery.

Jeremiah 3:6-9

Then Yahweh said to me in the days of Josiah the king, ***"Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there."*** And I thought, 'After she has done all these things, she will return to Me'; but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. And I saw that ***for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also. And it came about because of the lightness of her harlotry, that she polluted the land and committed adultery with stones and trees.***"

In the previous post in this series we looked at the scourge of venereal disease. Yahweh so designed His creation that when men and women act in an adulterous or sexually immoral manner, their bodies become infected with disease. The many diseases are often abhorrent in appearance, resulting in cankers, blisters, pustules, and various physical deformities. The blood stream of those infected can be compared to a polluted river within a nation. Death is present in that current that should be devoted to the preservation of life.

The blood stream of those infected can be compared to a polluted river.

The Marriage Covenant



Whenever God's chosen people embraced another god, He viewed the act as infidelity, and described it as whoredom and adultery. As the Israelites built their high places for the worship of these foreign gods, Yahweh viewed the land as polluted and greatly defiled. Israel and Judah embraced many gods. They worshiped the Baals. They worshiped Molech and Ashtoreth and Milcom and various other gods from the nations around them.

As we have observed in previous chapters of this series, man could have more than one wife, but a wife was permitted only one husband. This is a parable of God with man. Yahweh may take many peoples and nations to Himself, but the nations are only permitted to serve Him as God. For Israel or Judah to embrace another deity was viewed in the same way as the wife of a man spreading her legs and inviting strange men to be sexually promiscuous with her.

Ezekiel 16:25

"You built yourself a high place at the top of every street, and made your beauty abominable; and you spread your legs to every passer-by to multiply your harlotry."

These are profound parables. Yahweh uses this metaphor of His people being His wife throughout

both the Old and New Testaments. He speaks of the faithlessness and treachery of His people as they forsake Him and embrace foreigners. Yahweh testifies that He finds such betrayal and lewd behavior to be abhorrent.

Psalms 106:34-40

They did not destroy the peoples, as Yahweh commanded them, but they mingled with the nations, and learned their practices, and served their idols, which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons, and shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with the blood. **Thus they became unclean in their practices, and played the harlot in their deeds.** Therefore **the anger of Yahweh was kindled** against His people, **and He abhorred His inheritance.**

Yahweh has created man so that he too would be jealous of his wife. Man is created in the image and likeness of God, and Yahweh is jealous for His people. He is always angered and abhorred when His wife acts in an adulterous manner. When He found no repentance in His wife for her harlotry, He gave her a writ of divorce and sent her away. This He did with both Israel and Judah. Israel was sent away to the land of Assyria, and when Judah repeated the sins of her sister, she was sent to Babylon.

It should be understood from this that Yahweh sees nothing unrighteous in the act of sending away a wife that has acted in an adulterous manner. For the reason of unchastity, He has ever permitted a man to send away a wife. Yahweh would have mankind understand through the marriage relationship between a man and his wife the jealousy with which He looks upon His people.

Exodus 34:13-16

You are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their Asherim - for you shall not worship any other god, **for Yahweh,**

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whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God - lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they play the harlot with their gods, and sacrifice to their gods, and someone invite you to eat of his sacrifice; and you take some of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters play the harlot with their gods, and cause your sons also to play the harlot with their gods.

Jealousy toward a wife is not an evil thing. It would be an evil thing for a man to not care whether his wife was having sexual relations with other men. Some who are hardened in their sin practice such “open marriages” today, but those who do so have departed far from God whose name is Jealous.

The Jews were hard-hearted, and the men were prone to send their wives away for any transgression at all. If the wife simply did not please them anymore, they would send them away. This is something Yahweh would not do. It was only for the sake of unchastity, for sexual immorality, that Yahweh would send away His wife.

The Jewish leaders came to Christ and inquired of Him concerning this matter. They asked Yahshua if it was permitted for a man to send away a wife for any reason at all. He responded:

Matthew 5:32

“I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality (porneia) causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.”

The Greek word rendered here as “sexual immorality” is porneia. It is translated in a variety of ways, including “unchastity,” “fornication,” “adultery,” and “uncleanness.” Christ was declaring that sexual immorality was the only justification for a man to send away a wife with a writing of divorce. If a man sent her away for any reason besides sexual impurity, he would be causing her to commit adultery.

It is a terrible thing for any man to influence another to commit adultery. It is an act of great treachery for a man to cause his own wife to have to commit adultery by sending her out from his presence for any reason other than that she had already acted treacherously toward the marriage covenant by opening her legs to another man.

God viewed His wives, Israel and Judah to be polluted and defiled when they embraced other gods. It is natural that a man would hold the same view toward his wife when she has embraced other men.

Yahweh has created men so that those who are righteous as He is righteous, have an aversion to being joined to a woman who is polluted. Yahweh speaks of a man taking back a wife who has been polluted by another man as an act of abomination.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4

“When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house, and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's wife, and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since **she has been defiled**; for **that is an abomination before Yahweh**, and you shall not bring sin on the land which Yahweh your God gives you as an inheritance.”

Some have contemplated whether it is right for a man or woman today to return to a spouse that has been divorced and married to another. The Law delivered to Moses strictly forbid such an action. Yahweh said that the wife in such a case had been defiled, and that it was an abominable thing in the sight of God for the wife to return to the first husband after she had been polluted by intercourse

The Marriage Covenant

with another man.

The Law was given in order that man might identify sin and transgression as Yahweh does. The Law reveals those things that are clean in Yahweh's sight, and those things that are unclean. The Law makes a distinction between the holy and the profane.

A woman who has acted adulterously is unclean.

The Law was given in order that man might identify sin...

She is described as polluted and defiled. It is a very detestable thing in God's eyes for either Himself, or a man, to be joined to one who has polluted herself and

made herself abhorrent. This is the language that the Bible uses to describe these things.

Although the Law describes for us those things that are clean and unclean, it does not reveal the entire counsel of God. The Law was without mercy. "The soul that sinned must die." Aaron was the first High Priest of the Law, and he observed firsthand the merciless character of the Law. When Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu transgressed the command of God, failing to show reverence to His holiness, and the offered strange fire before Him, fire that God did not recognize as holy, Yahweh struck them both dead.

Aaron was confronted with the death of two of his sons in a single moment of time, and the loss was tremendous. Yahweh was revealing to Aaron that those who serve Him must treat Him as holy. Yahweh was demonstrating the awfulness of His Holy character. Men who are unclean cannot stand in His presence. The Law was given to show mankind the vast gulf between the holiness of Yahweh and the sinfulness of man. Those who understood the difference should truly tremble in fear, realizing their uncleanness.

This is the purpose of the Law, to show the abomi-

nable depths to which mankind has fallen, and to show to them their need of a Savior. The law included types and shadows of the mercy of God to come, for their were sacrifices and offerings that could be made to atone for the sins of mankind. Yet, the central purpose of the Law was to present all men as unclean before God that every mouth my be stopped, and that no flesh should glory in Yahweh's presence.

This severity of the Law was revealed in what happened to Aaron's two sons. Not only were they slain, but God forbid Aaron to even mourn for them.

Leviticus 10:1-7

Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before Yahweh, which He had not commanded them. And fire came out from the presence of Yahweh and consumed them, and they died before Yahweh. Then Moses said to Aaron, "It is what Yahweh spoke, saying, 'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored.'" So Aaron, therefore, kept silent... Then Moses said to Aaron and to his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, "Do not uncover your heads nor tear your clothes, so that you may not die, and that He may not become wrathful against all the congregation. But your kinsmen, the whole house of Israel, shall bewail the burning which Yahweh has brought about. You shall not even go out from the doorway of the tent of meeting, lest you die; for the Lord's anointing oil is upon you." So they did according to the word of Moses.

If God in His holiness were to treat us with justice we would all perish. Yet He has determined to show to mankind mercy.

James 2:13

For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

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The Law revealed the justice of God, and its judgments were accordingly severe. An adulterer, or adulteress was to be stoned to death. One who violated the Sabbath was to be stoned to death. A rebellious son was to be taken outside the camp and stoned to death. Mankind has fallen into great transgression, departing from the holy character of Yahweh, and the consequences are severe. The Law showed this seriousness of man's fall. Christ came to reveal the mercy of God. If we stop at the Law, we will all be accounted transgressors.

Galatians 2:16-17

A man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Yahshua, even we have believed in Christ Yahshua, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since ***by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.***

Galatians 3:11

Now that ***no one is justified by the Law before God*** is evident; for, "The righteous man shall live by faith."

What does this mean, but that no man can attain to the righteousness that is revealed in the Law. We are altogether unclean. We stand condemned by the Law, for this was its ministry; it was given to reveal to man his condemnation.

II Corinthians 3:7-9

But if ***the ministry of death***, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, how shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? For if ***the ministry of condemnation*** has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory.

What was engraved in letters on stones? It was the Law of God delivered to Moses. The apostle Paul

describes the role of the Law as "the ministry of death," and "the ministry of condemnation." The error of those who want to be ruled by the ministry of the Law is revealed in Christ's confrontation with the Jewish leaders over the woman who was caught in the act of adultery.

John 8:3-11

Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Yahshua stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Yahshua was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Yahshua had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Yahshua said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

The ministry of the Law was condemnation, but Christ's words were "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." The Law was given to condemn the world, but Christ did not come for the same purpose.

John 3:17

"For God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved through Him."

The Marriage Covenant

Luke 9:54-56

And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; **for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.**"]

Moses delivered the Law to God's people. The Jews thought that this Law could save them, for they were greatly deluded in thinking that they could attain to the righteous standards of the Law. In His sermon on the mount, Yahshua revealed that they were mistaken. He revealed the perfection that

Yahshua revealed to the Jews that the Law could only condemn them.

Yahweh required for men to be justified in His sight. It was not enough to keep from committing adultery, for if a man looked upon another man's wife with lust, he

had committed adultery with her in his heart. It was not enough to not murder another man, for if one were to be angry with his brother without a cause he was in danger of judgment. It was not enough to love one's friends and hate one's enemies, for God causes the Sun to shine on the just and the unjust, and He sends the blessing of rain upon all.

Over and over, Yahshua revealed to the Jews that the Law could only condemn them. It could never present them as righteous in the eyes of Yahweh. The law was given to accuse and convict men of sin before a holy God.

John 5:45

"Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; **the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope.**"

If we understand these things, then we can begin to understand why God at times violates the commands of His own Law. The Law only revealed one

aspect of Yahweh's character, His holiness, but it did not reveal His mercy. The Law demanded that the one caught in adultery should be stoned, but Christ expressed forgiveness and mercy to the adulteress, while admonishing her to sin no more.

Let us consider the words of the Law that we have read in Deuteronomy chapter 24, verses 1-4. Yahweh said that a woman who had been sent away and joined to another could not return to the first husband, for that was an abomination. Such a woman is defiled, and according to the righteousness of God this is true. Yet there is mercy even for such an one as this.

Yahweh revealed this when He sent Israel and Judah away with a writ of divorce. They were joined to their lovers, and played the harlot with abandonment. Yet a time came when Yahweh remembered His love for them, and He decided to express His mercy. He took them back, which is something that was detestable to His righteousness. Yet mercy triumphs over judgment! Hallelujah!

Jeremiah 3:8

"And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, **I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce...**"

Yahweh has declared that the adulteries of Israel are as abominable to Him as the adulteries of an unfaithful wife. He declares through Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 3:1

God says, "If a husband divorces his wife, and she goes from him, and belongs to another man, will he still return to her? Will not that land be completely polluted? But you are a harlot with many lovers; Yet you turn to Me," declares Yahweh.

What is Yahweh declaring? He is saying that Israel has acted just like one who has been divorced due

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to her adulteries and has been joined to another. She is completely polluted. He asks, "Will such a woman return to her first husband? Will not that land be completely polluted?" The answers are rhetorical, "Yes, she is polluted. No, she has no right to return to her first husband for she has defiled herself."

Yet, the remarkable thing is that Yahweh allowed her to come back. Indeed, He even sought after her to bring her back to Himself. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

Jeremiah 3:12-14

"Return, faithless Israel," declares Yahweh; **"I will not look upon you in anger. For I am gracious,"** declares Yahweh; **"I will not be angry forever.** Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against Yahweh your God and have scattered your favors to the strangers under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice," declares Yahweh. **"Return, O faithless sons,"** declares Yahweh.

We see this same merciful heart of God overcoming His righteous indignation and judgment as recorded in the book of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 39:25-29

Therefore thus says Yahweh God, "Now I shall restore the fortunes of Jacob, and **have mercy** on the whole house of Israel; and I shall be jealous for My holy name. And **they shall forget their disgrace and all their treachery which they perpetrated against Me,** when they live securely on their own land with no one to make them afraid. When I bring them back from the peoples and gather them from the lands of their enemies, then I shall be sanctified through them in the sight of the many nations. Then they will know that I am Yahweh their God because **I made them go into exile among the nations, and then gathered them again to their own land;** and I will leave none of them there any longer. And I will not hide My face from them any longer, for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel," de-

clares Yahweh God.

In His righteous anger and jealousy Yahweh could have cast His wife away forever, for she had played the harlot. Yet in His mercy He sought after her and drew her back to Himself.

As we proceed to address the specific questions that arise concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage, we must ever keep in mind the mercy of God. The Law of God is a minister of condemnation. The Law slays men and women in their sins. Yet God, being rich in His mercy, has put away His anger and ever seeks to save that which is lost. Christ came to save mankind, not to condemn, yet at the same time He says, "Go and sin no more."

We must ever keep the kindness and the severity of God in mind. His grace does not give men and woman license to sin. All who seek to abuse Yahweh's grace will reap the consequences of their error. "Do not be deceived, for God will not be mocked." Men and women will reap what they sow. If they continue to sow to the flesh after having been made partakers of the grace and mercy of God, will they not reap according to their error?

Mercy triumphs over judgment!

Where should we end this post? Should we end saying God is merciful, or should we end saying God is righteous and holy and to be feared? Let us end by declaring both.

Psalms 85:10

Lovingkindness and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

The land that is polluted can be redeemed. That which has been defiled may yet again be sanctified. Let us take hope, and let us "go and sin no more."

The Marriage Covenant

Foundation Stone Six - Betrothal

We now are come to look at the beautiful pattern and parable of betrothal. I hesitate to describe this as Hebrew betrothal, or a Jewish betrothal custom, for the pattern to be examined here is one that Yahweh Himself uses to describe the relation between His Son and the Bride of Christ.

In our modern society we have little to compare with betrothal. Engagements are as different from Biblical betrothal as co-habitation is from the marriage covenant. Following is an excerpt from the online Jewish Encyclopedia.

The term "betrothal" in Jewish law must not be understood in its modern sense; that is, the agreement of a man and a woman to marry, by which the parties are not, however, definitely bound, but

Once a man and woman were betrothed, they were considered husband and wife.

which may be broken or dissolved without formal divorce. Betrothal or engagement such as this is not known either to the Bible or to the Talmud, and only crept in among

the medieval and modern Jews through the influence of the example of the Occidental nations among whom they dwelt...

[Source: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/>]

Although there are varying examples of the way in which betrothals and marriages were conducted in Scripture, there are certain foundational precepts that were established by Yahweh, and written about in the Law. Beyond this, we have the very definite pattern manifested in the relationship between Christ and His Bride.

Most Christians are familiar with the symbolism of Christ being a Bridegroom, and the Church (Ekklesia, the Called-Out ones), being His bride. The apostle Paul speaks of the saints being "betrothed" to Christ.

II Corinthians 11:2

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have **betrothed** you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

The betrothal spoken of here refers to a marriage contract. It is not the same as becoming engaged today, for modern engagements are not considered legally binding. The betrothal would be more akin to a bride and groom signing the marriage certificate, and filing it with the court. A betrothal was a binding agreement. Once a man and woman were betrothed, they were considered husband and wife, though they would not live together, nor the union be consummated until the wedding night.

In the Old Testament, a betrothed virgin was referred to as the wife of the man to whom she was espoused.

Deuteronomy 22:23-24

"If there is a girl who is **a virgin betrothed** to a man, and another man finds her in the city and lies with her, then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city and you shall stone them to death; the girl, because she did not cry out in the city, and the man, because he has violated his neighbor's **wife**.

One thing we observe repeatedly in the Scriptural references to betrothal is that the woman betrothed is described as a virgin. Paul said that he had betrothed the church to Christ that he might present her to him "as a chaste virgin." The passage just cited from Deuteronomy 22 speaks of "a virgin betrothed." The will and design of Yahweh is revealed in these words. He intended for a young woman to remain a virgin until her wedding night. This alone constitutes righteous behavior.

As we have seen in previous chapters of this series, the first experience of sexual intercourse for a woman fulfills the types and patterns of a blood covenant. It is an aberration, an unseemly and en-

Parables Bookshelf

tirely inappropriate action for a young woman to give her virginity to one man and then to marry another. It is unthinkable that she should cut a blood covenant with a man that is not her husband for life.

Consider the example of two men cutting covenant with one another. It would be considered an act of treachery to go through all the forms of the blood covenant, signifying that two souls are joined as one, while there is no intent in the heart of those joined to honor the covenant. You cut covenant with a person to whom you are committed for life, binding yourself in blood. Yet men and women commit such absurdities and unseemly and treacherous actions without batting an eye. Such ones are testifying that they have no regard for the righteous and holy ways of God.

It was so important that a woman remain a virgin in order that she might enter into the blood covenant with her husband on her wedding night, that severe penalties were associated with any man who would dare to violate a virgin. If a man forced a virgin to lie with him before she were betrothed, he was required to marry her and could never divorce her? Why? He had entered into a blood covenant with the virgin.

If a man violated a virgin who had been betrothed, the man was to be stoned to death. He had robbed another man of the opportunity to cut covenant with his own bride. From antiquity, the knowledge of the great evil of defiling a virgin and robbing her of the opportunity to cut covenant with her husband, was well known. The oldest book in the Bible is Job, and we read his confession in the following words.

Job 31:1

"I Have made a covenant with my eyes; How then could I gaze at a virgin?"

The writer of the book of Job uses the Hebrew word "bethulah," meaning "virgin" to describe this covenant that Job made with his eyes. Job is not saying that he made a covenant to not look upon a woman with lust, although I am sure that he walked in integrity in this matter as well. What he specifically states is that he will not look upon a virgin with lust.

If a man violated a virgin who had been betrothed, the man was to be stoned to death.

Job is testifying that he has covenanted to not commit great wickedness in the eyes of Yahweh. It would be a great wickedness for him to take a pure virgin to himself and to lie with her. Though many men with the wealth he had may consider doing such things, he would not violate a virgin in this way, destroying her one opportunity to cut covenant with a man. Although it was wrong for a man to commit any act of fornication, it was especially reprehensible to do so with a virgin. God would see, and He would judge.

I know that many who read these words have transgressed in this area. There are women who gave their virginity to one who was not their husband. They cut covenant with a man that they did not marry. They deprived their future husband of the opportunity to establish a blood covenant with themselves. Many men have taken away the virginity of a woman that they had no intention of marrying. These are great transgressions, destroying the purity, innocence, and fidelity of what marriage was intended to be.

If reading this teaching causes a deep grieving in your spirit, then this writing is accomplishing one aim for which it is presented. It is the desire of this writer that the people of God would understand the holiness of the marriage covenant and that they would loathe all that would mar its sacredness.

But what then? Are those who sinned forever to suffer loss and regret for their transgressions? Is

The Marriage Covenant

there no forgiveness, no recovery of that which was carelessly discarded? We should remember the words cited in the previous post.

A woman was brought before Christ who was caught in the very act of adultery. This woman was close to having been stoned to death. She heard the charges of the men who had caught her committing a great transgression. She knew what Moses had written concerning adultery. She stood condemned. She stood before the righteous judge of Israel, and He saw her filth and uncleanness.

Christ told the scribes and Pharisees, "Let the one who is without sin among you be the first to cast a stone." There were no men present among those to

We all stand in need of the mercy of God.

whom Christ spoke who could cast a stone. They were all transgressors and stood condemned before Yahweh. Christ, however, was without sin. He could have hurled

a stone at the adulteress had He chosen to do so. She was a sinner; He was not. She had violated Yahweh's holiness; He had fulfilled it.

Yet the only One who was able to execute the judgment of the Law said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more." We all stand in need of the mercy of God. We would all do well to consider the peril that our transgressions have placed us in. We all stand within a hair's breath of the executioner, and we are guilty. Our only hope is that the Judge of all mankind might be merciful. We deserve the sentence of death, but He took the sentence upon Himself. He stood in our place and received the just condemnation for every woman who has cast away her virginity as if it was an unholy thing. Yahshua received the lashes and the cross for every man who has violated a virgin.

God has not changed the penalty of the Law. He merely changed who would pay the penalty. Let us weep and lament over the sins we have committed. Let us repent, and firmly commit ourselves to "Go

and sin no more." Let us be grieved at those things we cast away and cannot get back. A woman cannot regain her physical virginity once it is gone, but she can become a virgin in her heart. Those who were once fornicators and adulterers can be cleansed and purified.

I Corinthians 6:9-11

Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither **fornicators**, nor idolaters, nor **adulterers**, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And **such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Yahshua Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.**

"You were washed." The stain of sin has been removed. Those who were unclean have been declared righteous through the blood of Christ.

Titus 3:5

He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit...

"You were sanctified." You have now been set aside to walk as one who is holy and righteous. Having been freed from sin you have been made a bondsman to righteousness.

Romans 6:22

But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

"You were justified." God has made a way that we might lawfully be declared righteous in His sight. He has placed our condemnation upon His Son and has placed His Son's righteousness upon

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is. The great exchange has taken place.

II Corinthians 5:21

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

What should be the result of this knowledge? Are we to continue in sin? God forbid. How can those who have been freed from sin at so high a cost continue any longer in it? Will we trample on the blood of Christ and act despitely toward the Holy Spirit that has been given?

Hebrews 10:28-31

Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant **by which he was sanctified**, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." And again, "**The Lord will judge HIS PEOPLE.**" It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

This passage is speaking of those who have been sanctified, and who continue to transgress willfully. What can such ones expect? God will judge His people. If you have continued in the same transgressions that required Christ to go to the cross for you, have you not regarded as a common thing the precious blood of Christ? Have you not offended the Spirit of grace? Do you believe there will be no reaping of that which is sown to the flesh?

People of God, we have become accustomed to living carelessly, without any fear of God's righteous judgment. We should fear greatly if we persist in sins that He has redeemed us from at the cost of the life of His beloved Son.

Perhaps you find yourself in this situation. Having been redeemed from a life of transgression and sin, you continued in it as one insensitive to the great cost of your salvation. Is there yet hope? Having acted with such carelessness and continued license, having trampled on all that is holy, can you yet be restored?

The apostle Paul wrote to the church of Corinth among which there were many who were continuing in sin. Some were sick as a result, and some had died. Some men were visiting temple prostitutes. One man had even taken his father's wife to be his own. There was great transgression as many were partaking of the blood and body of Christ in an unworthy manner. (I am speaking here of the substance of what the bread and wine point to.)

Paul chastised them severely, and even declared that he had determined to turn the transgressor over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh that his soul might be saved in the day of Christ (I Corinthians 5:5). If you continue in sin, do you suppose that God will not turn you over to Satan for the destruction of your body? He surely will. Even now, many are sick, and some will die, because they have treated the blood of the covenant as an unholy thing.

Do you believe there will be no reaping of that which is sown to the flesh?

Yet, a remarkable thing is observed in Paul's next epistle. The man who had taken his father's wife to be his own, bringing great shame to the name of Christ, had repented and put away his father's wife. There was yet room for repentance in the eyes of God. The man was restored to God and to fellowship with the body of Christ.

II Corinthians 2:6-10

Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by exces-

The Marriage Covenant

sive sorrow. Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him. For to this end also I wrote that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. But whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ.

If you are experiencing conviction of your sin, then God's Spirit is yet striving with you, seeking to turn you to righteousness. There is yet room for repentance. If Yahweh had forsaken you due to continual transgression, then you would not be able to repent. He would give you over to your sin, and you would remain hardened until the stroke of judgment fell.

This is a serious matter. Do not delay to repent of your sins. Confess them to God and to those you have transgressed against. Fear God and pursue righteousness. If you shrug off the conviction, God will not strive with you forever. He will send upon you a spirit of delusion so that you will believe a lie and will be hardened until His judgment falls.

*Do not delay to repent
of your sins.*

II Thessalonians 2:10-12

Because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved... for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

I have strayed somewhat from the subject of betrothal, but the Spirit convinces me that I have not strayed from His message. Let us now return to our examination of betrothal.

According to the custom of the Jews, which is also the pattern demonstrated by Christ, a man would

enter into a marriage agreement and would then depart to prepare a home in which to live with his bride. During this period following the betrothal much activity would be going on. As the Groom was preparing a Bridal chamber, his father was also making plans for a wedding feast. The Bride too was busy. She was preparing herself to be taken into the Bridegroom's home to be his wife. We see all activities revealed in Christ's relationship to the church.

Christ, The Bridegroom, Preparing a Dwelling

John 14:2-4

"In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

God the Father, Preparing a Wedding Feast

Matthew 22:2-3

"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king, who gave a wedding feast for his son."

The Ekklessia, the Bride, Making Herself Ready

Revelation 19:7-9

"Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'"

A typical betrothal period lasted approximately one year. The Bride, having been espoused, was to wait

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in readiness, for she would not know the exact time that her Bridegroom would come for her.

Matthew 25:1-6

"Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom... Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'"

Not even the Bridegroom knows the precise time when His Father will send Him to get His Bride. He waits in readiness, having prepared a dwelling place for His Bride.

Mark 13:32-33

"But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. Take heed, keep on the alert; for you do not know when the appointed time is."

As the people of God, we have been espoused to Christ as a pure virgin. Christ has gone away to prepare a place to receive us unto Himself. The Father is preparing a great wedding feast to mark the day of our gathering to Christ to Tabernacle with Him forevermore.

What will Christ be looking for when He returns? He will be looking for those who have made themselves ready. Many in the church have failed to do so. They are not clothing themselves in white linen, which is the righteous acts of the saints. They are continuing in unrighteous acts. Many are involved in sexual immorality. Some are fornicating and committing adultery. Some are divorcing and remarrying according to their own soul's desire. Many are harlots in their affections, loving the world and the things in it. The majority of the church today are unclean. They have not washed their garments and made themselves ready to meet the Bridegroom. What will happen to them at His appearing?

Yahshua spoke of this matter in the parable of the ten virgins. The ten virgins are not the bride. They are attendants of the Bride. The Bride is depicted as alert and watchful.

I Thessalonians 5:4-7

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night.

Revelation 16:15

"Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments, lest he walk about naked and men see his shame."

The one who stays awake is the Bride. In the parable of the ten virgins, all ten had fallen asleep when the Bridegroom delayed. None of these were the Bride of Christ. It is common to find the people of God divided into three groups. There is always the overcomers.

We have been espoused to Christ as a pure virgin.

There are those who have some fruit, but not unto perfection. And there are the disobedient servants who bring forth no increase for the Kingdom of God. We see these three groups in the following:

Three Sections of the Tabernacle and Temple (which the people of God are)

- The Holy of Holies (the inner chamber of the Bride)
- The Holy Place
- The Outer Court

The Marriage Covenant

The Three Main Feasts.

Each was associated with a harvest, which is symbolic of resurrection - the ingathering of men from the earth.

- Passover (those who are passed over by the second death - The overcomers - the Bride - Revelation 2:11)
- Pentecost
- Tabernacles

The Disciples of Christ

- The Beloved Disciple who leaned upon Christ's breast (the Bride)
- The Three
- The Twelve

Many more examples of this three-fold division of God's people could be given, such as those who bring forth some an hundredfold, some sixty and some thirty; the three servants given talents who are called to give an account of their stewardship; and of course:

- The Bride
- The five wise virgins (who awoke at the last moment and had oil)
- The five foolish virgins (who awoke at the last moment and had no oil)

What does the oil represent? It is the righteous acts of the saints. The oil in the lamps was for the purpose of giving light. The wise virgins rose and trimmed their lamps, showing that they had some good works at the end, but the foolish had no oil in their lamps and could not be seen as lights in the darkness. The Bride did not let her lamp go out, neither did she sleep.

What is the character of your life at this time? Is your life a manifestation of the righteous acts of the

saints? Or have you taken that which has been entrusted to you (the Holy Spirit) and buried it in the earth (of your flesh) to be given back to Christ at His appearing? Are you asleep in the light, performing works of darkness, even despising the holiness of the marriage covenant? Are you fornicating, or divorcing and remarrying to satisfy your own soul?

The Bride did not let her lamp go out, neither did she sleep.

Remember that God equates idolatry with adultery. Christ will not return to take an adulteress into His bridal chamber. Such ones will be cast into outer darkness where there will be weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Christ is coming back for a pure virgin, one who has been cleansed of her adulteries, and is waiting with patience and chastity for His appearing.

What then is idolatry today? We must know if we are to identify those who are engaged in spiritual adultery.

Colossians 3:5-7

Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, **which amounts to idolatry**. For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.

All of the things in this list "amount to idolatry." This is revealed in that the apostle says "in **THEM** you also once walked." We once walked as idolaters, but must do so no more. You are not walking as a chaste virgin if you are engaging in these things. The Amplified Bible renders this Scripture in the following manner:

Colossians 3:5

So kill (deaden, deprive of power) the evil desire lurking in your members [those animal impulses

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and all that is earthly in you that is employed in sin]: sexual vice, impurity, sensual appetites, unholy desires, and all greed and covetousness, for that is idolatry (the deifying of self and other created things instead of God).

While the Church's Bridegroom is off preparing a dwelling place, and while the Father is preparing the wedding place, what is the Bride doing? Are you making yourself ready? Will you be adorned with linen, clean and white, at His appearing.

Let all who have this hope of being included in the Bride of Christ, purify themselves as He is pure.

*Are you making
yourself ready?*

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PARABLES PRECEPT— What's in a Name?

HELLO
my name is

Isaac

It would be pretty hard to be given a name that makes everyone laugh. One man in the Bible was given a name that actually meant “laughter.”

Abraham and Sarah were well advanced in age before a son was born to them Abraham was 100 years old, and Sarah was 90.

Sarah desperately wanted to bear a son for her husband. The years passed, and great disappoint-

ment set in as she passed the age of childbearing.

When Abraham was 99 years old an angel of Yahweh appeared to him and told him that his wife Sarah would bear a son the next year. This seemed incredible to Sarah, and she laughed when she heard it.

Sarah's laughter was even greater when she bore a son to Abraham the next year.

Genesis 21:5-6

Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son **Isaac** (Yitzhak) was born to him. And Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will **laugh** (Yitzhak) with me."

It brings joy and laughter to the heart of man when we find ourselves at the end of our abilities, then God accomplishes that which is impossible.

Do you have an impossible situation in your life? Has God spoken a word to you regarding what He will accomplish. Consider His word to be more sure than what your eyes see.

Hebrews 11:11

By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised...

I believe God likes to put His people in impossible situations so they can laugh when He performs that which we cannot.