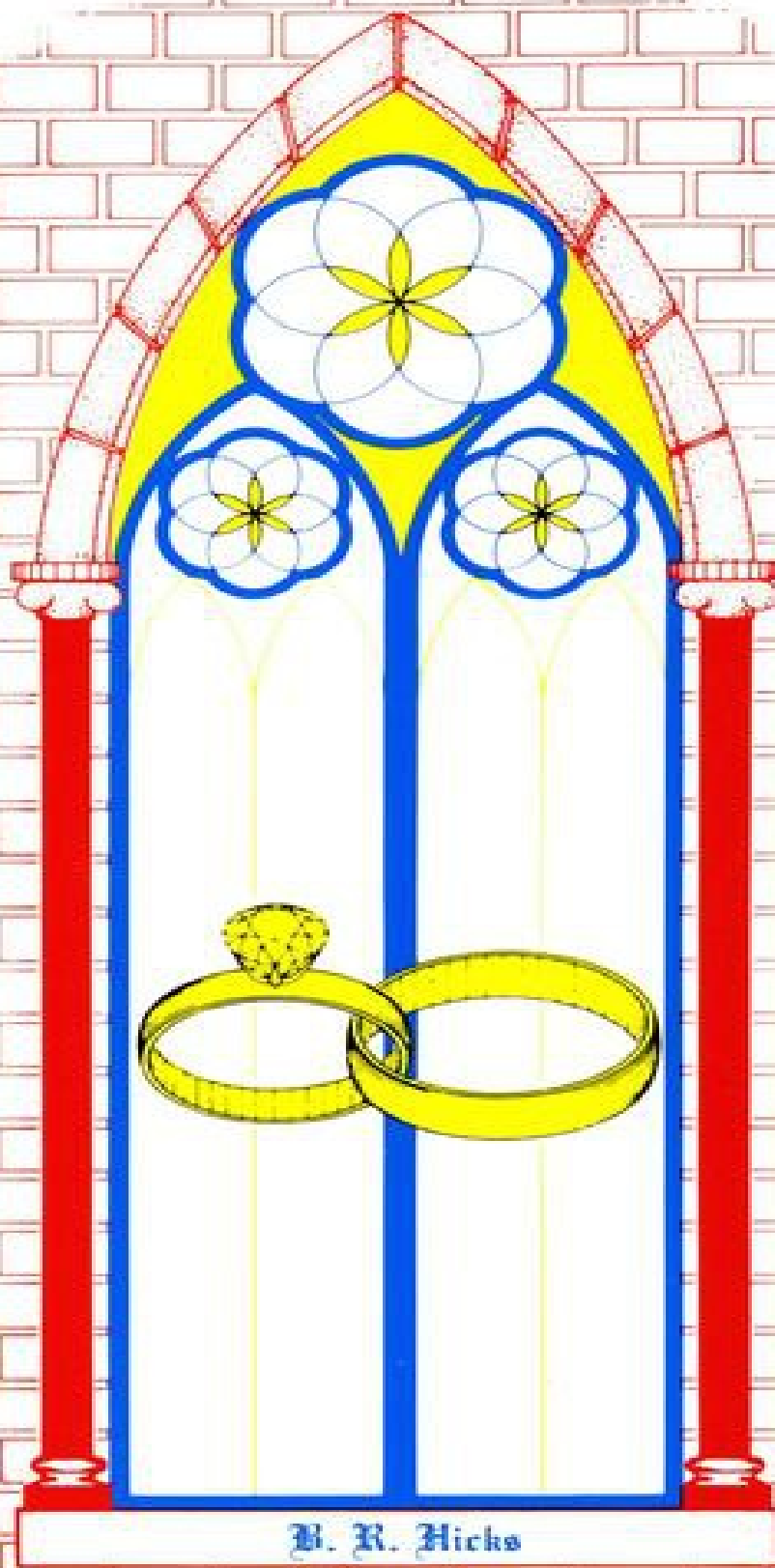



The Bond of Love



B. K. Hicks



The Bond of Love

B. R. Hicks

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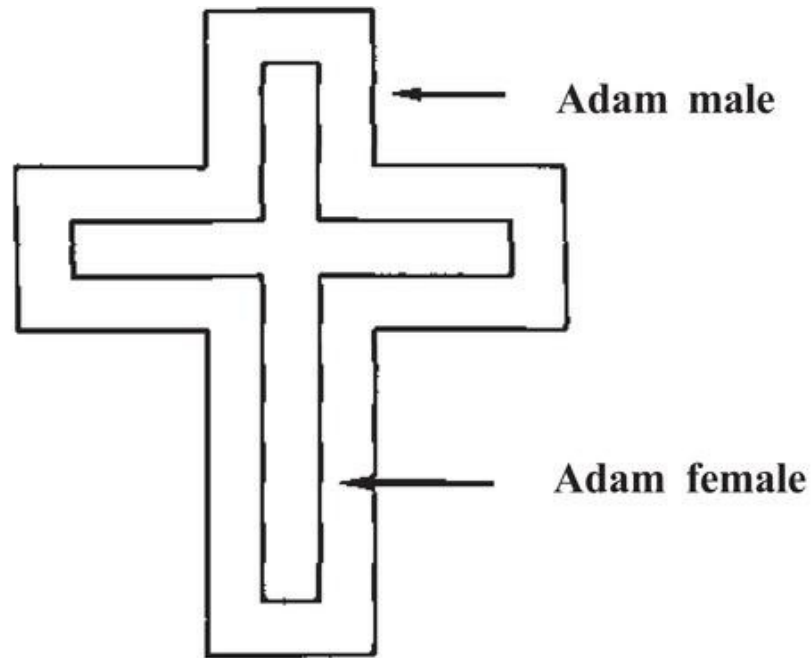
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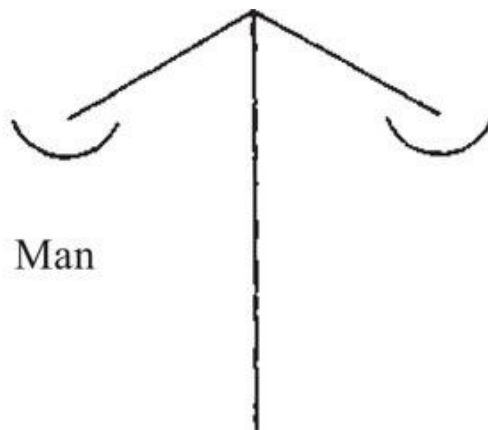
INTRODUCTION

The broad scope of marriage is revealed through the different renditions and phrases used to supply the meaning of the word *marriage* in the Hebrew and Greek languages. *Marriage* means to be master; to take a wife, to magnify or lift up a woman, to contract, to dwell together, sexual cohabitation, duty of marriage, to become the wife, to perform the duty of a brother (this refers to the fulfilling of the Levirate law by a surviving brother who marries the widow of his dead brother and raises up a seed to bear the name of the deceased).

Marriage was instituted before man sinned. During the dispensation of man's innocency, God established the principle of marriage for the purpose of preserving the world of mankind.

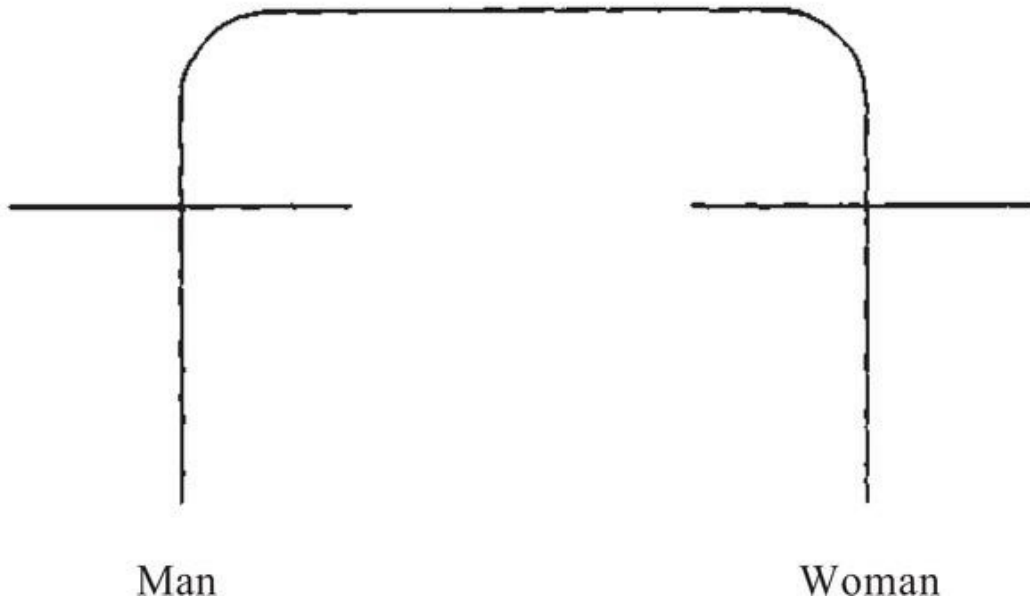


In the beginning, God created Adam male and female as *one*. Through His mysterious and miraculous working power, God separated Adam male and female into two individuals called *man* and *woman*.



Then through the power of God's Word, the man and woman became one again as the two of them were united by the holy, high marriage covenant.

Marriage Covenant



God intended for **the** marriage union to be **the** closest, most indissoluble of all unions.

That true marriage is an occasion when the LORD God rejoices with His creatures, whom He has had made to rejoice, is confirmed in the prophetic writings of the Apostle John.

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready, And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints (Revelation 19:7,8).

Marriage is a time for jubilant manifestation of selfless, sacrificial love. The Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, is the true example of the Perfect Bridegroom who gives His life completely in sacrificial love for His Bride. The Bridegroom's sacrificial deeds as a Husband reveal the truest affection that has ever existed.

When we read in the Book of Revelation that "His wife hath made herself ready," this signifies that the Bride willingly has chosen the LORD as her Husband. Of her own free will and with all of her heart, she has chosen to be His alone and to live with him forever. Since she has entered into the marriage contract willingly, not reluctantly, then to her is granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean, and white.

The simple, clean, and beautiful outward clothing which will be worn by the Bride is a witness of the inward clothing she wears on her heart and mind. The Bride's heart and mind are clothed with loyalty, fidelity, and holy watchfulness unto the Bridegroom's will and way.

The marriage of the Lamb and His Bride furnishes us with the perfect example of how a natural bridegroom and bride should willingly, with love and humble simplicity, approach the holy estate of matrimony. Marriage is a divine institution, designed to form a permanent union between man and woman so that they might be helpful to one another.

"And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Genesis 2:18). By creating a wife for the man, God in His infinite wisdom provided a painless cure for man's loneliness. God made the woman from a rib taken out of the side of man. The woman was not made out of man's head (to rule over him) nor out of his feet (to be trampled upon by him). Instead, woman was taken out of man's side (to be equal with him) and out from under his arm (to be protected near his heart and loved). By the greatness of His power, God made them both; and by the surety of His ordinance, He made them one.

According to the Word of God, the sacredness of the marriage relationship goes back to the very birth of human society. Marriage is part of the scheme of creation intended for all humanity.

God, as the Head, the Ruler, the Governor over His creation, instituted the ordinance of marriage. And as long as the LORD Jesus Christ is the Head, the Ruler, the Governor of the marriage relationship, it will continue to grow, producing fragrant buds, blossoms, and fruitfulness.

The husband and wife will continue to enjoy their private satisfaction as long as their hearts and minds are

crowned with a vision and goal of obtaining a spiritual marriage relationship with Jesus Christ in the New City, the New Jerusalem. This principle was affirmed by the Psalmist:

If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; and if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy (Psalm 137:6).

The Psalmist desired to lose all power of speech if he did not use his tongue in love and reverence, joyfully to set the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, in its proper or first place above his chiefest joy — his marriage.

God intended that the invisible, spiritual marriage relationship with Christ crown the natural, visible marriage relationship.



Marriage is a divine institution. Under its shadow alone can there be a true reverence for the mystery, dignity, and sacredness of life. When two persons have chosen each other from all others, with the intention of being each other's mutual comfort in pleasure and pain, they are candidates for the holy bond of matrimony. When they have bound themselves to be good-humored, affable, discreet, forgiving, patient, and joyful with respect to each other's frailties and imperfections until the end of their lives, their marriage union will be solid and secure.

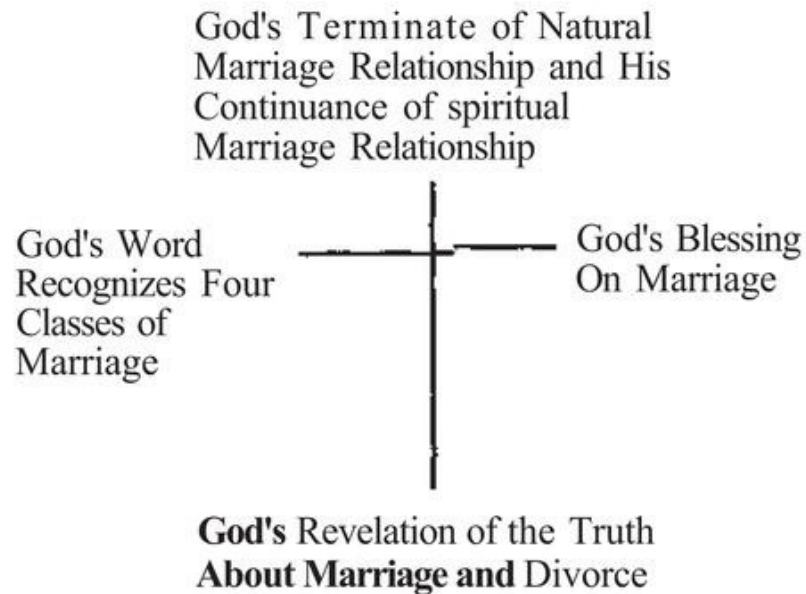
Moses presented marriage as the deepest corporeal and spiritual unity of man and woman. Monogamy is the form of marriage ordained by God. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24)

When the Pharisees tempted Jesus, asking Him if it were lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause, Jesus replied: ". . . Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh" (Matthew 19:4,5). We see, then, that Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, supported and taught the principle of a man having only one wife and a wife having only one husband. Without the conjugal tie, the inhabitants of this world would have been a mixed multitude. The family circle, family instruction, and parental love and care would have been unknown.

God's directive will is for a man to have one living wife. Unfortunately, not all men have been wise enough to choose to obey God's will. Mankind was not outside of the Garden of Eden very long before Lamech took unto himself two wives. While multiple marriages were not in His directive will, the LORD God extended mercy to Lamech and his two wives. From the days of Lamech to the present moment, the LORD God has continued to extend mercy to those who walk in His permissive will so far as their marriages are concerned.

God has been faithful to reveal in His Word the truth concerning marriage, in both the natural and spiritual

realms. In this book we shall study the following stature of truth about marriage.



May **God bless the study** of this portion of His truth to every heart.

— **The Author**

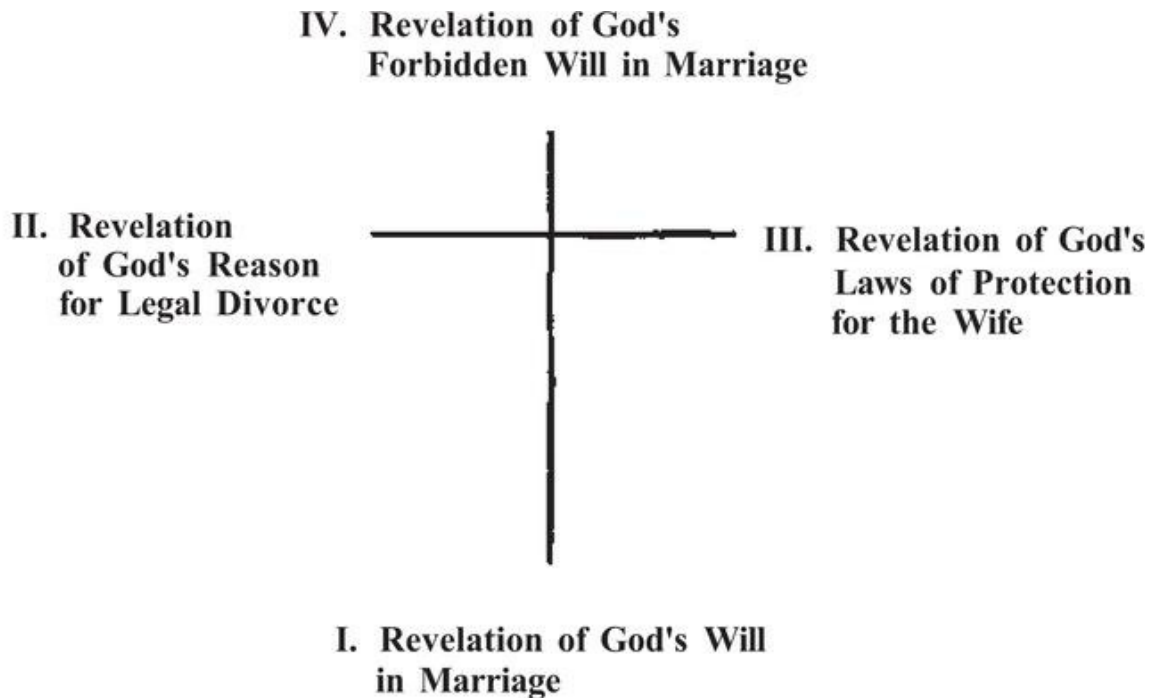
Chapter One

GOD'S REVELATION OF THE TRUTH ABOUT MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

God uses different patterns or forms in His Word to reveal His divine truth to man. This is explained in the introductory pages of this book. God uses the wheel, for instance, to reveal the relationship that natural things on earth have to their spiritual counterparts in the heavenly realm.

When the Creator instituted marriage, He made it like a great wheel. One part of the marriage relationship exists or turns in the natural realm while its counterpart turns in the spiritual realm. The satisfying, intimate relationship a man and woman can enjoy in the wheel of natural marriage is a picture of the ultimate satisfaction and pleasure a person can know when an individual's spirit and soul are joined in a oneness of spiritual marriage relationship with the Creator, the LORD Jesus Christ.

God's revelation about marriage and divorce is the first major point on the great stature of truth about marriage. Under this major point is a smaller stature of truth that helps us understand more about the ways God looks upon marriage *and* divorce.



I. REVELATION OF GOD'S WILL IN MARRIAGE

To begin the marriage, God's will sets the wheel of marriage in motion. Then His will continues to be the axle that turns the wheel of marriage in both the natural and spiritual realms.

A. GOD'S WILL IN THE NATURAL MARRIAGE

The Word of God reveals that a natural marriage may be consummated in either God's directive will or in His

permissive will. Every believer should strive for his marriage to be in God's directive will. Walking in God's directive will is the shortest way to completion of God's Master Plan for our lives.

1. Marriage in the Directive Will of God

Marriage in the directive will of God was instituted for present-day man in the Garden of Eden. In the beginning, God saw that it was not good for the man He had created to dwell alone. Therefore, God made a helpmeet, a wife, for Adam male. Before she was taken from his side, the woman was one with the man. Then in the marriage relationship, the husband and wife combined to form in the visible realm one new union of a perfect human being. The one complemented the other. God established marriage to bring about a new kind of unity between the man and the woman which would end man's loneliness.

And the LORD God said, it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof (Genesis 2:18,19).

Before God made the woman, He prophesied that she would be a helpmeet for Adam. The word *helpmeet* in Hebrew means to help or to give service, assistance, to relieve, to cure or mitigate, to avail again, to prevent, to remedy, to forbear, to avoid, to help forward, to advance, to aid in delivering from a difficulty, or to aid in completing a design, to enable, to surmount. It also means to surround or to encompass, to environ, to enclose on all sides, to aid or support. Helpmeet means to succor or offer particular assistance in difficulty or distress.

The woman is ordained by God to be a helpmeet for man. She can be a helpmeet by being a friend, by being loyal, and by being a companion.

Friendship in marriage is requisite for having a happy marriage. Friendship between a man and wife should function as a pair of scissors whose blades, although they go in opposite directions, are joined together to accomplish one mutual goal and objective; and that is to cut to pieces anything that comes between their intimate acquaintance, respect, and esteem for each other. Pleasant friendship in marriage increases the happiness and enjoyment of sense and reason.

Marriage is the strictest tie of perpetual friendship. Without confidence there is no friendship; and there is no confidence without integrity. When moral soundness of uprightness, sincerity, and honesty or integrity exists, they beget confidence. When there is firm trust, reliance, and confidence, they make the fruitful soil that begets friendship.

Friendship is like a fragile flower. It is a precious thing; therefore, it must be handled with care.

True friendship is like a doorway. The lintel of the door is sufficiently low to prevent arrogance and pride from entering inside. The threshold of the doorway is sufficiently high to prevent deceit from entering inside. The door jambs are sufficiently strong to prevent a thief or robber from entering inside. Yet friendship's door is so sensitive that it opens at the touch of a friend.

True friendship increases happiness and joy and diminishes misery and sadness. True friendship gives the greatest love and enables each friend to communicate love to the other. In times of suffering, true friendship makes itself of the greatest usefulness. True friendship renders the heartiest counsel along with the severest truth. True friendship produces the greatest union of hearts and minds.

In order to avoid wretchedness, which has embittered and blighted many marriages, it is necessary to cultivate true friendship. Since wretchedness has its origin in negligence of trifles, it is necessary to guard the bloom of friendship in marriage.

True friendship is like a healthy ivy vine. It beautifies all it embraces, giving new life and animation to all it touches. But false friendship is like a decaying vine; it mars and ruins all it touches. Therefore, the vine of connubial friendship is a plant of too fine a texture to be handled roughly. It is a sensitive plant which will not bear even the touch of unfriendliness or unkindness. It is a delicate, flowering vine which unfriendly indifference will chill and which suspicion will blast. Friendship must be watered by the showers of tender, affectionate, friendly understanding and expanded by the cheering glow of kindness. It must be guarded by the impregnable barrier of unshaken confidence. This kind of true, mature friendship will bloom with fragrance in every season of life and will sweeten the loneliness of declining years.

Loyalty is also a requisite for a happy marriage. Once one understands the necessity for loyalty to God and to one's spouse in the marriage contract, and once one understands the dire consequences to be visited upon the

offenders who violate the marriage contract, understanding becomes a “helpmeet” to prevent one from being disloyal to God and to the other partner.

Another “helpmeet” is companionship. This is a necessity in sustaining a healthy marriage union and in maintaining a union that will progress in happy contentment.

Woman is to be the helpmeet of man. A wife is a man’s other self, all that man’s nature demands for its completion physically, socially, and spiritually. In marriage, alone, can man’s need for physical and social companionship be directed to holy ends. Marriage is the hallowing of two human beings to life’s holiest, happy companionship. It is only through married life that the human personality reaches its highest fulfillment in companionship. The perfect marriage is crowned with God’s divine love in the spiritual realm and is joined to the love of the Bridegroom and Bride in the natural realm.

Companionship is the strengthening force between the man and wife in all labors and toils of life. Companionship offers a shoulder for the other to rest upon in all the sorrows and trials of life. Companionship ministers to the broken heart of the other in all painful circumstances of life. Companionship shares all the silent, unspeakable, inexpressible thoughts of the other in the times that make the heart and mouth speechless.

Knowing that the enemy, called the *Serpent*, would come to attack Adam male, God provided a bodyguard in the person of Adam female and committed to her the tremendous responsibility of protecting her husband, Adam male. Adam female was to be a picture of the *Torah*. God gave the *Torah*, His Word, to be a protective fence around the soul of man. Had man accepted God’s high and holy fence of protection for his soul, the Serpent could not have corrupted man’s soul. Likewise, had Adam female remained a high and holy helpmeet or fence around Adam male, she could have protected him from disobedience to God’s Word.

The Serpent was very wise. He knew that he could corrupt the whole world of mankind if he could tear down the helpmeet, the fence of protection. So instead of going directly to Adam male, he approached Adam female, who was to be the guarding fence of her husband, and seduced her to sin first. Then Adam female shared the forbidden fruit with her husband. Thus, they corrupted themselves and their holy marriage union.

God’s directive will for Adam male was that he should have one wife who, in turn, should be a helpmeet to him. Although Adam female failed to fulfill her calling to guard and protect her husband from temptation and sin, God let neither the failure of Adam female nor the sin of them both deter Him from requiring that His directive will be established in the natural marriage.

The first law which was instituted to produce a true marriage union was that a man was to leave his father and mother.

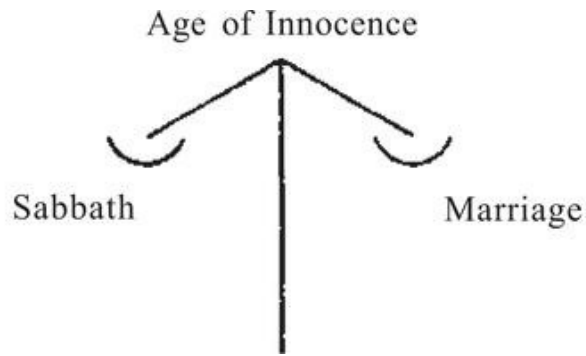
a. Leave Father and Mother

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh (Genesis 2:24).

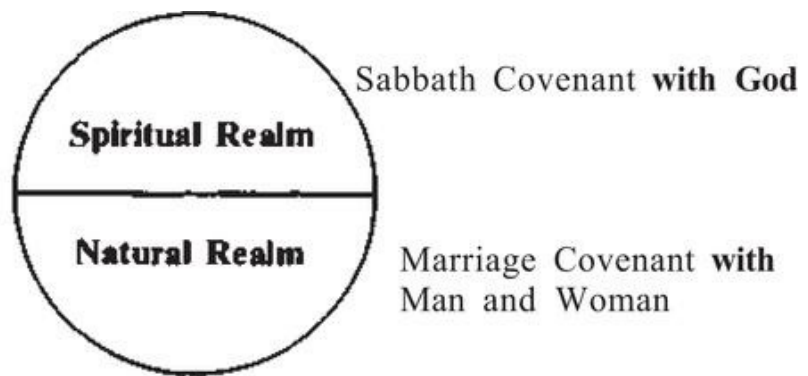
The Hebrew word for *leave* means to loosen, relinquish, permit, commit self, fail, forsake, fortify, help, leave, refuse, surely, to please, to have liberty to act, to bid goodbye. These definitions reveal that God intended for a man to leave the home of his parents and establish a new home with his wife. This does not mean that the man or the woman is to forsake his or her parents in regard to filial duty, honor, and love towards the parents.

However, when a man enters into the holy, sacred covenant of marriage, he must permit his parents to become secondary in his life. In order for a new husband to take liberty and pleasure in his new union with his wife, he must bid goodbye to the parent/ child relationship. A husband cannot assume his mature responsibility as the head of his own home as long as he remains emotionally and/or financially dependent upon his parents.

In the dispensation of man’s innocence, God gave two hallowed institutions: the Sabbath and the marriage.



The Sabbath was given to man in order to provide him with the highest, holiest, happiest, and most pure and perfect communion with the LORD God in the spiritual realm. The marriage covenant was given to man and woman in order to provide them with the highest, holiest, happiest, and most pure and perfect communion with each other in the natural realm. The Sabbath covenant and the marriage covenant form a true wheel of perfect communion.



When husband and wife join their natural communion with each other to spiritual communion with the LORD God, their home is filled with security and peace. Their home becomes a cultivated, fragrant field, producing flowering plants of love, joy, and peace. Continually remembering the Sabbath Day lifts the wedded pair into a place of continual, fresh light and life, making their existence an overflowing fountain of happiness. This wheel of communion in the natural and spiritual realms restrains the overgrowth of selfishness and feeds the growth of unselfishness and sacrifice. This produces the satisfaction of true joy and achievement.

The second law of marriage was for a man to cleave to his wife.

b. Cleave to Wife

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh (Genesis 2:24).

The Hebrew word for *cleave* means to stick, to adhere, to be attached to physically and by affection. God's Word commands the husband to leave all others and to be joined to his wife. A married man's first fidelity or loyalty belongs to God and after that to his wife.

How wonderful it would be if all men understood this principle. The husband's failure to cleave to his wife and support her physically and emotionally with his own physical presence and affection has been the breeding ground for countless troubles in the home.

It is the husband's responsibility to see that neither mother, nor father, nor any other relative or friend stand between him and his wife, stirring jealousy in the wife's heart because he has allowed others to usurp the love and support that rightly belong to her.

The union between husband and wife was meant to be closer than that which exists between parents and children. When this fundamental law of marriage is observed, not broken or violated, the marriage bond will be strong and unbroken. Therefore, the enemy will not be able to thwart the divine appointment and divine institution of God.

The nature of the holy marriage contract is a union of persons.

c. They Shall be One Flesh

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh (Genesis 2:24).

The marriage relationship is a love union which is closer than the love union between parents and children. The wife is man's other self. Therefore, in loving his wife, the man loves himself. Those who take the vows of marriage are brought into the closest and most sacred of love relationships. Their lives are blended into one love relationship as the waters of confluent streams are mingled. Thus, they must share the joys and sorrows of life. From this intimate love relationship spring obligations of the most solemn and lasting character. The husband is under obligation to enfold his wife in his protective care, to shield her from the rough storms of life, to cling to her with unfaltering fidelity, to cherish her with unflinching affection and to guard her happiness with unceasing vigilance. The wife is under obligation to love and cherish her husband, to honor and sustain him, and to be true to him in all ways.

Each is under obligation to fulfill the requisite of love as ordained of God and recorded in I Corinthians 13. Love endures evil, injury, and provocation without being filled with resentment, indignation, or revenge. It makes the mind firm, gives it power over angry passions and furnishes it with a preserving patience that would rather wait and wish for the reformation of the other than to fly into a rage in resentment at his or her conduct. Love endures many slights and neglects from the person it loves and patiently waits to reap the kindly effects of such love and patience.

Love is kind. It is benign, bountiful; it is courteous and obliging. Love is ever ready to minister favors and to do good. Love seeks and searches for ways to be useful. Love seizes visible opportunities of doing good and searches for invisible opportunities of doing good. Love suppresses envy; it is not grieved at the good of others; neither is it grieved at their gifts, their good qualities, their honors, nor their estates. Love conquers pride and vain glory; it is not bloated with self-conceit, does not dwell upon its accomplishments and possessions. Love does not arrogantly claim for itself any honor, power, or respect which does not belong to it. Love is not insolent, apt to despise others, trample on them, nor treat them with contempt and scorn. Love calms angry passions instead of arousing them. Love does not act insidiously with any, seek to ensnare them, nor tease them with needless words and demands. Love does not boldly push its way in front of others. Love is not stubborn and intractable, nor apt to be cross and contradictory. Love does nothing that is unseemly and improper, nothing that is base or vile. Love does nothing out of place or time; but love behaves itself towards all men according to their rank in relation to its own; that is to say, with reverence and respect to superiors, with kindness and condescension to inferiors, and with courtesy and good will towards all men.

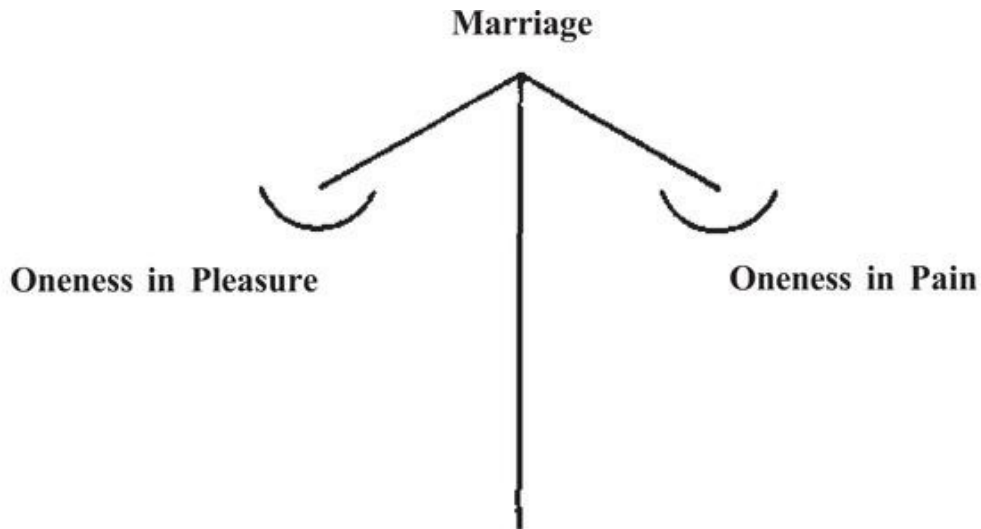
Love does not excessively desire nor seek its own praise, honor, profit, and pleasure. Love never seeks its own to the injury and hurt of others. Love does not increase its position, power, and riches nor gratify itself at the expense of others. Love quickly corrects a sharpness of temper. Love sweetens and softens the mind, preventing it from suddenly conceiving anger and continuing long in vehement passion. Where the fire of love is burning, it is impossible for the flames of wrath to be easily kindled or to keep burning.

Love does not harbor malice nor give way to revenge. True love is not jealous nor suspicious. Love covers faults which appear by drawing a veil over them. Love does not search out those things that lie covered and concealed in order to expose them. Love takes no pleasure in the misery of a fellow creature. Love takes satisfaction in seeing that truth and justice prevail among men. Love endeavors to see the innocent person cleared. Love labors long to keep mutual faith and trust established between it and others. Love cultivates the ground of the heart so that piety and truth can flourish. Love gives fortitude and firmness of mind when it has been injured and ill-used. How amiable is the mind that is diffused with true love. Love is permanent and perpetual grace which lasts an eternity.

"He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love" (Song of Solomon 2:4). The LORD God brought Israel, His Bride, to His banqueting house of the *Torah*, and spread over her the banner of love and humility of His Shekinah glory. When a bridegroom and bride in the nation of Israel joined their natural love to God's divine love in His *Torah*, their marriage remained immutable and unchangeable. Therefore, the love-bond in marriage is a divine law given by the LORD God in the beginning and ratified by the LORD Jesus Christ. This is the reason why a man should not put away his wife (Malachi 2:15,16; Matthew 19:4-6).

God instituted the marriage yoke between man and woman, and it is not to be put asunder by man.

The laws that God gave to govern the natural marriage are simple: a man is to leave the parent/child relationship; he is to cleave to his wife, and he is to be one with her. The hardest of these laws to accept in married life is the oneness principle. The oneness principle is to be established in pleasure and pain.



Most people are eager to be one with their mate in prosperity and honor. However, they separate themselves quickly from any painful faults and failures a mate may have. As long as a husband is saying “It is *her* fault,” and as long as a wife is saying “It is *his* fault,” this is a sure sign that neither of them has accepted the oneness principle on the pain side of the scales. When oneness exists in a marriage, it is no longer *his* fault or *her* fault, but it is *our* fault. All married couples should pray for God to quicken this truth to them!

Marriage is a chief moment of life when two people who were strangers to one another are drawn together by an irresistible attraction so that their souls cannot continue to be divided by time or space. Therefore, they choose to become one in pleasure and in pain. When a man sees in a single woman that dream of purity and sweetness which has been the dream and vision of his soul, and when a woman finds in a single man the rest and satisfaction her heart has been unconsciously seeking, then the yoke of marriage is born. It is God’s revelation from above, making all things new. It is God’s hand; therefore, it annuls every earthly argument. Marriage is performing the act of utter faith and confidence in one another to the end.

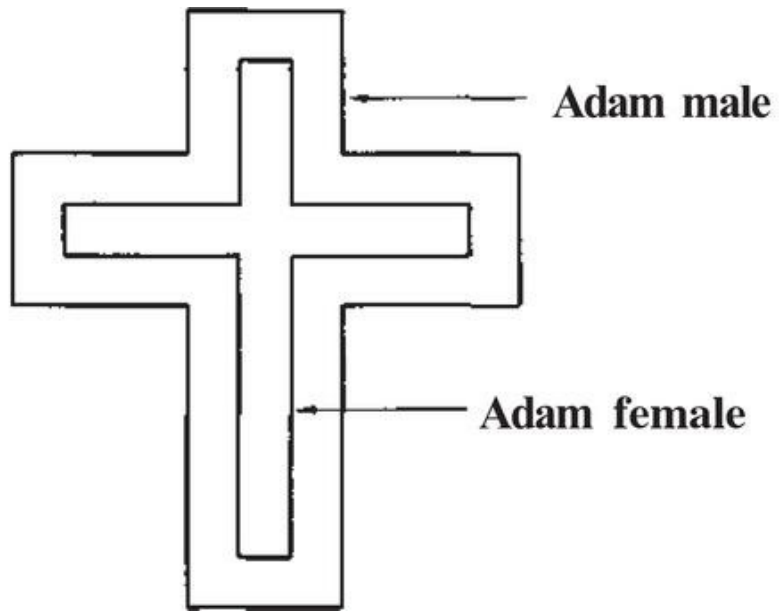
The new estate of marriage will be continually touched with beauty and freshness if the man and woman continue to cherish those gracious visions which were conceived within their hearts during the days of their betrothal. A man and woman must never forget the vision they once had; they must purpose not to allow it to be blotted out nor blurred by the commonplace experiences of life. Under the yoke of marriage, painful faults will appear which were once hidden in a golden mist of pleasure and delight. There- fore, excellencies will seem to fade in the painful glare of the noonday sun. However, if the man and woman remain unmoved in their devotion, if they remain confident and hopeful, new love and unity will be formed in the midst of pain. Amid the painful reality of present imperfection, it is necessary to continue believing and hoping in the divine purpose of marriage, which is complete unity on both sides of the scales of pleasure and pain. Marriage is the final truth and will of God; therefore, marriage should not be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, and in the fear of God. The holy estate of marriage binds two persons together in pleasure and pain.

God’s Master Plan has always been for a man to have one wife. If God had wanted Adam to have had two wives, He would have made two wives for him in the beginning. Adam had enough trouble with the one wife God gave him. Just imagine the chaos there would have been if God had given him two wives!

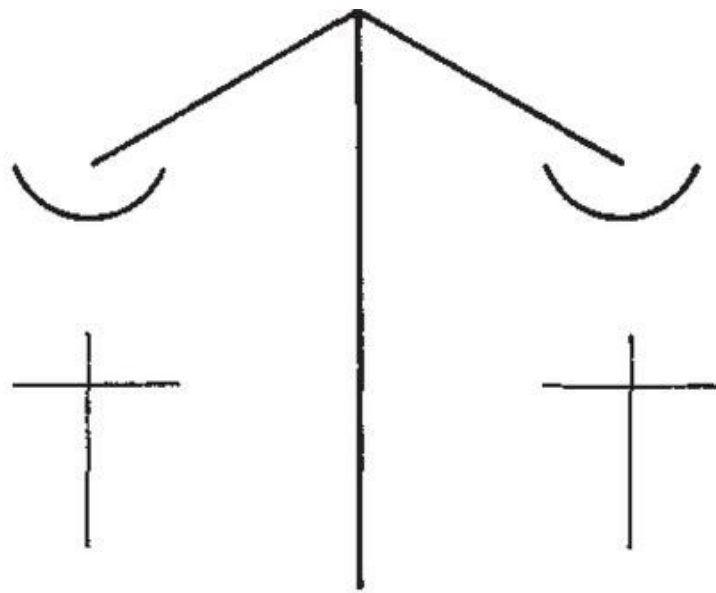
In the New Testament, Jesus Christ confirmed the truth of a husband leaving his father and mother, cleaving to his wife, and being one flesh with her.

But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder (Mark 10:6-9).

In the beginning, man and woman were *one*.



Then God miraculously wrought and made them *two*.

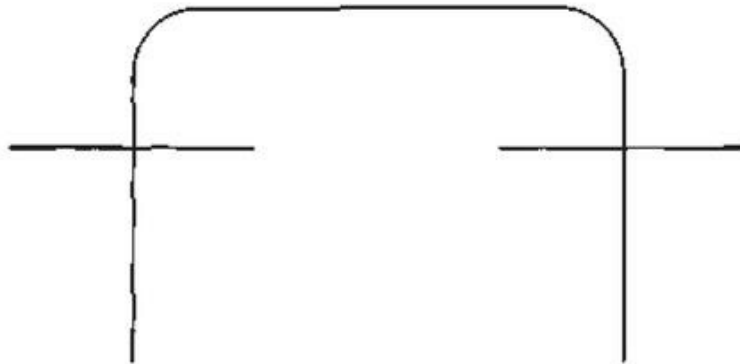


Adam male

Adam female

Then God miraculously **wrought through His Word and** Spirit and made them *one* again.

Marriage Covenant



Adam male
Man

Adam female
Woman

Jesus honored a marriage in Cana of Galilee with His personal presence, and there He performed His first miracle by turning the water into wine. “And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage” (John 2:1,2).

Marriage is to be a time of celebration with joyful festivals. Jesus feasted with His friends and family at the marriage of Cana. Just as Moses performed miracles in the wilderness to provide food and drink for God’s espoused Bride, Israel, so did Jesus perform miracles to give food and drink in His day. It was not the responsibility of Jesus, as an invited guest, to supply either food or drink at the wedding of Cana. Yet when the wine ran out before the feast ended, Jesus worked miraculously to supply them with wine by turning the water into wine. This reveals unto us that any marriage at which Christ is present will have the assurance of His miracle-working power in the bride and groom’s behalf.

Paul the Apostle declared: “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4). Marriage in the directive will of God protects both the husband and the wife against being unduly tempted by the lust of the flesh.

Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me [Paul’s next words were quoted from what the Corinthians had written to him in the form of questions]: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. [Paul did not make this statement; they did. After repeating their question, Paul wrote his answer.] Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife (1 Corinthians 7:1-4).

The restriction of the holy bonds of matrimony is the fragrant design of the length, breadth, depth, and height of God’s will. The marriage bond is a spiritual lasso of God’s Word which restricts each one from any intimate physical relationship with any others than the one to whom each is wedded. God’s spiritual lasso restricts one from preventing the biological needs of his or her spouse from being fulfilled.

God’s holy, golden wisdom has provided the man and the woman the comforts and satisfactions of holy marriage, preventing the lawless lust of fornication. In the holy estate of matrimony, the holy, spiritual lasso of the yoke of Christ restrains one from blindness to the needs of one’s spouse. In the married state, each person has delivered the power of his body over to the other. Therefore, the spirit of defrauding each other must be bound in order to keep the body of both the husband and wife sanctified and honorable.

The purpose of marriage is to preserve and sanctify that which was made in the image of God — one entity, sharing the joys and burdens of life. True marriage is not merely a union between two creatures; it is a union between two spirits, two souls, and two bodies. The intention of the marriage bond is to perfect the nature of both partners by supplementing the other’s deficiencies through the force of contrast, each giving to the other those

excellencies in which the other is naturally deficient: to the one, strength of character and firmness of moral will; to the other, sympathy, meekness, tenderness which consummates marriage into a solemn and glorious ending for which the union was intended.

No earthly relationship has so much power to ennoble and to exalt as the bonds of holy matrimony. Marriage is like a rock given by God upon which the spirit, soul, and body of man can be anchored in the storms of life. The chain of matrimony will have strength when the links of the spirit, soul, and body are in perfect unity and harmony. The garden of matrimony will have beauty and strength when the blossoms of love diffuse their fragrance in times of pleasure and delight as well as in times of pain and sorrow.

The Word of God declares that Isaac experienced the comforting love of holy matrimony when he brought Rebekah into the tent of his mother, Sarah, and took her. She became his wife, and he loved her. And Isaac was comforted over the loss of his mother. The order of God's Word is: He brought her into his mother's tent. He took Rebekah. She became his wife. And he loved her. In modern life, we would place "he loved her" first, and write: "He loved Rebekah. He brought her into his mother's tent. He took her. And she became his wife." But however important it is that the love precede marriage, it is far more important that it continues after marriage. The modern attitude places all the stress on the romance before marriage, but the Word of God emphasizes the life-long love, comfort, devotion, and affection after marriage, in pleasure and pain. Remember Isaac loved Rebekah AFTER marriage.

Marriage is necessary for man to grow in love. Few people have strong enough wills to give all their capacity for love to the spiritual realm. Only a few people, comparatively speaking, have been given a gift of continence such as Paul had and have been called to live a life of celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of God. While every person's top priority in prayer should be for his spiritual growth and moral development in Christ, every unmarried person should make the matter of choosing the right marriage partner of next importance when they pray. Do not be discouraged if there are few eligible Christians in your area. And do not go out into the world looking for a mate. If you will pray and believe God, He will raise up a suitable Christian companion for you in His time. Until God gives you a Christian mate, you have the right to seek Him for the grace and strength to keep yourself morally clean and holy. God's children do not have to be swept away in the flood of lustful, unholy, licentious thoughts and practices that is covering the world today.

Why did God say that the husband and wife were to be one *flesh*? Why did He not ordain that they were to be one in spirit, soul, and body? The reason is that oneness of the spirit and soul is a spiritual experience we enter into as we go on for God and become spiritually mature. God wants married Christians to be "one flesh" from the *beginning* of their marriage. As they grow spiritually, He also wants both of them to become "one soul" and "one spirit."

Man's threefold being is comprised of his spirit, his soul, and his body. Through marital love, a husband and wife are made one flesh. Yet, regardless of how good a relationship a couple may have in the physical realm, they cannot expect to have true unity and harmony in their home unless they have the Word of God working in them to make them one in the soul realm and the Holy Ghost of God working in them to join them together in the spirit realm. Married couples who do not read their Bibles together and pray together cannot experience true oneness of the soul and spirit; all they will have is a physical union and a very superficial joining in the soul and spirit. Since most problems arise from the soul and spirit realms; it is easy to understand the importance of having the complete union of the spirit, the soul, and the body.

The unifying of the spirit and soul of the husband and wife, through the Word of God and the Spirit of God, makes them *one light* in Christ Jesus. When the marriage is clothed with one resplendent robe of beautiful light in Christ Jesus, it will always swallow up all gloom. As the husband and wife feed this living robe of light with the moral light and glory of God's *Torah* or Law, their "unified marriage light" will be a bright beacon light reaching out to many lost souls in darkness, joyfully transporting them to the Light of Christ. Therefore, it is necessary for the husband and wife to walk in the "unified light" that God has given. Thus, they can walk boldly and wisely through this world in the unified light of holy matrimony.

The light of Christ, the living Word, will strengthen the unified light of matrimony and will lighten the couple's pathway though at times it may be rock-strewn and thorny. With the light of Christ feeding the matrimonial light, the marriage will be one flaming torch to point people to the goodness and the glory of God.

Therefore, the husband and wife should not allow their voices to lose the tender tones of affection, nor their eyes to lose the gentle rays they wore in courtship's smiling days. They should not allow their memories to forget the pleasing motions their souls enjoyed of sincere love, hope, and desire in courtship's happy days. Thus, they will find in their new marriage union an unfailing source of joy in the remembrance of the number of quiet attentions they encountered in courtship's pleasant days. God desires that holy matrimony make the husband and wife one in name,

one in aim, and one in happy destiny together in the LORD.

2. Marriage in the Permissive Will of God

God made one wife for Adam male, showing that His highest will for marriage is for man to have one living wife. Yet man had not been out of the Garden of Eden very long until he began to enter into multiple marriages, which were permitted by God, but which were not in His directive will. Anything that is not in God's directive will falls into what can be called the permissive will of God in the sense that God permits man to take his own will and go his own way in this life, if that is his choice. Thus, when Lamech (the great, great, great-grandson of Cain) took two wives, he became the originator of those who take the permissive will of God in regard to marriage.

And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch. And unto Enoch was born Irad: and Irad begat Methujael: and Methujael begat Methusael: and Methusael begat Lamech. *And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah.* And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle. And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ. And Zillah, she also bare Tubal-cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah (Genesis 4:16-22).

The civilization of the antediluvian world, as it is called by man, was instituted by Cain and his descendants. Every element of material civilization is mentioned here: city and pastoral life, and the development of arts and manufacturing. Lamech, a member of the degenerate race of Cain, was clever in the outward, material things of this life, but he was unlearned so far as the inward, spiritual things of God were concerned. Lamech was the first to transgress God's original law of marriage. In the beginning, man had one wife. As the first man to take two wives, Lamech set the stage for the permissive will of God in marriage. God tolerated Lamech's polygamous marriage union with Adah and Zillah, although it was contrary to His directive will.

While we are studying what the Bible teaches about the permissive will of God in regard to marriage in Old Testament times, let us emphasize that we are *not* endorsing multiple marriages. Neither are we suggesting that a Christian should settle for anything less than God's highest, most directive will for marriage. Nevertheless, since the permissive will of God is presented in the Word of God, and since people still are entering into marriages that are not in the directive will of God, it behooves us to discover the truth so we can exhibit the right attitude toward those whose marriages are in the permissive will of God.

Descendants of Cain were not the only men to marry more than one wife. Some of the most staunch believers in the LORD God also took unto themselves two or more wives.

a. Abraham's Marriage in the Permissive Will of God

Abraham was the first person from the line of Adam and Eve's son Seth, which was the spiritual line, to have more than one wife. Abraham was the father of faith, the father of the Kingdom of God, and the father of the mysteries of the Bride and Bridegroom. Yet Abram, as he was called at this point in his life, took the permissive will of God when he married Hagar, the Egyptian handmaid of his wife, Sarai.

Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and he had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes (Genesis 16:1-4).

By taking God's permissive will in marriage, Abraham encountered many problems he would not have known as the husband of only one wife. As long as Hagar remained in the household, there was conflict, hatred, and jealousy between the two wives. Abraham loved his son Ishmael, and doubtless felt compassion, if not affection, for Hagar. Yet, because of the continual contention in the home, he eventually was constrained to send Hagar and Ishmael away so his wife, Sarah, and Isaac, the son of promise, might live in peace.

After the death of Sarah, Abraham took another wife whose name was Keturah.

Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah. And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Isbak, and Shuah. And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim. And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Epher, and Hanoah, and Abidah, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah (Genesis 25:1-4).

Abraham also loved the sons Keturah bore him, but he knew that neither Ishmael, the son of Hagar, nor the sons of Keturah were to share in the inheritance promised to Isaac, the son of his wife Sarah. Therefore, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them away while he yet lived.

And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country. And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years. Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people (Genesis 25:5-8).

Much of Abraham's life was spent in the permissive will of God with his concubines. God's *directive will* and order for marriage *was* and *is* for a man to have *one wife*. The fact that God tolerates situations and circumstances that are contrary to His directive will is a witness of His great mercy.

b. Jacob's Marriage in the Permissive Will of God

And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had for her. And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her. And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her. And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid for a handmaid. And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me? And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years. And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also. And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid (Genesis 29:20-29).

Seven years Jacob worked for his beloved Rachel. Then, instead of receiving Rachel on his wedding night, Jacob was given Leah, Rachel's older sister, for his wife. A week later, Laban gave Rachel to Jacob, with the understanding that Jacob was to work another seven years for his second wife. Later, the two wives gave their handmaids to him also.

Although Jacob was in the permissive will of God in having four wives, God still blessed him. In His great mercy, God used the four wives of Jacob to build the twelve tribes of Israel. Later these twelve tribes formed the nation of Israel. After the nation of Israel entered into Canaan's Land, she became known as the "Wife" of God. By building the twelve tribes of Israel out of a marriage situation that was in His permissive will (out of that which was not according to His directive will in the beginning of creation), the LORD God proved that He is the Sovereign Ruler over all His creation.

c. Moses' Marriage in the Permissive Will of God

And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. And they said, hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it. (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.) And the LORD spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out. And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. And he said, hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them; and he departed. And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous. And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly and wherein we have sinned. Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb. And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee. And the LORD said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again. And

Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days; and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again. And afterward the people removed from Hazereth, and pitched in the wilderness of Paran (Numbers 12:1-16).

Miriam, Moses' sister, had a revelation of God's directive will for marriage. Both she and Aaron spoke against Moses when he took a second wife, an Ethiopian woman. The LORD did not rebuke Moses on this occasion, however, because his accusers were not without sin.

Neither Miriam nor Aaron had a burning desire to see the directive will of God exalted. Their accusation arose out of a desire to cast a shadow on the ministry of Moses so that they might be exalted in the eyes of the people for their own prophetic gifts of ministry. The fact that the charge was made out of a wrong motive was revealed in the punishment that God put upon Miriam for her part in instigating this charge against His chosen servant. When the cloud departed from the Tabernacle, Miriam was left a leper, white as snow. The outward, visible leprosy was a reflection of the inward, invisible leprosy of self-righteous pride that filled the hearts of both Miriam and Aaron on this occasion.

Although Aaron also was guilty of the sin of self-righteous pride, he was not made leprous. The plague of natural leprosy would have defiled the priestly garments worn by Aaron. The defiled priestly garments, in turn, would have caused the people to look upon the office of the holy priesthood with disgust. So God mercifully spared Aaron the plague of leprosy for the sake of his priestly calling and anointing.

Aaron did not escape without being punished, however, for he and all the camp of Israel had to wait until Miriam was cleansed of her leprosy. There was no movement or progress in their journey toward Canaan's Land as long as Miriam had the plague of leprosy upon her. The seven days of Miriam's exile outside the camp gave Aaron plenty of time to repent of his part in lifting up an accusation against the servant of God.

Moses was in the permissive will of God in taking a second wife. Nevertheless, he had a better spirit toward God and a better spirit toward his persecutors than was manifested by the self-righteous Miriam and Aaron. The example that God made of Miriam on this occasion should serve as a warning to anyone who ever is tempted to use the uncrucified humanity of one of God's servants as an excuse for exalting himself in the eyes of others. A wise person will remember that God is the Judge of His servants, and not man.

d. King David's Marriage in the Permissive Will of God

And unto David were sons born in Hebron: and his firstborn was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; And his second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur; And the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah the son of Abital; And the sixth, Ithream, by Eglah David's wife. These were born to David in Hebron (II Samuel 3:2-5).

And he said, Well; I will make a league with thee: but one thing I require of thee, that is, Thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Mical Saul's daughter when thou comest to see my face. And David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth Saul's son, saying, Deliver me my wife Mical, which I espoused to me for an hundred foreskins of the Philistines (II Samuel 3:13,14).

And David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he had come from Hebron: and there were yet sons and daughters born to David (II Samuel 5:13).

And these were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shimea, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon, four of Bath-shua [this is another spelling of the name Bath-sheba] the daughter of Ammiel: Ibhar also, and Elishama, and Eliphelet, and Nogah, and Nepheg, and Japhia, And Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphelet, nine. These were all the sons of David, beside the sons of the concubines, and Tamar their sister (I Chronicles 3:5-9).

Although the foregoing scriptures are not the only verses which mentions names of David's many children, they do identify David's wives who were named. Obviously, David was in the permissive will of God in taking more than one wife. Nevertheless, in spite of David's many marriages, God said that David was a man after His own heart.

We need to keep in mind that we are viewing God's great mercy in the Old Testament dispensation. Not only did God tolerate marriages that were in His permissive will, but He overruled to the extent of blessing them.

While God tolerated the king's multiple marriages, he did not condone David's adultery with Bath-sheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. The LORD sent Nathan the prophet to confront David about his sin of adultery and his crime of sending Bathsheba's husband into the thick of the battle to be killed.

And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. [This was the LORD God speaking to David through Nathan.] Wherefore hath thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hath taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die (II Samuel 12:8-13).

King David already had taken Bath-sheba, yet God promised to put away his sin so that he would not die. According to the Law of Moses, those who committed adultery were punished in different ways: sometimes by fire, sometimes by stoning, and sometimes, in the case of a woman, by the waters of jealousy. (If the woman were guilty, the bitter waters ministered by the priest caused her belly to swell and her thigh to rot.) In the case of King David, Nathan prophesied that the child who was conceived in sin would surely die.

Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die. And Nathan departed unto his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick. David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead? But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead (II Samuel 12:14-19).

David's fasting and prayer did not stay God's hand of judgment; God took the child as a part of the price King David had to pay for his sin. Then, in His mercy, God put away the sin of David and Bath-sheba from before His face. Although their marriage was in His permissive will, God blessed them with a child who was beloved in His sight.

And David comforted Bath-sheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the LORD loved him. And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD (II Samuel 12:24,25).

In spite of the adultery committed by the parents, the LORD loved Solomon and renamed him *Jedidiah*, which means beloved of the LORD. After the death of David, the LORD gave the throne to Solomon.

The desire was in David's heart to build a house for the LORD, but it was Solomon who was granted the privilege of actually constructing the glorious temple for the LORD in Jerusalem. Next to Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived. Yet he was born to parents whose marriage was in the permissive will of God.

Let us repeat that we are not holding up the permissive will of God as a pattern to be followed. We are simply lifting up the truth, and the truth is that when people find themselves in the permissive will of God, the LORD still shows forth His mercy. Surely, since God was so merciful to Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and David, He would have us, His children, to show mercy to people who have fallen into His permissive will in the matter of marriage.

Up to this point, we have seen God's directive will and His permissive will for natural marriage. God's directive will always has been for a man to have one wife. This principle was confirmed by the teachings of the LORD Jesus Christ in the New Testament. While it is true that people whose marriages are in the permissive will of God experience many problems they would not have to suffer in the directive will of God, it also is true that the LORD continues to extend His mercy to these people and bless them with His life, and light, and love.

B. GOD'S WILL IN SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE

In the type and shadows of the Old Testament Tabernacle, God drew out a picture of spiritual truth that exists in the spiritual realm. Thus, the natural marriage relationship portrayed God's revealed, directive will for the spiritual marriage relationship. The standards of holiness that the LORD laid down for the high priest to use when choosing a wife are the same qualifications Jesus Christ, our spiritual High Priest, requires of His spiritual Bride.

And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes; Neither shall he go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his father, or for his mother; Neither shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him: I am the LORD. And he shall take a wife in her virginity. A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, or an harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife (Leviticus 21:10-14).

The high priest in the Old Testament chose his wife from among the virgin daughters of his own people. An example of the wife being a virgin and a blood relative is seen in the case of Isaac and Rebekah. Abraham sent his servant, Eliezer, to take a virgin for a wife for his son from among the daughters of Abraham's blood relatives.

The oneness of relationship that can be experienced by a husband and wife in the natural realm picture the perfect spiritual union or oneness of relationship which the LORD God desired to establish with the entire nation of Israel in the Old Testament dispensation and with the individual believer who will yield completely to Him and grow to maturity in spiritual stature in the New Testament dispensation.

1. Spiritual Bride Has Virgin Heart

Christians who want to be in the Bride of Jesus Christ must allow him to form within them a virgin heart. The LORD will not marry a heart that is committing spiritual adultery with the world; neither will He marry a heart that has divorced itself from Him and His blessed Word. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

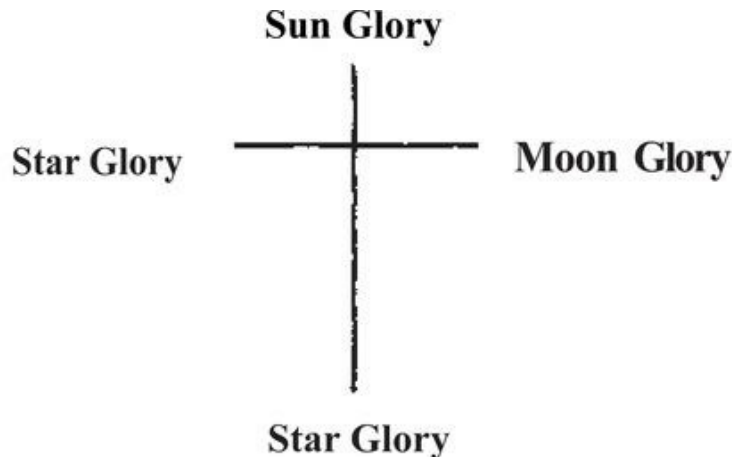
Jesus Christ will marry a Bride who has a virgin heart, and He will take her from among His own people, from among the blood relatives.

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9).

All who receive an invitation to attend the wedding Supper of the Lamb as a guest have a reason to be glad and rejoice; yet it is more wonderful to be going to the wedding as the wife or Bride of the Lamb. The Lamb's wife is counted worthy of wearing glorious, white linen in eternity because she "hath made herself ready." This means that the spiritual preparation made in this life by the Bride is greater than the preparation made by other believers.

2. Spiritual Bride Will Wear White Linen

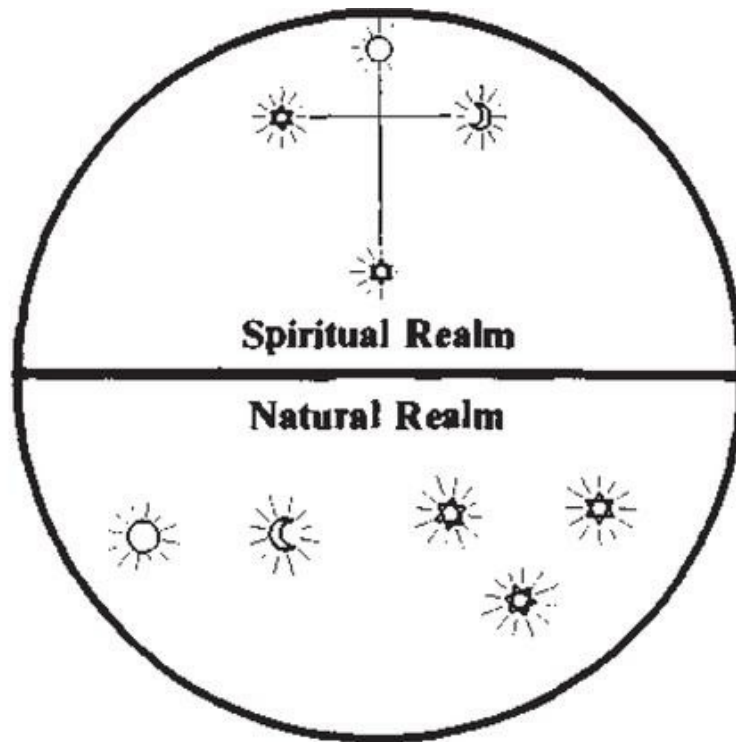
In order to appreciate the kind of preparation the Bride makes in order to wear white linen and to live in the New City, we need to understand the different comparisons that God's Word makes concerning the resurrected body. First, God compares the resurrected body to various degrees of glory with which the resurrected body will be infused: sun glory, moon glory, and star glory.



The resurrected, shining body will be like a holy garment in which the spirit and soul will dwell. Secondly, the Word of God compares the resurrected body to an eternal house which will be put on by the spirit and soul (II Corinthians 5:1-4).

All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. *So also is the resurrection of the dead.* It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. (I Corinthians 15:39-50).

On resurrection morning, the body will be raised as a glorified, spiritual body. The sun glory, moon glory, and different degrees of star glory that God has put in the natural sky are types of the glory of the sun, moon, and stars that exist in the spiritual realm.



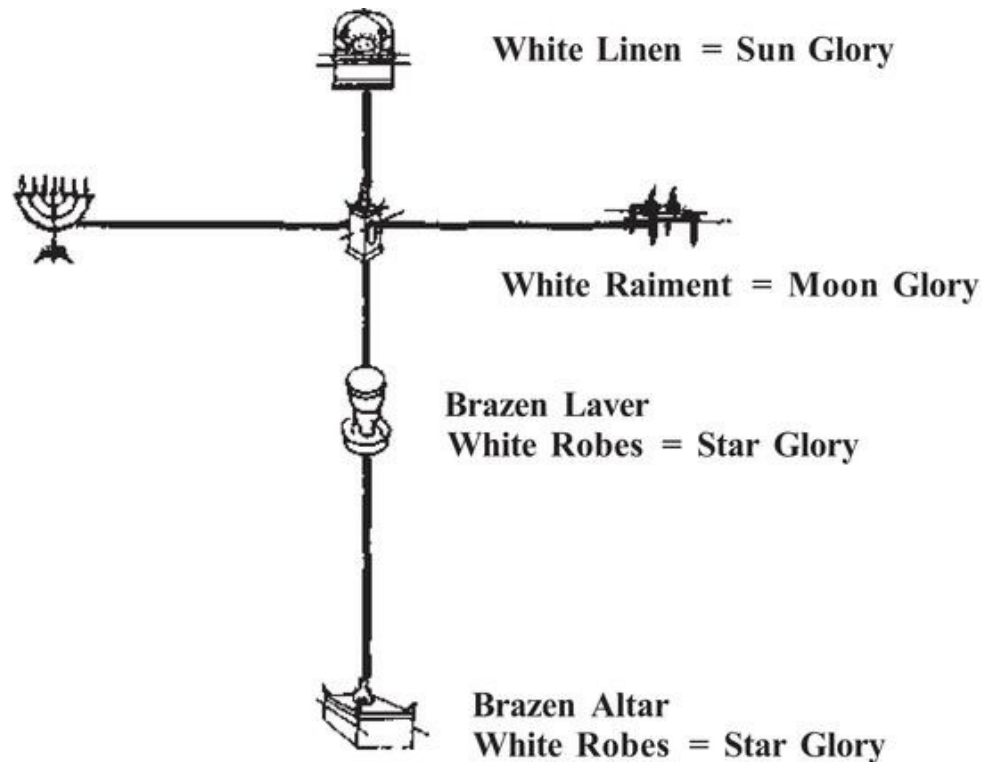
The three classes of resurrected glory garments mentioned in the Book of Revelation depict the glory of the LORD's spiritual light of the sun, moon, and stars which will clothe the bodies of resurrected believers. The degree of glory a believer will have in eternity is determined by the measure of growth he attains in the spiritual stature of Jesus Christ as he walks through this life. Thus, the eternal glory garment not only will fit each believer's resurrected, spiritual stature perfectly, but it will be a shining witness to his personal faithfulness and diligence in the things of God.

White robes will be given to resurrected believers who attain *by gift* the spiritual experiences that are revealed in the Courtyard at the Brazen Altar and also the Brazen Laver (Revelation 6:9-11; 7:9-15). The white robes are equivalent to the star glory.

White raiment will be worn by resurrected believers who attain *by growth* the experiences that are revealed in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle at the Golden Altar, the Golden Candlestick, and the Golden Table of Shewbread

(Revelation 3:5; 4:4; 5:8-10). The white raiment is equivalent to the moon glory.

White linen pertains to the glory dress that will be worn on resurrection morning by the Bride, who attains by *growth* the experiences that are revealed in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle at the Mercy Seat and the Ark of the Covenant (Revelation 19:8,14). The white linen is equivalent to the sun glory.



The difference in the glory of these garments is not easily seen in the English language, but it is unquestionably clear in the Greek. The Greek word *white* used for both white robes and white raiment simply means light. The word for *robe* means a stole, long fitting garment. This robe of shining, white light reflects the star glory of the LORD; it is the glorious garment of salvation worn by believers who accept the free gift which Jesus Christ provided when He shed His precious Blood on Calvary's Cross.

Raiment in the Greek means dress, inner or outer apparel, cloak, garment, vesture. This garment of shining, white light reflects the moon glory of the LORD. It is a glorious cloak of inner and outer ruling power and authority of God's Spirit and Word. White raiment will be worn by the spiritual kings and priests who will reign over the people who will live upon the new earth. The kings and priests will be granted ruling authority over others because they have learned in this life how to rule, by the Spirit and Word of God, over their own carnal, fleshly nature. Although the kings have the privilege of taking their glory and honor into the New City (Revelation 21:24-27), they do not have the privilege of abiding there forever; they go *in* and *out*.

The Greek word used to refer to white linen is a much stronger word than the one used for white robes and white raiment. *White* in this case means radiant, limpid, magnificent, sumptuous in appearance, right, clear, gay, goodly, gorgeous, white; it goes back to another Greek word that means to beam, to radiate brilliancy, to *give light*. The Greek word for *linen* has its origin in a Hebrew word meaning to bleach, to be white, probably cotton of some sort, fine, white linen.

Believers who wear white robes and white raiment will *have* light, but their's will be a reflected light of the LORD's spiritual star light and moon light glory. Only the Bride of Jesus Christ will wear white linen that radiates the sun glory of the LORD. Thus, only the Bride will have the creative ability to *give light*, to *impart light*. She will be granted the exalted privilege of wearing white linen because of her faithfulness in this life to be made one with the Source of Light, Jesus Christ, the Light of the world. Revelation 21:24 tells us that the nations that are saved will walk in the light of the Wife of the Lamb.

3. Spiritual Bride Will Build With Lasting Substance

The maturity of the Bride's spiritual stature also is revealed in the fact that her new, resurrected house of glory, her resurrected body, will be clothed in the sun glory of the Sun of Righteousness. Therefore, she will be counted worthy to live in the New City in which she will dwell eternally with God and the Lamb.

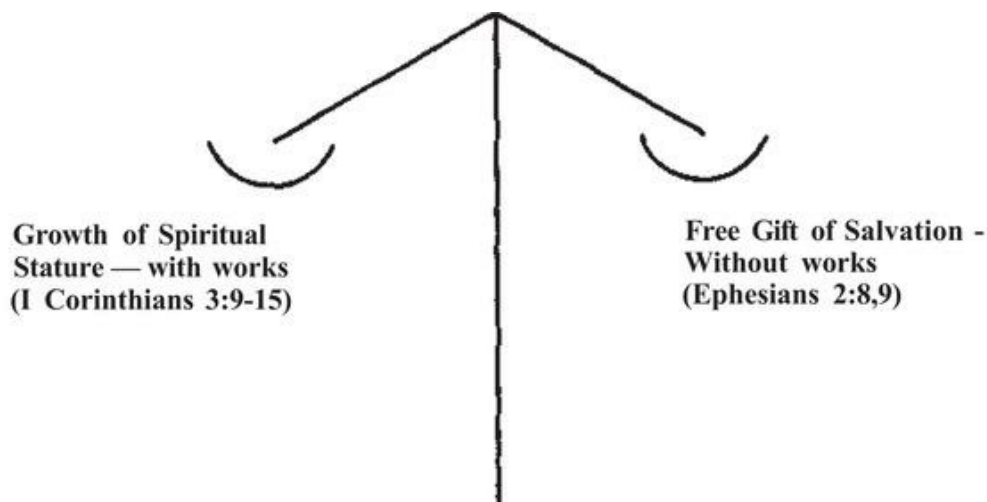
For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord (II Corinthians 5:1-8).

The full foundation for a spiritual building is comprised of the Blood of Jesus Christ, the fire of the Holy Ghost, and the waters of the Name, death, and life of Jesus Christ. This foundation is God's gift to man; it is not something that man can earn by his own works. "For by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast*" (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Our salvation is the work of Jesus Christ. He went to hell and death in our place. When He was resurrected the third day, he came forth with the keys of hell and death. Then He ascended into heaven to apply His resurrected Blood to the Mercy Seat there. Now He is seated on the right hand of God the Father, and as our eternal High Priest, ". . . He is able to save them to the *uttermost* that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). All we have to do to be saved is to believe in the finished work of Jesus **Christ**, repent of our sins, and confess Him as our Saviour.

But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Romans 10:8-13).

That man's salvation is a gift from God is a true principle. Yet this true principle does not negate the reality of the true principle that man, after he has been saved, must work with *God to build* a spiritual building.



The Apostle Paul, who under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost penned the foregoing words, also wrote the following words:

For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood,

hay, stubble; Every man's works shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire (I Corinthians 3:9-15).

The Blood of Jesus Christ, the fire of the Holy Ghost, and the waters of the Name, death, and life of Jesus Christ make up the full spiritual foundation which God freely gives to us if we ask Him. The kind of spiritual edifice erected on top of the foundation depends upon the spiritual work done by each believer and the nature of the substance used.

Many Christians will find themselves spiritually bankrupt in eternity. A lasting spiritual building can be erected only by those who willingly come under the headship of the LORD in this life, let the divine Architect and Masterbuilder reveal His Master Plan for their lives, let Him impart to them His divine wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, and direct them in the choice of building materials. The spiritual edifice erected by Christians who choose to work alone in fleshly independence will be, at its best, a mixture of gold, silver, and precious stones and wood, hay, and stubble. When the judgment fire of God hits this building, everything that is not gold, silver, and precious stones of God's Word and Spirit will be burnt up.

The temporal nature of the substance of man's fleshly works, represented by the wood, hay, and stubble, cannot survive God's fire. On resurrection morning, many Christians will awaken to discover that the fire reduced their building to a heap of ashes. Instead of being rewarded with a beautiful eternal home made of gold, silver, and precious stones, they will enter into eternity with a handful of ashes and the foundation of salvation which they received as a gift from God.

The enduring nature of the substance of the New City in which the Bride of Christ will dwell with her spiritual Bridegroom will be a perpetual witness to the fact that she worked with the LORD and built a spiritual building according to His Master Plan for her life.

Thus far we have seen that God instituted marriage in both the natural and spiritual realms. His directive will in the natural realm is for a man to have one wife in order that the oneness of their marriage relationship may typify God's provision in the spiritual realm. God desires to cleanse a human heart, fill it with His precious Spirit, and feed it with the Word of God until it is brought to spiritual maturity, ready to be granted the privilege of being arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for a spiritual marriage with the Lamb, the LORD Jesus Christ.

May Jesus Christ give to each of us a vision of being in His Bride, for this is the highest calling of time and eternity; this most precious prize of spiritual oneness with the LORD Jesus Christ can be enjoyed now and throughout eternity!

II. REVELATION OF GOD'S REASON FOR LEGAL DIVORCE

Natural wedlock can be broken in two ways: because of fornication or adultery committed by either of the marriage partners, and by the death of one of the marriage partners. Thus, sexual sins and death are the two legal, spiritual reasons for breaking wedlock. Death automatically severs the marriage union. Sexual sin, if it is not repented of, is a legal, spiritual reason for a bill of divorce.

Although natural wedlock can be broken by the sin of adultery, it is the directive will of God for the guilty party to confess to God and to the other partner and repent and for the innocent one to forgive and to forget. The same principle applies to the sin of idolatry, which is spiritual adultery in the spiritual realm. The sin of idolatry breaks the oneness of spiritual relationship between the human heart and the heart of God. A classic example of the power that idolatry wields in breaking wedlock in the spiritual realm is recorded in Jeremiah's writings about the nation of Israel, who in Old Testament days was known as the "Wife" of the LORD God.

The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. And I saw, *when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce*; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks. And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD. And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah. Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD: and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger

for ever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion (Jeremiah 3:6-14).

When Israel and Judah turned away from worshipping the **LORD** God, they derived their spiritual satisfaction by worshipping the strange gods of their heathen neighbors. By playing the part of spiritual harlots, they broke the spiritual wedlock that existed between them and their Creator. Consequently, God put them away and gave them a bill of divorcement.

God did not put Israel away without first pleading with her through His anointed prophets, asking her to confess her sin and repent of her spiritual idolatry or adultery. God showed His willingness to forgive and forget her sin. But, when Israel refused to repent of her iniquity and return to the LORD God, thus saving her spiritual marriage with Him, God had no choice but to put her away by giving her a bill of divorcement.

The same principle applies when an individual believer turns from the LORD Jesus Christ, and through his friendship with the world, begins to worship an idol image in his heart. If he persists in his adulterous, idolatrous practices, he loses his union with the heart of God, and God eventually gives him over to his backsliding. If God did not turn people loose when they refuse to repent, He would become a party to their spiritual idolatry, adultery, and death.

Thus, we have seen that fornication and death, which are God's reasons for legal divorce in the natural realm, typify His reasons for legal divorce in the spiritual realm. Let us be quick to repent and turn our hearts to the LORD when He reveals to us that there is something between us and Him, lest we find ourselves divorced from God!

Although a person who has received a bill of divorcement from the LORD may continue to exist naturally and go through the form of worshipping God, he no longer will feel the personal love relationship he once knew with the spiritual Bridegroom, the LORD Jesus Christ. Furthermore, he will continue to feel separated or cut off from the life, light, and love of the LORD as long as he clings to his idolatrous images, refusing to repent of breaking the second commandment, and persists in bowing down to false gods.

Our God is a jealous God. The LORD Jesus Christ will not share His Bridegroom love with an idolatrous heart.

III. GOD'S LAWS OF PROTECTION FOR THE WIFE

Knowing that not all men would choose to walk in His perfect, directive will, the LORD God's merciful nature constrained Him to make laws which would protect the different classes of innocent wives married to men who would refuse to obey His directive will.

A. LAW FOR VIRGIN WIFE

If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her, And give occasions of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid: Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate: And the damsel's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her; And, lo, he hath given occasions of speech against her saying, I found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. And the elders of the city shall take that man and chastise him; And they shall amerce him in a hundred shekels of silver, and give them unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days (Deuteronomy 22:13-19).

When a young virgin married, it was the custom for her father to give her what was called the "virgin's cloth." The couple slept on this cloth during their wedding night. After the consummation of the marriage, the wife returned the cloth bearing the visible evidence of her virginity to her father and mother who, in turn, brought the tokens of her virginity to the elders of the city and made a feast to celebrate this joyous occasion. Later, if the husband hated his wife and falsely accused her of not being a virgin on her wedding night, her parents again spread the virgin's cloth" before the elders of the city. The visible witness of the wife's virginity meant that the husband had no legal grounds for putting her away.

B. LAW FOR MAIDSERVANT WIFE

And if a man sell his daughter to be a maidservant, he shall not go out as the menservants do. If she please not her master, who hath betrothed her to himself, then shall he let her be redeemed: to sell her unto a strange nation he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her. And if he hath betrothed her unto his son, he shall deal with her after the manner of daughters. If he take him another wife; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage shall he not diminish. And if he do not these three unto her, then shall she go out free without money (Exodus 21:7-11).

Laws such as these would not have been needed had all men been willing to walk in God's directive will. The fact that God instituted laws of protection reveals that He knew there was a definite need for them. In this particular law, the LORD made provision in His permissive will for the master to take his maidservant as a wife. If, after taking her, the master was not pleased to continue living with her, he was not permitted to mistreat her. Although he could allow her to be redeemed by a far kinsman, he was not permitted to sell her to a strange nation

If the master married one of his maidservants to one of his sons to be a concubine, as married maidservants were called, the master had to assume the same responsibility for her as for a daughter. If his son took another wife, the master has to see that the son continues to provide food and raiment for the maidservant wife and to perform the duty of marriage. If the son failed to fulfill these three requirements, the master was to give the woman complete liberty so she was no longer a servant.

C. LAW FOR CAPTIVE WIFE

In His great mercy toward those in slavery and bondage, God made a law to protect slaves taken as wives by their owners from mistreatment at the hands of a cruel taskmaster.

And seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife; Then thou shalt bring her home to thine house; and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails; And she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife. And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will; but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her (Deuteronomy 21:11-14).

God gave the nation of Israel specific laws of cleanliness and hygiene. Since Israel's heathen neighbors did not observe these laws, God gave a special law for the captive wife. Before a Jewish man could take a captive woman as his wife, the woman was required to shave her hair and cut her nails. (The hair and nails are breeding places for germs and disease if they are not properly cleansed.) God allowed the captive wife-to-be to spend a full month mourning the loss of her parents so she might be purged inwardly, in her soul and spirit, of unclean spirits of sadness while her physical body was being cleansed of outward defilement.

At the end of the specified period of the woman's cleansing, the Jewish man was allowed to take her as a wife. If he found no delight in her, he was commanded to let her go free; he was not permitted to make merciless merchandise of her

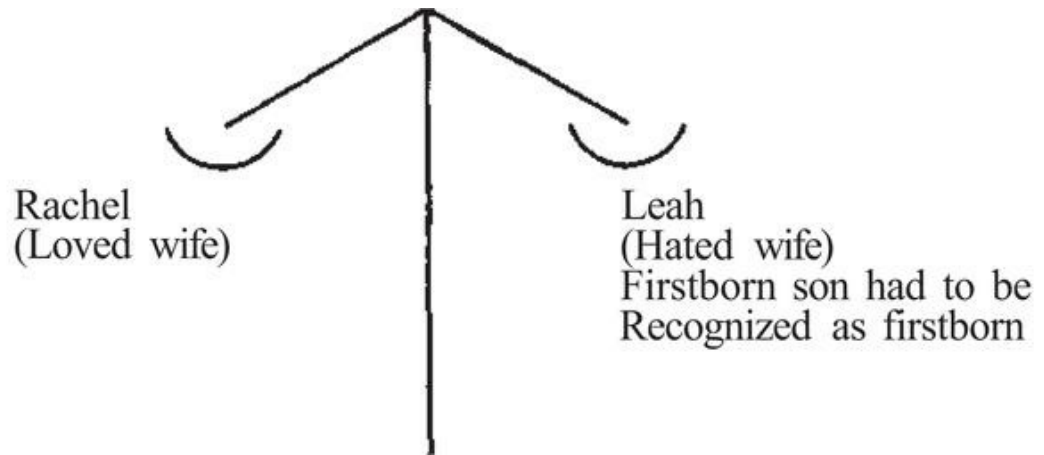
These laws certainly were not in keeping with the law of God's directive will from the beginning. Nevertheless, God was forced to issue special laws through His servant Moses in order to protect the innocent women who were and who would be involved with men who refused to humble themselves and walk in God's directive will.

D. LAW FOR TWO WIVES

God, in His graciousness and goodness, provided laws to govern those who lived in His permissive will.

If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the firstborn son be he's that was hated: Then it shall be, when he maketh his son to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, which is indeed the firstborn: But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his (Deuteronomy 21:15-17).

God forbade a man who had two wives (one who was loved and one who was hated) to rob his firstborn son of his birthright just because he happened to be the son of the hated wife. The sons born to Jacob's two wives, Leah and Rachel, are an example of this principle.



God blessed poor, hated Leah with four sons before he looked upon the barrenness of the beloved wife, Rachel. Rachel's firstborn son was Joseph. Although Joseph was Jacob's favorite son, he was not his father's firstborn son. Reuben was Jacob's firstborn son by his wife Leah. As the legal, firstborn son, Reuben was in line for the birthright; however, he did not receive it because he lay with Bilhah, his father's concubine. Neither Simeon nor Levi, the second and third sons of Leah, received the birthright because of their willful, cruel murder of Shechem (the man who defiled their sister Dinah) and all the male inhabitants of his city. Thus, by default, Leah's fourth son, Judah, received the birthright.

God saw that man was sinful and not desirous of walking in His directive will. So, by giving laws to govern His permissive will in marriage, God provided for the virgin wife, the maidservant wife, the captive wife, and the hated wife to be treated fairly, and for the children of the hated wife to receive their rightful inheritance.

IV. REVELATION OF GOD'S FORBIDDEN WILL IN THE MARRIAGE

The Word of God reveals that adultery, the greatest enemy of natural and spiritual marriage, was forbidden under the Law. The seventh Commandment, written by God's own finger on the tablets of stone given to Moses on the Mount, said: "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Lest there be some person who would say that we no longer are under the moral law, but grace, let us remember that Jesus Christ, who brought grace and truth, also forbade adultery. He did not forbid the act of adultery just once; but many times, He repeated this to different classes of people. Jesus Christ never negated the moral law. Only the ceremonial law ceased because Jesus Christ fulfilled it by His life and death and resurrection. Jesus Christ came to save us through His own precious Blood, and then He establishes in us His moral law by leading and guiding us into spiritual growth and moral development.

It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery (Matthew 5:31,32).

Jesus spoke these words to His disciples in His famous discourse called *The Sermon on the Mount*. Certainly, all those who desire to be called disciples, all those who long to sit at the feet of the Master and learn of Him, should know that adultery is forbidden in both the natural and spiritual realms. It is impossible to walk with the LORD Jesus Christ in the way of holiness and, at the same time, walk in the ways of the world, the flesh, and the Devil.

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marieth her which is put away doth commit adultery (Matthew 19:9).

The Pharisees, the self-righteous religious crowd of Jesus' day, tempted Him, trying to force Him to join them in accepting something less than the directive will of God. However, Jesus did not budge one iota, one jot, or one tittle from His position of always holding up the whole truth of His Father's perfect will. A person cannot compromise the truth in one point, in order to satisfy the lust of the flesh, without eventually compromising it in another point. If one remains immutable, unchangeable, and uncompromising toward God's directive will, he stirs up the wrath of

God's enemies. One must be prepared to give his life when he takes an uncompromising stand for the directive will of God. Jesus took a stand for the directive will of God, and a short time later, the Pharisees became instigators of the crucifixion of God's holy, spotless Lamb, Jesus Christ. In order to accomplish their disgraceful plan, they had to break the Law which says: "Thou shalt not kill."

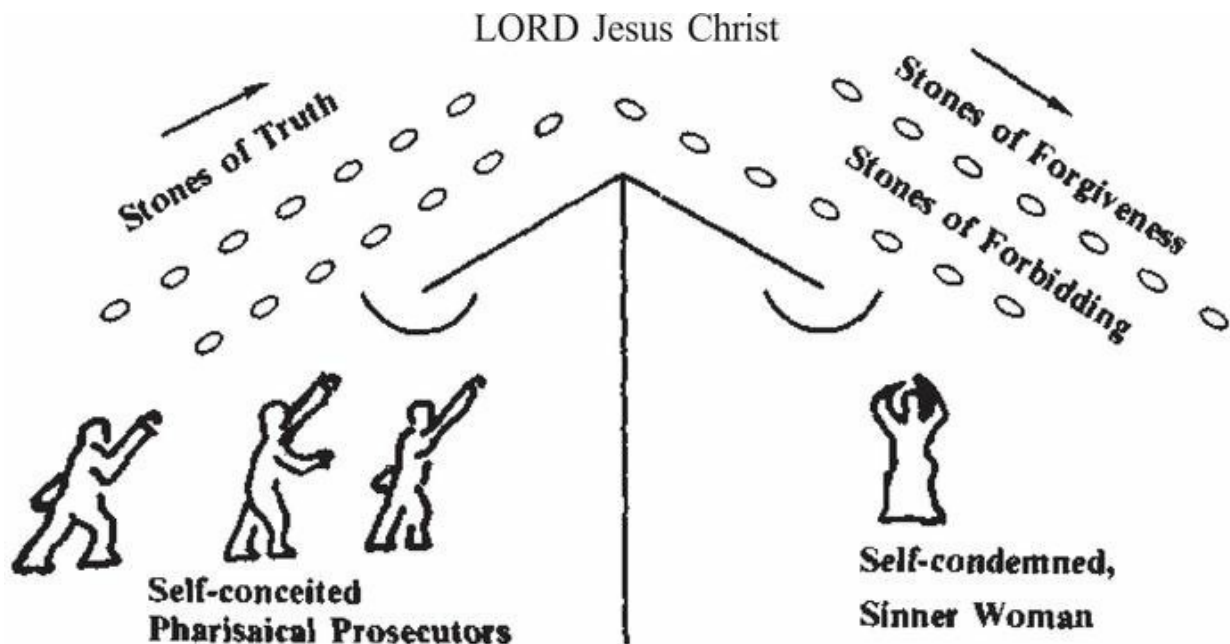
He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness (Matthew 19:18).

Jesus spoke these words to the rich young ruler who came to Him professing to want to know how to gain eternal life. Upon being told to keep the Commandments of God, the young man claimed to be a keeper of the Law from his youth up. He may have observed the letter of the Law outwardly, but it is evident that he did not keep the spirit of the Law in his heart. He was not willing to forsake his earthly possessions, which were his gods, in order to become a follower of the True and Living God, the LORD Jesus Christ. The fact that a person keeps himself from adultery in the natural realm does not necessarily mean that he is keeping himself from lustful thoughts in his heart or from idolatrous practices in his spiritual heart.

The woman taken in adultery is a good example of this very truth.

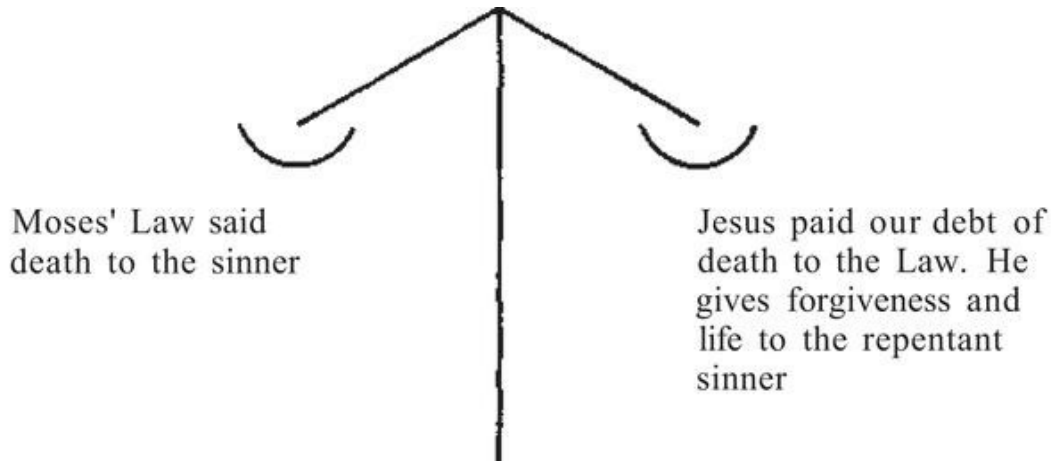
And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more (John 8:2-11).

When the Pharisees, the self-conceited prosecutors, brought the adulterous woman to the LORD Jesus Christ, the self-condemned sinner did not try to flee. Patiently she waited for the LORD Jesus to give His judgment in her case.



The stones of the Law had condemned the woman. Jesus was not deceived, however, by the sanctimonious, outward behavior of the Pharisees; He knew that in their hearts they stood guilty before God. So He cast out the stones of truth to her prosecutors, saying: ". . . He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7). As the only sinless one in the crowd, Jesus could have cast the stones of death at the woman, but He did

not. He cast out the stones of truth of forgiveness and life.



Jesus' stones of truth struck hard at the guilt of adultery in the hearts of the woman's prosecutors. One by one, they laid down their stones and fled, leaving the woman alone with Jesus. On this occasion, He threw out His stones of truth, demanding that she obey the Law and stop committing adultery.

Jesus Christ demands that obedience to the Law be built upon His free gift of salvation and forgiveness.



Only a person who has been guilty of the sin of adultery can appreciate fully how this woman must have felt when the merciful words of Jesus' forgiveness fell upon her ears. She stood before Him knowing that, according to the Law of Moses, she deserved death by stoning. Jesus did not throw literal stones at her, but He did throw some spiritual stones of truth that penetrated to the very core of her being. "Go and sin no more," said Christ, the living Rock of Truth. Thus, He forbade her to continue committing adultery.

Jesus Christ died on the cross, was buried, and rose again in order to give to us the kind of power needed to submit to Him and allow Him to write His holy, righteous Law upon the fleshly tables of our hearts. In addition to setting us free from the outward act of adultery, the living reality of God's holy Law that is written in the heart also liberates us from the inward thought which, Jesus declared, is just as censurable in the eyes of the LORD as the actual deed.

The sin of adultery has power to break the bond of wedlock (meaning to lock in unity together, joined, made one), which God forbids man to put asunder. Since this sin is so powerful in both the natural and spiritual realms, it behooves us to look more closely at what God has revealed in His Word about adultery.

A. ORIGIN OF ADULTERY

When one discovers the beginning, the place at which adultery comes into existence, it is easy to lay the axe at the root of this sin by repenting and pleading the Blood of Jesus Christ.

For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, *adulteries*, fornication, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit,

lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man (Mark 7:21-23).

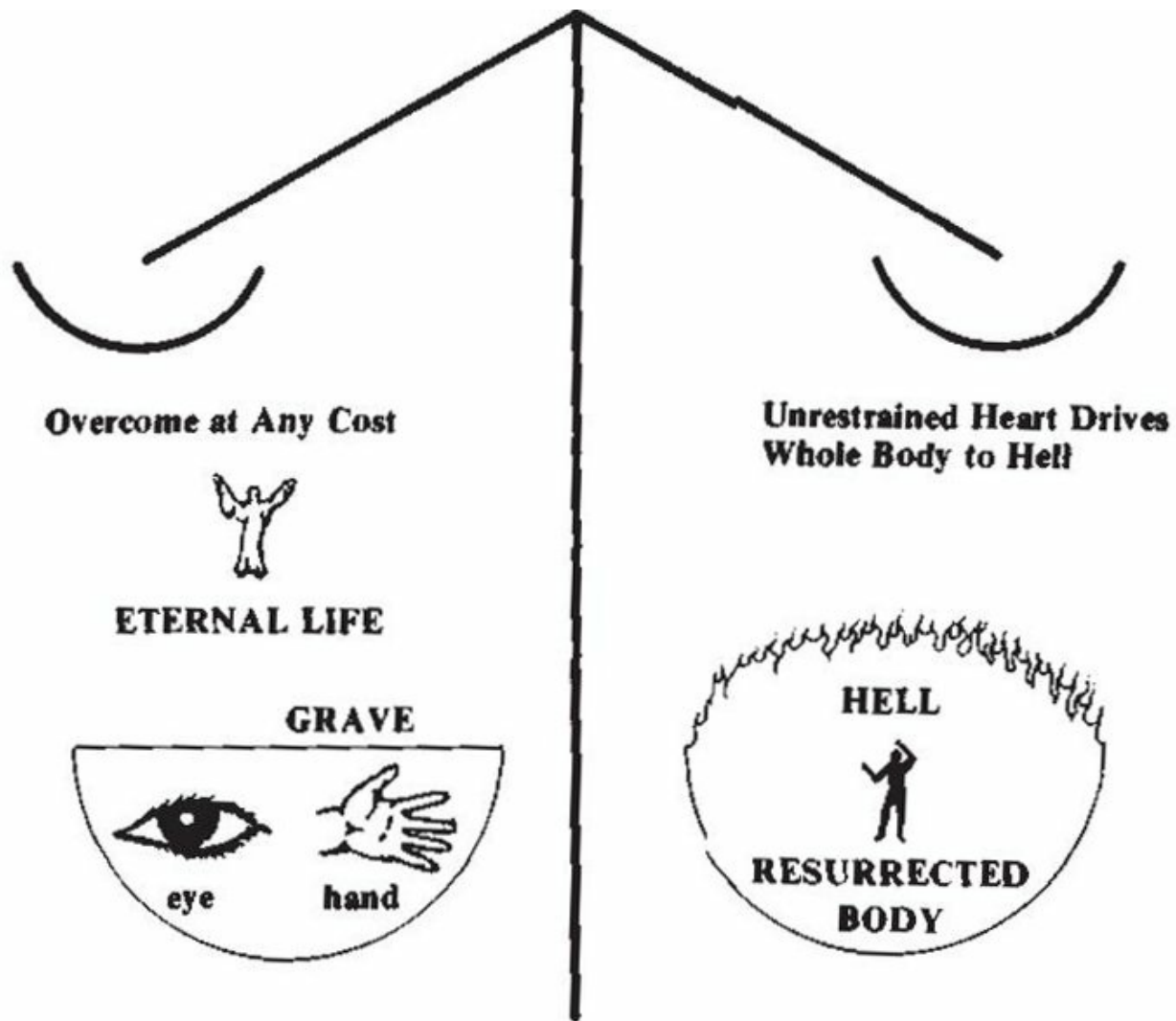
Man often boasts of the goodness of his heart. However, God has declared that it is a corrupt fountain, sending forth its corrupt streams of adulterous desires, passions, and appetites.

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell (Matthew 5:27-30).

Jesus not only established the seventh commandment, but He enlarged upon the exposition of it. Since the seventh commandment was engraved by His holy hand, He was the most qualified to be the interpreter of it. Jesus revealed the extent of the forbiddance of adultery. The Law not only forbade the act of adultery, but also included all lustful thoughts and desires for the forbidden fruit of adultery that lie in the heart.

Job made a covenant with his eyes not to think on a maid. The person who wishes to protect his heart from corrupt impressions and desires must cover his eyes by restraining them from ensnaring looks. Unrestrained, lustful looking feeds the hellish fires of adultery.

Jesus prescribed a harsh, extreme solution for the unrestrained eye and hand which refuse to cease their wicked participation in adultery. It is better to deny the flesh (bringing the body into subjection and mortification at any cost) in order to enter into eternal life than it is to have the whole, resurrected, wicked body cast into hell.



Jesus left no room for man to venter about the origin of adultery. The seed of adultery lies within all human hearts. The word *adultery* means violation of the marriage bed, sexual commerce between a married man and a woman who is not his own wife or vice versa.

B. NATURE OF ADULTERY

The nature of a thing pertains to the intrinsic characteristics that cannot be separated from the thing without changing it into something else. The nature of adultery is that it loves darkness rather than light. This characteristic manifests itself in different ways.

1. Shameful Nature of Adultery

The humiliating, disgraceful nature of adultery makes it hide its scandalizing head for shame. The Apostle Paul declared that it was a shame to speak of those things which are done of them in secret (Ephesians 5:12).

Job realized that shame in the hearts of adulterers and adulteresses constrains them to wait for the darkness of night or for a convenient season for the display of the seed of adultery that exists in their human hearts.

The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me: and disguiseth his face (Job 24:15).

The most wretched, impudent sinner seeks to hide his sin. While making great provision to fulfill the lust of his

adulterous heart, he also makes great provision to conceal his sin by disguising his face because of shame.

The nature of adultery is full of shame that causes the heart to desire to cover the thought or deed. Shame has the following definition: a painful sensation excited by the exposure of that which nature or modesty prompts us to conceal; a consciousness of guilt of having done something which injures reputation; the cause of or reason for reproach, disgrace, contempt.

How wonderful it is to know that Jesus Christ came to take away our old nature, which carries the seed of adultery, and to give us His new nature of holiness and purity of heart so we may worship and serve Him in the beauty of holiness! When Jesus Christ cleanses and changes the heart of man, the man has no need to change and disguise his face because his conduct is honorable and holy.

2. Hunting Nature of Adultery

The nature of adultery is to search for the precious life of a soul, as Delilah searched for Samson's life and power.

For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life (Proverbs 6:26).

The spirit of adultery hunts for the precious life; that is, it searches for, chases, follows after for the purpose of catching or killing, pursues with the aim of taking captive. The Hebrew word for *precious* means valuable, brightness, clear, costly, excellent, fat, honorable *woman*, precious, reputation.

It is the nature of the spirit of adultery to look for those who have a valuable or highly regarded reputation, those who have a bright, clear spiritual life, those who have excellent talents and abilities, those who have achieved honor. If the spirit of adultery succeeds in seducing a person who has the highest, most valuable reputation, in either the natural or spiritual realms, it prides itself on its great accomplishment.

How deceitful is the pride of the spirit of adultery! Since the shameful nature of adultery always covers its true self, the person who is being used by the spirit of adultery is deceived into thinking that he (or she) possesses special charm and beauty which enable him (or her) to attract and captivate the prey. Deceit causes a person to forget that the spirit of adultery can accomplish its lustful purpose through someone whose personality is *not* charming, whose features are not beautiful, and whose powers of personal magnetism are weak. The spirit or nature of adultery has reduced many a good, prosperous man to extreme poverty. The foolish victim is then deprived of his enjoyable comforts of life and forced to exist on what, by comparison, is a mere loaf of bread.

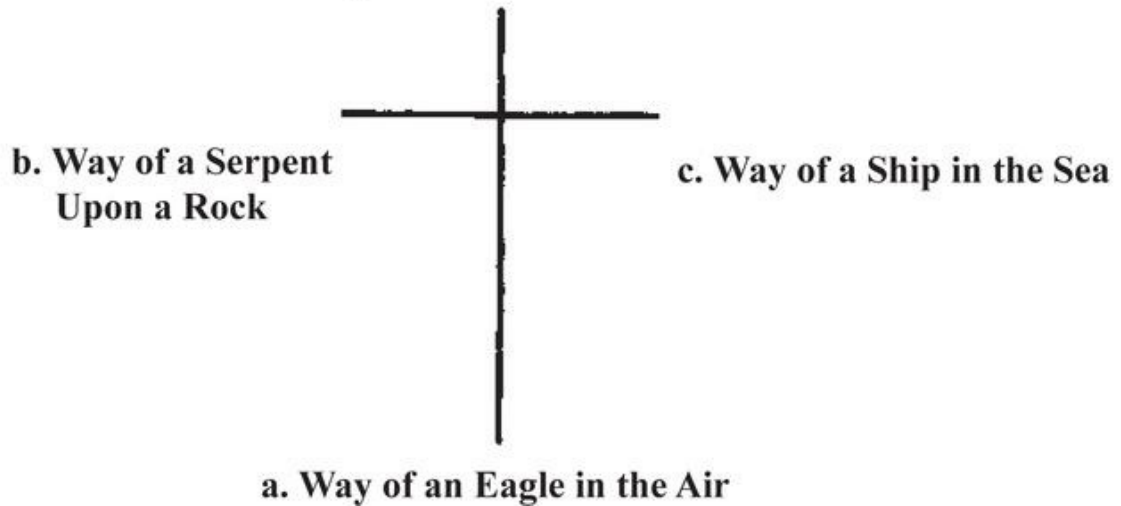
3. Secretive Nature of Adultery

The mysterious nature of adultery conceals its vile, slimy trail so that it is often unknown except to God and the guilty pair.

There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid. Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness (Proverbs 30:18,20).

The beautiful stature of truth revealed in the foregoing verses helps us understand the secretive ways in which the spirit of adultery works to accomplish its will.

d. Way of a Man With a Maid



a. Way of an Eagle in the Air

The way of an eagle in the air; . . . Such is the way of an adulteress woman: she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith I have done no wickedness (Proverbs 30:19,20).

Through the anointed writings of Solomon, God used a natural eagle to typify the subtlety with which the spirit of adultery and whoredom soar in the spiritual realm. The eagle takes a secret way which cannot be easily traced. It is useless to put blood hounds on her trail because she leaves no scent in the air; it is not possible to take her fingerprints because she has none. Her movements, as she flies at tremendous heights by secret direction, are beautiful to behold. Swiftly she flies toward her secret destination; she can be in one place one minute and somewhere else the next. In addition to having powerful wings which lift her above the marked roads and pathways on the earth, the eagle also possesses exceptionally keen eyesight. While flying high in the heavens, she can spot a crawling serpent on the earth and descend upon him with the swiftness of lightning.

The sly way in which the natural eagle works is a picture of the way the spirit of adultery operates in both the natural and spiritual realms. Just as an eagle can soar on uncharted pathways in the natural sky so also can the spirit of adultery and whoredom soar high in the celestial skyways, beyond where man's mortal thinking can climb, in search of a human heart that it can swoop down upon and carry away to its nest of spiritual and natural adultery. The eagle is also a heavy bird, which makes its flight seem impossible. The secretive nature of adultery is like the flying eagle in that it arranges almost impossible meeting places in which to accomplish its desired goal and objective.

The spirit of spiritual adultery (idolatry) works subtly. It can come into a person's heart and life secretly and swiftly. And, while it is not possible to discern how, where, or when this spirit entered, the person suddenly feels alienated from the affections of Jesus Christ. The spirit of spiritual adultery or idolatry draws the heart and mind away from the LORD and changes one's attitude toward Him. This spirit causes us to lose the thrill we once had in studying God's Word; it causes us to lose the excitement we once felt about praying and going to the house of God.

The spirit of natural adultery also works subtly and swiftly. For instance, a man can leave for work feeling very much in love with his wife and family. Then, with the speed of an eagle, the spirit of adultery stirs the seed of natural adultery that is within his heart. By the time the man returns home, he has a changed attitude toward his family. Men are not the only ones who are carried away by the spirit of adultery. Because the seed of natural adultery is present in every human heart, women also are caught up by the same spirit. Many people whose homes have been broken by the spirit of natural adultery can bear witness to the swiftness and subtlety of its attack.

We need to remember two important things about the eagle: her ability to soar secretly in high places and the swiftness of her flight as she descends upon her prey. These two attributes symbolize the secretiveness and swiftness of the movement of the spirit of adultery in both the natural and spiritual realms.

b. Way of a Serpent Upon a Rock

The manner or fashion of the serpent's movements upon the rock, as he slithers along without feet, is both secretive and mysterious.

. . . the way of a serpent upon a rock; . . . Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness (Proverbs 30:19,20).

Notice that the wise man compared the way of the spirit of adultery to the way a serpent moves upon a rock. Tracing a serpent's trail is easy when he moves through sand, but it is difficult to track him when he crawls upon a rock. This is another picture of the secretiveness, slyness, subtleness, and wise skill of the nature of the spirit of natural and spiritual adultery.

The natural serpent's wise skill allows him to crawl upon the highest, most perpendicular rock. The serpent has no appendages, such as feet or claws, to aid him in his climb. It is the wise use of his smooth belly that enables him to wriggle, turn, and crawl until he gets to the very top.

Equally subtle and skillful is the nature of spiritual and natural adultery. The serpent of spiritual adultery or idolatry possesses a corrupted form of skillful wisdom that enables it to crawl into the heart of a believer so secretly that the believer is unaware of its presence until the idol image is enthroned in the heart. The same principle applies to the serpent of natural adultery. For example, when the spirit of adultery stirs the seed of natural adultery in a woman's heart and she "sets her cap" for a man, it does not matter whether he is interested in her or not; that spirit will find a way to wriggle into his heart through its secretive, skillful movement, just as the serpent moves on the rock.

c. Way of a Ship in the Sea

It is a mystery how a ship remains afloat on the difficult waters. Yet it presses on through the obstacles, leaving no trace of its path in the sea.

. . . the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; . . . Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness (Proverbs 30:19,20).

As the ship sails through the midst of the sea, it provides another picture of the secretiveness, swiftness, and skillfulness of the nature of adultery. The natural ship leaves no tracks as it moves through the sea. Once the sea is past, the waters soon settle down; there are no prints by which a person can track the ship's secretive path.

A natural ship has an ability to press through difficult, stormy waters, rise above the highest, most dangerous waves, and keep going toward its destination. This ability depicts the driving determination exhibited by the spirit of adultery. Neither difficulty nor danger deters the spirit of adultery from pursuing its course to its end, which is fleshly satisfaction.

d. The Way of a Man With A Maid

The attraction of procreative power between a man and a woman is a mystery. The secret path of attraction is known only to the man and the maid.

. . . and the way of a man with a maid. Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness (Proverbs 30:19,20).

Secret looks, secret thoughts, and secret feelings are involved in a man's courting of a maid because God has endowed a man with secret wooing power. Once a man has won the heart of a maid, she is willing to forsake everything and everyone in order to spend the rest of her life with him. The nature of the spirit of adultery also possesses secret powers that enable it to seduce the human heart away from the LORD God.

An adulterous woman gobbles up pleasure and takes delight in her wicked ways. After eating of the pleasure of adultery, she wipes off the evidence so others will not discern her secret pleasure. Then she denies that she has done any wickedness. The adulteress' lack of sensibility to moral wrong is incomprehensible. She is so degraded that she feels nothing sinful in her act of infidelity. To the adulteress, the act of adultery is like eating food; it is just physical satisfaction.

The spirit of adultery and whoredom has a deceitful nature. It lies to the very people it possesses, making them think they will find lasting happiness and satisfaction outside of God's directive will. The spirit of adultery lies to the mind and heart, making the guilty feel justified in their actions. They put the blame and guilt on others, not on themselves.

Beloved, the spirit of adultery is not something to play around with in either the natural or spiritual realms. Its secretive, eagle nature allows it to move swiftly in higher realms than man's conscious man can soar. Its corrupt serpent wisdom permits it to crawl and wriggle its way secretly into the heart. Like a ship in the midst of the sea, the spirit of adultery possesses powerful drive and determination to keep moving in spite of opposition. And it has a deceitful way of removing the visible evidence of its wicked nature and denying the secret pleasure it takes in breaking God's *Torah* which says: "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

C. PREVENTION OF ADULTERY

Thou shalt not commit adultery (Exodus 20:14).

God is the Guide of everyone. By the commands of His *Torah*, which forbid adultery and covetousness of one's possessions, God protects every home with all its possessions of life, freedom, happiness, honor, property, and most of all the marriage relationship of the husband and wife.

God also has provided a way whereby the seeds of adultery that are present in every human heart can be prevented from growing to maturity and bearing fruit in either the spiritual or natural realms. That way is revealed to us through the Word of God.

God revealed in His Word what His will was concerning adultery, namely, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Millions of people know that adultery is forbidden by God's Word, yet many of those same people are guilty of having broken the seventh commandment. It follows, then, that more than theoretical Word is needed in order to prevent the seeds of adultery from being manifested in a life. It is easy for a person to forget the Word of Truth that is written in a book he reads only occasionally.

The Word of God must be written on the fleshly tables of the heart in order for God's Commandment to prevent a person from committing adultery. We know from the types and shadows of the Old Testament that the writing of the Word on a heart is a *process* rather than something which occurs instantly. For instance, when God wrote His Word on the tables of stone, it was not an instantaneous thing. Moses was in the Mount of the LORD for forty days and forty nights, during which time the LORD engraved His holy Word in the first tables of stone. These tables were broken by Moses when he came down out of the mountain and discovered the children of Israel worshipping a golden calf. Later, the LORD instructed Moses to hew out two tables of stone like unto the first. Then, instead of God writing the words with His own finger as He had done in the first tables of stone, the hand of the LORD overshadowed the hand of Moses as Moses inscribed the words in the tables of stone he had prepared. Moses stayed in the mountain another forty days and forty nights before he descended with the second tables of the Law.

Likewise, the engraving of the living truth of God's Word on the fleshly tables of our hearts occurs gradually, as we study God's Word and let its truth come into our hearts. That does not mean that ALL of the Word must be engraved deeply in the heart before it has power to influence our thinking and prevent us from breaking God's holy Commandments.

Paul wrote: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). Paul was talking about God's divine, living Word in the heart as well as His written Word. Each time we study God's Word and let the truth of it come into our heart, we receive the life and light and love of the truth. When the burning life of the truth burns upon the altar of the heart, it consumes that which is not like Christ. The shining light of the truth illuminates the darkened heart, imparting divine wisdom, understanding, and knowledge while it inspires the heart with a desire to please God and not self. The holy love of the truth enflames the heart with holy, prudent zeal to choose to obey His Word rather than to please self and fulfill the lustful desires of the flesh.

Each time we allow the LORD Jesus Christ to write His moral law of truth on the fleshly tables of our heart, the engraving of the living truth of the Law goes deeper. Thus, each new engraving of the living truth of the Law unearths more seeds of spiritual and natural adultery that have been hidden in unexposed, subconscious levels of the heart.

It is very important for us to understand this concept. Otherwise, when we see a new level of adultery spring up in either the spirit or natural realm, it is easy for us to think we still have the same wicked desires we dealt with weeks,

or even years ago. We have to remember that the nature of adultery never changes. It is always the same regardless of how deeply it is rooted in the heart. We also need to realize that the seeds found on the surface are not the same ones buried in deeper levels of the heart.

We can prevent the spirit of adultery from being manifested in our lives if we are willing to let Jesus Christ dig out and crucify the seeds of adultery in our human heart. Once the seed of adultery has been eradicated from the heart, the spirit of adultery will find nothing on which to fasten itself when it passes our way. If the “sign” of adultery is not hanging on the outside, we do not receive much trade. We can prevent the spirit of adultery from entering into cleansed areas of our heart if we allow Jesus Christ to give us an overflowing spring of determination to be like Him. Then we can rebuke and resist the spirits that pass our way.

D. PUNISHMENT OF ADULTERY

God’s Word teaches us that the LORD abundantly rewards those who love Him and keep His Commandments. Yet, because God is just and righteousness, He also punishes those who hate Him and break the holy, moral Law of His *Torah* which forbids man to commit adultery. God has been faithful in every generation to punish the adulterer and the adulteress.

1. Punishment Under the Dispensation of the Law of Moses

In the Old Testament, when man was under the dispensation of the Law of Moses, death was the punishment for both natural and spiritual adultery. The three forms of death which *God* decreed as punishment for natural and spiritual adultery gave man a threefold witness of the consequences of adultery.

a. Death by Stoning — God’s Word Witness Against Adultery

In some cases of adultery, God had the guilty people stoned because stones symbolize the judgment of God’s Word against adultery in the natural realm and idolatry in the spiritual realm. The Book of Deuteronomy describes the LORD God as the Rock of truth or Word. “He is the Rock, his word is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He” (Deuteronomy 32:4). The Apostle Paul revealed that the Rock was none other than Christ, the living Word of truth. “And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: *and that Rock was Christ*” (I Corinthians 10:4).

When a Jewish man or woman sinned against the revealed Word of God by committing either natural adultery or spiritual adultery or idolatry, the just punishment was death by stoning. Notice in the following scriptures, which confirm that the Law administered death by stoning, how often spiritual adultery or idolatry is entwined with natural adultery.

Again, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Molech; *he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones, . . .* And the man that committeth adultery with another man’s wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbor’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death (Leviticus 20:2,10).

Molech, the fire-god, was the national god of the Ammonites. His worship, which was a form of Baal worship, included the offering of human sacrifice. Molech was represented by a brazen statue (which was hollow and capable of being heated) with a bull’s head, and arms stretched out to receive the children to be sacrificed. Drums and cymbals were beaten to drown the cries of the sufferers. In spite of the atrocious, inhuman practices associated with the worship of this idol, some Israelites actually embraced his false teachings in preference to the teachings of God’s holy *Torah* and offered their children to be burned in the fire.

The LORD God pronounced the same punishment upon these idolaters as He pronounced upon people who committed natural adultery. In both cases, the guilty ones were stoned to death because they had rejected the true witness of God’s spoken Word, given through Moses, and His written Word engraved upon the tables of stone.

If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy father; Namely, of the gods of the people which are

round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. *And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die;* because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage (Deuteronomy 13:6-10).

False prophets were executed by stoning. It mattered not that the false prophet was a member of a man's own household or one of his closest friends. The false prophet was to be reported for trying to lead Israel into idolatry (which was spiritual adultery in God's sight). He was not to be pitied or spared, but the death sentence was to be carried out because he had not heeded the witness of the LORD's voice or Word that forbade Israel to worship any other God.

If there be among you, within any of thy gates which the LORD thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the LORD thy God, in transgressing his covenant, And hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded; And it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and enquired diligently, and, behold, it be true, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel: Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, even that man or that woman, *and shalt stone them with stones, till they die* (Deuteronomy 17:2-5).

The pagan nations practiced grossly immoral sex acts as a part of their worship of the celestial bodies of heaven. Thus when an Israelite promoted worship of the creation (sun, moon, and stars) rather than the LORD God (the Creator who had placed these chandeliers of light in the heavens), he was guilty of encouraging adultery in both the natural and spiritual realms. God commanded idolaters to be stoned because they refused to heed the witness of His holy Word, His *Torah*.

But if this thing be true [the husband's accusation against his wife's virginity when he married her], and the tokens of virginity be not found for the damsel: Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, *and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die:* because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you. If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel. If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, *and ye shall stone them with stones that they die;* the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you (Deuteronomy 22:20-24).

In view of the widespread promiscuity in our land today, it might appear at first glance that God was unduly hard on the Israelites who lived in the Old Testament dispensation. However, we need to remember that the nation of Israel was called and chosen to bring forth the Messiah, the Saviour of the world. God had to administer severe judgment against those who disregarded the witness of His Word. Otherwise, the licentiousness of a few individuals eventually would have spread through the nation and corrupted the holiness and purity of the lineage of His Son. We would not have a Saviour today if God had not judged the sinners who did not heed His command to live holy, separated lives.

B. Death by Fire — God's Spirit Witness Against Adultery

Fire in the Word of God is a picture of the fiery, burning, holy Spirit of the LORD God. God called the nation of Israel to be a kingdom of priests unto Him. "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel" (Exodus 19:6). Had Israel been faithful to their calling and gone forth in the Spirit and power of the LORD God, they would have led the whole world in worshipping the true and living God. Unfortunately, Israel failed to lift up the LORD's standard of holiness before the world. So, in some cases of adultery, God pronounced the judgment of death by fire as a witness that the guilty person had sinned against the witness of the LORD's Spirit of holiness.

And if a man take a wife and her mother, it is wickedness: *they shall be burnt with fire, both he and they;* that there be no wickedness among you (Leviticus 20:14).

God intended for His people to be a holy people whose moral standards were higher than those of their heathen neighbors. In order for an Israelite to carry on an unlawful, adulterous relationship with the mother of his wife, he

had to deliberately reject the visible and true witness of the fire of the LORD's Spirit that burned upon the Altar in the Courtyard. He had to despise the Spirit's fiery, prophetic promise of mercy and forgiveness to all who repented and brought their sin offering to the Altar. Those who sinned against the fire of the LORD's Spirit were judged and punished with death by fire.

And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the whore, she profaneth her father: *she shall be burnt with fire* (Leviticus 21:9).

Part of the covenant the LORD God made with those who served as His priests was the privilege of eating bread from the Table of Shewbread. The priest's unmarried daughters also had the same privilege. Each Sabbath the priest carried in twelve cakes and set them in two rows upon the Table. Then, after putting pure frankincense upon each row, he used a coal from off the Brazen Altar to ignite the frankincense. During the days that followed, the bread absorbed the smoky fragrance of the incense (a picture of the fragrant Name of Jesus) offered upon the Golden Altar twice daily. It absorbed the shining light from the Golden Candlestick (a picture of the LORD'S divine wisdom, understanding, and knowledge), and it absorbed the pure fragrance of the pure frankincense (a picture of the pure faith of Christ, the living Truth) at the Golden Table. On the following Sabbath, when the priest brought in new bread, he carried the bread from the previous week back to his family.

It is a mistake to think that God would give His servants stale bread to eat. Although the Shewbread was seven days old, it was neither stale nor ordinary. It was permeated with the supernatural anointing of every holy thing God had placed in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle. When the priest and his family ate the Shewbread in faith, they also partook of the spiritual counterpart that rested upon the natural bread. In the bread was the essence of everything needed to make a person holy, if he or she ate it in faith.

In order for the priest's daughter to commit adultery, she had to count the Shewbread of the LORD's holy covenant as an impotent, lifeless thing without power to work holiness in those who ate it. Adultery by the daughter of a priest not only profaned the bread, but it also was a sign against the LORD's Spirit that permeated the bread. Therefore, the adulterous daughter of a priest was counted worthy of death by burning.

And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy. And I will also give thee into their hand, and they shall throw down thine eminent place, and shall break down thy high places: they shall strip thee also of thy clothes, and shall take thy fair jewels, and leave thee naked and bare. They shall also bring up a comply against thee, *and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords. And they shall burn thine houses with fire*, and execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou also shalt give no hire any more (Ezekiel 16:38-41).

Israel should have become a kingdom of holy priests who led the world out of idolatry and into the worship of the true and living God. Instead, she became a spiritual harlot. The LORD looked upon Israel's sin in this instance as being equivalent to spiritual adultery against His Spirit of holiness. Consequently, Israel was punished in the same way the adulterous daughter of the priest was punished. The LORD sent enemy nations into the land to burn the cities of Israel with fire.

c. Sickness and Disease - God's Works Witness against Adultery

Sickness and disease were also God's tools **of punishment for** adultery.

And when he had made her to drink the water, then it shall come to pass, that, if she be defiled, and have done trespass against her husband, that the water that causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter, and her belly shall swell, and her thigh shall rot: and the woman shall be a curse among her people (Numbers 5:27).

If a Jewish woman's behavior caused her husband to suffer pangs of jealousy, or if a spirit of jealousy provoked the husband when there was no reason for his jealousy, God had provided a way of determining the wife's guilt or innocence. The bitter waters administered by the priest caused the belly of the guilty woman to swell and her thigh to rot. In this instance the judgment of death, which was executed by a slow process that involved great physical and mental suffering, was a witness of God's works against sin in the natural realm.

The Book of Deuteronomy lists twelve sicknesses and diseases that God prophesied He would put upon the nation of Israel if she committed spiritual adultery against Him by worshipping idol gods.

And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the

commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them: And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.... The LORD shall make the *pestilence* cleave unto thee, until he hath consumed thee from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it. The LORD shall smite thee with a *consumption*, and with a *fever*, and with an *inflammation*, and with an *extreme burning*, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and they shall pursue thee until thou perish. . . . The LORD will smite thee with the *botch* of Egypt, and with the *emerods*, and with the *scab*, and with the *itch*, whereof thou canst not be healed. The LORD shall smite thee with *madness*, and *blindness*, and *astonishment of heart*. . . . The LORD shall smite thee in the knees, and in the legs, with a sore botch that cannot be healed, from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head (Deuteronomy 28:13-35).

Israel became known as the “wife” of the LORD God after she had entered into Canaan’s Land. Since Israel knew the LORD God in a spiritual oneness of relationship, her idolatrous worship of false gods stirred up the holy jealousy of her spiritual Husband. Then the LORD God, in turn, caused Israel to drink the bitter waters of judgment in the form of twelve classes of sickness and disease:

1. Pestilence
2. Consumption
3. Fever
4. Inflammation
5. Extreme burning
6. Botch
7. Emerods
8. Scab
9. Itch
10. Madness
11. Blindness
12. Astonishment of heart

The LORD God would have been justified in pronouncing instant judgment upon Israel for her sin of spiritual adultery against him. Instead, He allowed her *to* suffer sicknesses and diseases. Rather than being an act of sadistic cruelty, this judgment was a witness of God’s works of long-suffering mercy. As Israel experienced these various, painful afflictions in the physical realm, she had a chance to look longer upon the works witness of the LORD’S mercy and to repent of her idolatry before His jealousy forced Him to judge her with greater, more painful death in both the natural and spiritual realms.

When God judged the sin of natural adultery and the sin of spiritual adultery or idolatry in the Old Testament, His judgment was always tempered with His mercy. Before the guilty sinner was judged and stoned for his sin, the LORD had mercifully given the person the witness of His stones of living Word from His Rock of Truth. Before the priest’s daughter was judged and burned with fire for her sin of adultery, the LORD had given her the fiery witness of His Spirit in the form of the living, supernatural bread that she had had the privilege of eating, week after week. Had she accepted the spiritual counterpart that rested upon the natural bread, it would have burned out her sinful, adulterous desire and worked holiness in the innermost part of her being. Likewise, before the LORD God pronounced upon Israel the judgment of death in both the natural and spiritual realms, He let her suffer the painful (but merciful) works witness of twelve classes of sickness and disease so she could experience a foretaste, as it were, of the pain and suffering awaiting her if she did not repent speedily of her spiritual adultery or idolatry against the true and living God.

2. Punishment Under the Dispensation of Grace

God was faithful to chastise and correct sin in the **Old** Testament and also in the New Testament.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (for until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of

many offences unto justification. *For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ,*) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. *Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord* (Romans 5:12-21).

In the New Testament Dispensation of grace, God has provided His Son, Jesus Christ, the holy, spotless Lamb, as the acceptable sacrifice for sin. Jesus Christ fulfilled, in His earthly life, all the types and shadows of the animal sacrifices specified in the ceremonial portion of the Mosaic Law. God no longer requires animal sacrifice because He accepts the one offering of His Son as the eternal propitiation for the sins of the whole world. Man, now, can come boldly to the throne of grace at the foot of the Cross of Jesus Christ, confess his sin, repent, and forsake his sin. Forgiveness comes when man accepts, by faith, the Blood of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ as his substitutionary offering.

It must be remembered, however, that while man is no longer required to bring the animal sacrifices specified in the ceremonial portion of the Mosaic Law, God never has revoked His moral law of sowing and reaping. Thus, although man may repent and receive from God forgiveness for sin and its penalty (which is death), he still **has to reap the fruit of the** seeds he has sown while living in sin.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (Galatians 6:7,8).

The man who has confessed, repented, and forsaken his sin of adultery sometimes still reaps the effects of his sin. For example, if the adulterer's wife has left him, his home may not be restored. God promises in His Word to forgive the repentant sinner; however, the Word does not promise that his wife will forgive him. She may never return and be his wife. When a child is conceived as a result of an adulterous union, someone will have to support the child until he or she is grown. At least one of the guilty parents will have to assume this responsibility; otherwise, the burden falls upon the state or the adoptive parents. (We are assuming that the mother will fear God enough not to abort the living fetus in her womb. Abortion breaks the sixth Commandment: "Thou shalt not kill.") Likewise, any disease contracted during the adulterous affair will not disappear simply because a person repents of his sin. Some venereal diseases have no known cure. If this is the case, the repentant person may be forgiven, but he will have to live with the effects of his sin.

Let us pray that our chastity be as dear to us as our very lives. Let us fear that which defiles the body as much as we fear that which destroys it. We need to understand that all fleshly, lustful desires not only war against the soul, but they produce the acts of adultery in either the natural or spiritual realms. If we are a wife, we will confess our unChrist-like practices which cherish and excite our fleshly lusts, repent of them, and offer them up for crucifixion. In order for us to run in the Christian race that is set before us and obtain the prize of being in the Bride of Jesus Christ, we must be clean before God.

In this chapter we have studied God's revelation of truth about marriage and divorce. This, the first major point on the main stature of truth concerning marriage, covered the following area of study:

- Revelation of God's Will in Marriage
- Revelation of God's Reason for Legal Divorce
- Revelation of God's Laws of Protection for the Wife
- Revelation of God's Forbidden Will

When God made one wife for Adam in the Garden of Eden, He established His directive will in a natural marriage; God intended that one man and one woman be joined together in a oneness of relationship so that they can be one in body, soul, and spirit. The natural marriage relationship between one man and one woman is a type of the spiritual union or oneness of relationship that the LORD God desires to establish with individual believers who yield completely to Him and grow to maturity in the full stature of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Lamech, a descendant of Cain, took two wives. Thus, he became the first man to walk in God's permissive will so far as his marriage was concerned. Although the permissive will of God is not to be the pattern we follow, we see God's mercy demonstrated in the lives of those whose marriages were in His permissive will.

In His directive will for a natural marriage, God has permitted the man only one reason for legal divorce, and that is fornication by the woman before marriage, during the espousal period. In the Old Testament, the vows made by the betrothed couple were as binding as their marriage vows. God permitted the man to break the betrothal covenant only if his espoused bride were guilty of fornication. When adultery was committed after the consummation of the marriage, the union was to be restored through the guilty person's repentance and the offended person's forgiveness. In His direct will, God permitted the woman only one legal reason for divorce, and that was the death of her husband. The only way a woman could be free from the marriage covenant of her husband was if her husband died. Death of the husband constituted a legal divorce in God's eyes, and the woman was free to marry another man.

Fornication and death were the only grounds for divorce in the directive will of God. The principle applied to marriage in both the natural and spiritual realms. Idolatry (spiritual adultery) and a heart filled with sin and death would work separation and bring about a divorcement between the heart of a believer and the heart of God; only on this basis would God give him over to his backsliding.

From the beginning, polygamous marriages were not in God's directive will. Nevertheless, He mercifully made provision for the protection of a virgin wife, a maidservant wife, a captive wife, and in cases where a man had two wives, the wife who was loved and the wife who was hated.

God always has forbidden man to commit adultery. In studying about the forbidden will of God, we learned that adultery originates out of man's unregenerated, human heart. The shameful nature of adultery constrains adulterers and adulteresses to wait for the dark of night or for a convenient season to manifest the seeds of sin in their hearts. The hunting nature of adultery seeks out the precious life—that which is highly desirable in the eyes of both man and God. The writer of Proverbs described the secretive nature of adultery as follows: as an eagle in the air, adultery works subtly and swiftly. As a serpent on a rock, adultery moves with skillful wisdom. As a ship in the midst of the sea, adultery moves with driving determination toward its goal — fleshly satisfaction. As the way a man courts a maid is the secretive, deceitful way adultery seduces the human heart to sin.

God has provided a way whereby the seeds of adultery can be prevented from growing to maturity and bearing fruit in either the spiritual or natural realms; and that way is through having the revealed Word of God written on the fleshly tables of the heart. The engraving of the living truth of God's Word involves a process of time. Yet, there is enough power in each new engraving of truth to influence our thinking and prevent us from breaking God's holy Commandments.

The punishment of adultery under the dispensation of the Mosaic Law included: death by stoning, by fire, and sickness and disease. These three forms of punishment for adultery represented the threefold witness that man rejected when he committed adultery. Death by stoning was the judgment pronounced upon those who rejected the witness of God's Word that forbade man to commit adultery. Death by fire was pronounced against the priest's daughter because of her rejection of God's fiery Spirit of holiness that was present in the supernatural bread she ate. Had she eaten the bread in faith, it would have burned out the unholy desires in her heart. Sickness and disease were the judgments prophesied when Israel rejected God's Word and Spirit and turned to worship idol gods. This third witness was a witness of God's longsuffering works of mercy which He extended in order to give man another opportunity to repent before being judged with natural and spiritual death.

We live in a day of shifting standards and rampant immorality. Yet there is no excuse for anyone being ignorant of the standards of morality that God requires of His people. God has spoken clearly in His Word and revealed His will concerning the matter of marriage, divorce, and adultery. It behooves us, then, to heed God's Word and to walk softly and in humility before God and circumspectly before men.

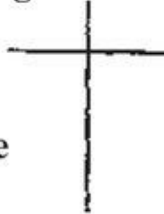
Chapter Two

GODS WORD RECOGNIZES FOUR CLASSES OF MARRIAGE

We come now to the second major point on the stature of truth we are studying on marriage, which is the revelation in God's Word of four classes of marriage. God's perfect, directive will is and always has been for a man to have one wife and for the two of them to become one flesh. However, because man has inherited a corrupt, sinful will, he has not chosen always to walk in the directive will of God. From the time of Lamech, a descendant of Cain, there have been men and women who have chosen to take more than one marriage partner. In spite of the fact that these individuals have spurned God's directive will and have refused to walk in it, He has mercifully extended His permissive will to them so they may live and not be cut off because of their disobedience.

God knows that not all marriages are consummated in His directive will. He knows, too, that not all marriages in His permissive will are there because of an act of open defiance of His headship and deliberate rejection of His directive will. Therefore, the LORD God deals in His Word with four classes of marriages.

IV. Marriage of Two Unbelievers



II. Mixed Marriage by Choice

III. Mixed Marriage by Salvation

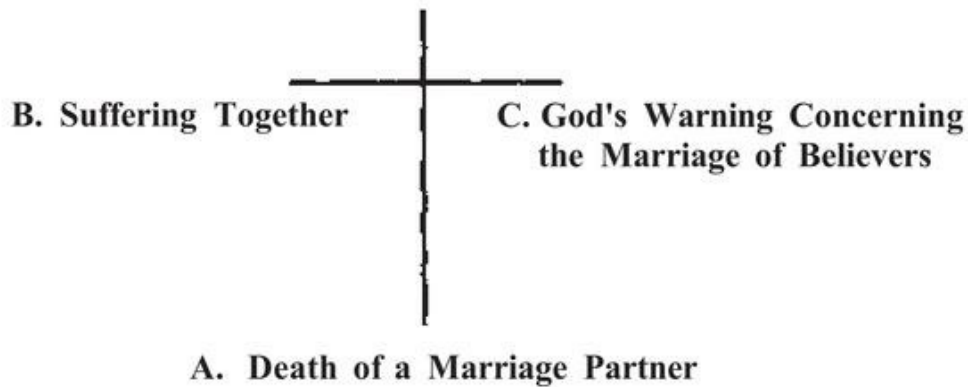
I. Marriage of Two Believers

The good works of love, mercy, compassion, and pity are the results of diligent study and divine revelation of the Word of God. We will be able to exhibit a more merciful, compassionate attitude toward all classes of marriages if we study the Word of God and let the LORD open the eyes of our understanding so we can see His righteous judgment in each case.

I. MARRIAGE OF TWO BELIEVERS

God's directive will is for Christians to marry other Christians. All believers should make a commitment to God to choose his or her companion for life from among those of like faith. The following stature of truth reveals other attitudes believers should have when they are considering marriage.

D. Conditions for a Happy Marriage



A. DEATH OF A MARRIAGE PARTNER

The death of the husband released the living wife to marry a blood relative or a kinsman-redeemer. Second Timothy 3:16,17 states: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." This tells us that ALL scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, is profitable for the man of God. In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel was comprised of believers in the LORD God. These believers were equivalent to New Testament Christians who are believers in the LORD Jesus Christ. The requirements God placed on the natural marriage of believers in natural Israel, who was God's spiritual Bride, reveal to us the requirements He places on the natural marriage of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament, who make up spiritual Israel.

The law of death is the first law God dealt with in the marriage of believers in the Old Testament. A lesson in the Book of Genesis shows us what to do when one of the believing marriage partners dies.

And it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shuah; and he took her, and went in unto her. And she conceived, and bare a son; and he called his name Er. And she conceived again, and bare a son; and she called his name Onan. And she yet again conceived, and bare a son; and called his name Shelah: and he was at Chezib, when she bare him. And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name was Tamar. And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him. And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother (Genesis 38:1-8).

God made a law that if a believer died, leaving no seed, his wife had to marry her husband's brother or a blood relative. This law was instituted for the purpose of raising up a seed for the dead brother and, thus, preventing his name from perishing out of the land. This law, called the Levirate law (*Levirate* comes from a word meaning husband's brother or brother-in-law), was established before the Mosaic Law was given. The time from Abraham to Moses was a dispensation of faith, comparable to the dispensation of faith in which we live today. The Levirate Law, which required marrying a blood relative after the death of a husband who had not generated heirs, was established under the Law of Faith from Abraham and was in operation in the time of Judah.

The Levirate Law was this: if a believing husband died, his widow must marry a blood brother. This law Israel observed in the natural realm is a picture of what God requires for Christians to observe in relation to the spiritual Blood of Christ. If death separates a Christian marriage, the law is that the survivor marry someone who has been born-again and is a blood relative through the precious, spiritual Blood of Jesus Christ.

When God institutes a moral principle or law, it is active throughout the entire Word. God never revokes His moral, spiritual laws; they remain the same from generation to generation. Only the ceremonial law with its animal sacrifices has been eliminated in the New Testament dispensation because it was fulfilled by Jesus Christ. The principle of the Levirate law is recorded again in the Book of Deuteronomy.

If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother unto her (Deuteronomy 25:5).

When an Israelite died, his marriage partner was not permitted to marry a stranger, an unbeliever. The law required that the widow marry a brother, a blood relative of her husband.

The Apostle Paul reaffirmed this principle in the New Testament.

The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord (I Corinthians 7:39).

“The wife,” said Paul, “is bound by the law as long as her husband is alive.” Paul was referring, not to the Mosaic Law, but to the moral law of marriage that God instituted with Adam male and female, the law that a husband is to have one wife, and a wife is to have one husband. God made one wife for Adam, and Adam lived with her all the days of his life (even after he backslid from God and after he came back to God). Only death broke their marriage covenant.

Paul had the moral law of marriage in mind when he wrote: “. . . if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord.” If a Christian husband dies, his widow is free from the marriage covenant she made with him. She is free to marry again, but not to an unbeliever. A Christian widow’s second husband should be a spiritual, blood relative; a believer in the LORD Jesus Christ.

Let us remember that at this point we are dealing only with the marriage of believers. And the first law that God gave concerning the marriage of believers is that in the event of the death of one of the marriage partners, the remaining spouse is free to marry another believer, one who is a blood relative in the spiritual realm.

B. SUFFERING TOGETHER

God demands that a husband and wife make a commitment in their marriage vows to be willing to undergo pain, to experience discomfort in order to keep their marriage intact.

The second point of truth for believers to understand and accept is the reality principle that, in order to keep a marriage together, suffering or pain is involved. Believers who keep their marriage together must endure suffering; no two human beings ever have lived together without experiencing suffering. In this day of people’s lax moral commitment to the marriage vows, it is more necessary than ever for Christians to teach their children the reality principle of accepting and expecting pain as well as pleasure in a marriage. Regardless of how much a person may love a companion, there will be times when the fleshly disposition of one will cause great distress to the other and vice versa. A couple should realize that even the best marriages include suffering.

The same principle is true in regard to the believer’s spiritual marriage to Jesus Christ. Second Timothy 3:12 states: “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” Persecution is the believer’s legacy; however, suffering is not ALL of his legacy. In Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle wrote that the suffering was not worthy to be compared with the glory. Believers who put Jesus Christ in the midst of their natural marriage will not only encounter persecution from without, but they also will experience personal suffering within as they allow Him to crucify their flesh that is revealed in the course of living with another human being. In both instances, the suffering is not worthy to be compared with the glory gained. Believers who make Christ the Head and governing shaft of their homes can have a miniature heaven, as it were, here on earth.

In the Book of Exodus, God recorded His moral laws that include suffering in order to keep a marriage together.

Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them. If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him (Exodus 21:1-3).

God made special provision in the Old Testament for a Hebrew believer who fell into sore trials and tribulations. If he lost his money, inheritance, land, home, and other material goods, he could sell himself as a servant. If the man was married, his wife was required to go with him into bondage, servitude, and suffering. Remember this was long before the days of the Equal Rights Amendment. So the wife was not allowed the freedom of saying: “I am sorry for you, husband. But if you cannot support me now, you go and serve a master for six years. When you return in the seventh year, if I haven’t found someone else, I will go back to you.” God’s Law required both of them to go into bondage together in order to preserve their marriage relationship. The Hebrew man was a believer, and his wife was a believer; therefore, they were obligated to suffer together.

The marriages of many believers break up simply because the husband and wife are not willing to suffer with one

another. When God joins two people together in marriage, they are no longer two separate individuals; they are one flesh. Therefore, it is no longer *his* fault or *her* fault, but it is *our* fault. Circumstances become *our* circumstances. Sufferings become *our* sufferings.

The man who was single when he went into bondage went out alone in the year of release. However, the man who was married when he went into bondage took his wife with him when he went out. The master of the house had no right to keep the wife of the man-servant after they had completed their period of servitude.

The foregoing scripture dealt basically with the wife's choice to suffer in bondage with her husband in order to keep the marriage together. Now, let us look at an example of a husband's willingness to suffer in bondage all his life for the same cause.

If his master had given him a wife, and she have borne him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he [the husband] shall go out by himself. And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him to the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door posts; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever (Exodus 21:4-6).

If a young, single Hebrew man's poverty forced him to sell his services to some master, it was the custom for the master to provide the young man with a wife from among his female servants. The Jewish law did not permit an Israelite to buy and own other Israelites as property. However, they could own slaves captured in war, and they could and did buy slaves from neighboring nations or from foreign residents in Canaan. Although both the husband and the wife were servants of the master, there was a distinction between them because one had sold his services and the other was owned by the master. According to the law, the master could hold the young man for only six years; the seventh year was the year of release. However, he could hold the wife forever because she was his property. Any children born to the couple during their years of servitude became the property of the master.

When the year of release came for the Hebrew husband, the master would say to him: "You are free to leave now, but you cannot take your wife and children with you. They belong to me. However, if you love your wife and children and want to remain here with them, you may do so if you are willing to become my bond-slave forever." The husband who loved his family and who loved God's moral law, which said a man was to have one wife, had to choose to suffer the humiliation of being a servant for the rest of his life in order to preserve his marriage.

The ear that had been bored with an awl was the visible seal of the master's ownership; it was an obvious sign that the bond-slave was no longer a free man. Yet the same hole in the ear was also a visible witness that the man had freely chosen, while he was a free man, to serve his master forever in order to keep his marriage together. All the remaining days of his life the man carried an outward, visible demonstration of his decision to hear and obey the voice of his master — his open ear. Inwardly, the man's spiritual ear had to be opened by the Almighty God in order for him to hear God's Word and understand that it would be better for him to stay in his master's house and suffer to keep his family together than to go out free and be separated from the family God had given him.

Believers who want to divorce the mate God has given them and be free have not yet had their ears bored through with the truth. They have not yet learned that it is better to suffer as a servant in the directive will of God than it is to be free and out of His directive will. It is wonderful when we allow the LORD God to bore a hole, as it were, in our ear with His aul of truth. When our ear is open to hear the truth, we understand that it is better to stay in the house of our Master, the LORD Jesus Christ, and suffer in order to keep our family together than to go out free and be in our own will.

One of the biggest lies the Devil tells believers (and others too) is that they will experience less suffering if they have a different marriage partner. Any time two human beings are joined together, there is suffering. It is inevitable. There is always a degree of suffering, even in the directive will of God, but there is a much greater measure of suffering when a person deliberately steps outside of God's directive will.

C. GOD'S WARNING CONCERNING THE MARRIAGE OF BELIEVERS

The fact that God has great respect for the marriages of believers is reflected in the warnings He gave concerning this type of marriage. Since God Himself shows respect for the marriage of believers, it is only right that His children follow His example.

1. Warning Against Belittling the Marriage of Believers

God sorely rebuked Aaron and Miriam for speaking disparagingly of Moses' marriage to the Ethiopian woman.

And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. And they said, hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it. (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.) And the LORD spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out. And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them; and he departed. And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and behold, -Miriam became leprous, white as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, she was leprous (Numbers 12:1-10).

God came down in the form of the pillar of the cloud and personally warned Miriam and Aaron against belittling Moses' marriage to an Ethiopian woman. If anyone should have been understanding toward Moses, it was Miriam and Aaron. Not only was Moses their spiritual leader, but he also was their brother. Yet they were the ones who persecuted him and belittled his marriage.

It is wrong to belittle the marriage of believers, regardless of who they may be and regardless of their races, nationalities, or differences in social status. Since Israel always had proselytes and converts from different nations, we know that Moses' Ethiopian wife had to have been a convert to the Hebrew religion, and therefore, a believer in the LORD God. Otherwise, God would not have defended Moses in such a special way. Had Moses married an unbeliever, he would have been out of God's directive will, and God would not have been so angry on this occasion, and His judgment of Miriam probably would have been less severe.

The solemn warning in this portion of scripture is this: do not belittle, degrade, or speak evil against the marriage of believers. Since believers are God's servants, it is His right and privilege to judge them, and not man's.

2. Warning Against Committing Adultery

God has given us needful warning, advice, and admonition concerning the need to restrain our hearts and bodies from adultery. The sin of adultery belongs to God's forbidden will to all men, but He warns believers especially against committing this heinous crime. God makes it very clear in His Word that, once believers are married, death is the only thing that is supposed to separate them.

If a man be *found* lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shall thou put away evil from Israel (Deuteronomy 22:22).

God was speaking here to the Israelites who were believers in the LORD God during the Old Testament dispensation. God did not require the same strict obedience from the Gentiles that He did from His own people who knew Him in a spiritual oneness of relationship. In the Old Testament dispensation, God required the punishment of literal death for the married believer who was found guilty of adultery. In the dispensation of grace, the death warrant is still issued for the sin of adultery. Spiritual death comes first, and later comes literal death.

The reason that spiritual death is inflicted first is because adultery begins in the spiritual realm. Jesus Christ taught this principle of truth to His disciples.

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matthew 5:27,28).

Before adultery is ever committed in the physical realm, it has been committed in the heart. When a believer starts committing adultery in his heart, he starts dying spiritually; and death separates him from God.

In both the Old Testament and New Testament dispensations, God commanded believers not to commit adultery. God has told us in His Word that very soon Jesus Christ is coming again. He has told us, too, that as it was in the days of Noah and Lot so shall it be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man. There are as many lustful people, as many adulterers and adulteresses, as many fornicators, and as many people committing all manner of unlawful, sexual sins in the world today as there were in the days of Noah and Lot. Beloved, believers need to be diligent in

keeping a fresh covering of the precious Blood of Jesus Christ on their eyes at all times in order to keep their hearts and minds stayed on God and His truth. Those who allow themselves to indulge in the world's lustful thoughts soon become involved in its adulterous practices. Such individuals will not be counted worthy to escape the things that are coming upon this world. Believers who keep themselves from adultery also keep themselves free from the spirit of death that will kill their love for God and family.

The Apostle Paul possessed a special gift of continence which allowed him to live a life of holy celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of God. Although Paul did not have a wife, he was not without understanding of the strong pull of man's sexual drive. Paul knew the importance of a husband and wife having their sexual desires under the control of God's Word and Spirit.

Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man (Romans 7:1-3).

Paul wrote these words to Christian people at Rome. The Apostle called them "brethren" and reminded them of the law of marriage that God instituted in the Garden when He gave Adam male one wife. (Paul was not speaking of the Mosaic Law, as some suppose.) God intended for a man to have one wife and the wife to have one husband and for the two of them to live together until they were separated by death. The woman's sin of fornication during the espousal period was the only legal grounds a man was given for breaking the marriage covenant. The death of her spouse was the only legal grounds a woman was given for divorce from the marriage covenant. Therefore, the married believer who leaves his or her living companion to marry someone else is guilty of adultery.

And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife (I Corinthians 7:10,11).

Paul reminded the believers in Corinth that this was not something the Holy Ghost had inspired him to write just recently. Instead, it was a command spoken by the LORD Himself during the days of His flesh. Simply stated the command was this: "I do not want divorce and remarriage being practiced among believers. I want the Christian home to remain intact. If you decide to divorce and marry someone else, it will be adultery."

The command to which Paul referred is recorded in the Book of Mark.

And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder (Mark 10:2-9).

Jesus Christ always upheld the directive will of His heavenly Father. When God has joined two Christian people together in a oneness relationship, then all those who share Christ's love for the directive will of God will seek to uphold the truth and protect the marriage from being broken by divorce.

God created man a threefold being: a spirit, a soul, and a body. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our LORD Jesus Christ" (I Thessalonians 5:23). Only Christians can truly be one with one another and with God. It takes the Spirit of God to join the spirit of a man and the spirit of a woman together in unity and harmony. Thus, as a husband and wife pray together in the Spirit of God, they maintain the oneness of relationship in the Spirit. Through His Word, God brings the soul or mind of the husband into unity with the soul or mind of the wife. As a husband and wife seek God in His precious Word, they find the exquisite delight of a holy union of their souls. The glory of the LORD overshadows the marriage bed of Christians. Thus, their physical union will be clean before God and satisfying between themselves. It is God's own Spirit, Word, and Glory that join the husband and wife together — spirit, soul, and body.

Many married people have only a physical union; they have no real joining in their spirits and souls. It is not long before these people feel disappointed in their marriage, and it is easy, then, for them to believe that divorce is the only reasonable solution. Divorce does not deal with the root of the problem. If husbands and wives will turn to God and make Him the Head of their homes, He, in turn, will work through the ministry of the Holy Ghost, the Word,

and the Glory of the LORD to make them one in spirit, one in soul, and one in body.

The LORD God intended for a Christian couple to keep their marriage together and let Him work in their threefold beings until they are joined together in a oneness of relationship with the LORD Jesus Christ and with one another.

Jesus Christ realized the seriousness of breaking the wedlock that exists in the spiritual realm when God joins a Christian couple together, and He warned man against breaking it.

And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.

And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter (Mark 10:8-10).

Jesus spoke these words first to the Pharisees and then later to His disciples. Although the Pharisees were self-righteous, they still were believers in the LORD God and His holy *Torah*. We understand, then, that in both instances He was dealing with believers and warning them against breaking wedlock when God joins a couple together.

Later, when the disciples inquired further into the matter of breaking wedlock, Jesus gave this additional warning:

And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery (Mark 10:11,12).

Divorce is not a thing to be taken lightly, for it has power to break the wedlock that God has established between a husband and a wife. Those who willingly choose to divorce their mate and marry another person are guilty of adultery.

D. CONDITIONS FOR A HAPPY MARRIAGE

Happiness in a marriage is not an accident; it is the effect of a good cause. God's Word reveals the principles of truth, the "good cause," that are necessary requisites in creating an atmosphere in which happiness is the natural result or effect. The degree of happiness enjoyed in a marriage is determined by each couple's faithful adherence to these conditions or requirements.

1. Unity Through Marriage to Person in Same Family and Tribe

The first condition God gave for having a happy marriage in the Old Testament was the requirement that the believer marry a person who was not only a blood relative, an Israelite, but who also came from the same tribe and family.

And the chief fathers of the families of the children of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of the sons of Joseph, came near, and spake before Moses, and before the princes, the chief fathers of the children of Israel: And they said, The LORD commanded my lord to give the land for an inheritance by lot to the children of Israel: and my lord was commanded by the LORD to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother *unto his daughters*. And if they be married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the children of Israel, then shall their inheritance be taken from the inheritance of our fathers, and shall be put to the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall it be taken from the lot of our inheritance. And when the jubile of the children of Israel shall be, then shall their inheritance be put unto the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they are received: so shall their inheritance be taken away from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers. And Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of the LORD, saying, The tribe of the sons of Joseph hath said well. This is the thing which the LORD doth command concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, *Let them marry to whom they think best; only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry*. So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe: for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers. *And every daughter, that possesseth an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel, shall be wife unto one of the family of the tribe of her father, That the children of Israel may enjoy every man the inheritance of his father*. Neither shall the inheritance remove from one tribe to another tribe; but every one of the tribes of the children of Israel shall keep himself to his own inheritance. Even as the LORD commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad: For Mahlah, Tirzah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married unto their father's brothers' sons: And they were married into the families of the sons of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of the family of their father. These are the commandments and the judgments, which the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses unto the children of Israel in the plain of Moab by Jordan near Jericho (Numbers 36:1-13).

Zelophehad, a descendant of Manasseh, had five daughters, but no sons. According to the Law, until this point in time, the property was divided among the sons of a man's legitimate wives, with a double portion going to one, usually the eldest, who assumed the duty of maintaining the females of the family. (Sons of concubines were portioned off with presents, as Abraham did for the sons of his concubines.) Since Zelophehad had no sons to inherit his property, the LORD established another law that allowed his daughters to receive their father's inheritance, then the LORD stipulated that these daughters marry men who belonged to the same family and tribe as their father. The law included daughters of other tribes who inherited their father's property. The LORD had a twofold purpose in giving this command: first, He wanted to assure a clean, pure, easily traced lineage for the promised Messiah; secondly, he wanted to preserve each individual tribe's full inheritance in Canaan's Land.

The fact that a husband and wife shared a mutual inheritance eliminated a lot of strife and contention in the home. Had the daughters of Zelophehad been allowed to marry men of other tribes, their property would have become a part of their husband's inheritance; and since they added something the husband did not have, they may have been tempted to be unduly independent in their marriage.

In addition to sharing the same inheritance, the husband and wife who were members of the same tribe and family lineage would have shared many common experiences. For instance, the experiences of the families of the tribe of Manasseh would have been different from those of the families of the tribe of Judah because these tribes encamped on opposite sides of the Tabernacle. The similarity of experiences within each tribe and family caused the individual members of a tribe to share a similar outlook on life. And when there is an atmosphere of peaceful unity between the husband and wife, there is more happiness in the home.

The natural law that required daughters to marry within the same family and tribe in order to preserve their inheritance is applicable for believers in the spiritual realm. All born-again believers are saved from the penalty of sin, which is death, by the shed Blood of Jesus Christ. However, all believers are not going to receive the same spiritual inheritance in eternity. The believer's inheritance in eternity is determined by the spiritual growth he attains in this life through experiences with the LORD Jesus Christ, as Christ's spiritual stature is revealed from His feet up to His head. The spiritual inheritance of the believer who has experienced salvation through the Blood of Jesus Christ, received baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire, and been baptized in the waters of the Name, death, and life of Jesus Christ will be greater, for example, than that of the believer who has experienced only the Blood, or one who has experienced only the Blood and the Holy Ghost baptism.

When a believer who has experienced the Blood, Fire, and Water decides to marry a person who has experienced only the Blood or only the Blood and the Fire, the spiritual yoke in their marriage is unequal because they are not of the same family and tribe so far as their spiritual experiences are concerned.

The lesson we need to learn is this: believers should not marry out of their spiritual realm. Otherwise, they may lose their spiritual inheritance, and there will not be the happiness in a marriage in which the yoke is unequal as there would be if both partners shared the same spiritual experiences in God.

Believers who plan to marry should be zealous to obtain the same spiritual place in God so they can be of the same spiritual tribe and family. The young man, who falls in love with a girl who has not attained the same spiritual experiences in God he has obtained, would be wise if he waited until she grew in the stature of Jesus Christ to the place he has grown. On the other hand, if he falls in love with a girl who is more mature spiritually than he, the girl would be wise if she waited for him to attain greater experiences in God.

We have seen believers with lesser spiritual experiences press in and lay hold of new spiritual experiences in God only to fall away and stop following the Lord shortly after the marriage. The problem in these cases was that their motive for seeking the LORD was not pure; they were more interested in satisfying their desire for marriage than they were in walking with God. Therefore, it is good for a couple to wait until the spiritual unity has been proven before they marry. They need to see whether the person with the lesser spiritual experiences has really attained to a new spiritual family or tribe.

2. Moral and Natural Cleanness

Bright, clear moral cleanness is an important requirement for a happy marriage. Likewise, natural cleanness achieved by habitually avoiding filth and dirt, stain and soil, is imperative for having a bright, happy marriage.

When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house (Deuteronomy 24:1).

Some men in Israel used this law as an excuse for divorcing their wives when they had no true reason for doing so. Man's misuse of the law does not negate the spiritual principle it projects; the principle of moral and natural cleanness in a marriage is still true and valid.

A happy marriage cannot be built upon a foundation of false conditions or lies; neither can a marriage be happy if there is not personal cleanness of both marriage partners. Those who build their marriage on moral and natural cleanness reap the reward of mutual trust and admiration. When marriage partners have unity that comes from being in the same spiritual tribe and family, and when they have moral and natural cleanness, they can enjoy true marital happiness because their marriage is visited with the sweet pleasures of God as He reveals Himself to them through His Word and His Spirit.

The sensual pleasures and moral uncleanness for which mankind so eagerly seeks are nothing but vanity and vexation. They promise much, but they are just a shadow of good, a picture of profit, a dream of delight. One frown from God turns all these illusions and delusions into a nightmare of astonishing horror and despair. The happiness they promise vanishes like a tender flower that is nipped by one frosty night or one scorching day. Each believer should search into the inwards of a holy life so he or she can be clean, a fit subject for God's holy institution of marriage.

3. Do Not Marry a Stranger

God forbade the joining of a believer to a stranger, one who is a foreigner, an alien, to the Spirit and Word of God. A husband and wife cannot walk together in harmonious unity unless they be in agreement on God's Spirit and Word.

When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hast cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: Neither shalt *thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.* For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly (Deuteronomy 7:1-4).

God commanded Israel (the believers) not to enter into marriages with people of the seven heathen, idol-worshipping nations that inhabited Canaan's Land. The same principle applies today. Believers who want a happy marriage cannot marry a person who is a stranger to God and the spiritual experiences found in Him.

It is not uncommon for a Christian to marry a sinner with the thought of leading the unbeliever to the LORD. Unfortunately, it seldom happens that way. More often than not, the unsaved person exerts such a strong pull on the believer that his or her devotion to God becomes dull. Even if the believer is strong enough to remain true to the LORD, the worldly example set by the unbelieving mate may influence the children to turn their hearts away from serving the true and living God, the LORD Jesus Christ.

4. Do Not Display an Odious, Hateful Attitude

God warned the woman against assuming an insufferable attitude if she is neglected by her husband.

For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear: For a servant when he reigneth; and a fool when he is filled with meat; For an odious woman when she is married; and an handmaid that is heir to her mistress (Proverbs 30:21-23).

One of the four things that the earth cannot bear is an odious or hateful woman. A husband's or wife's hateful, unforgiving disposition can wreck a marriage, even the marriage of believers.

The Apostle Peter gave some practical instructions to help married couples achieve an equable marriage relationship. He began with the woman, speaking to her about her relationship with her husband.

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husband; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting of the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also,

who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement (1 Peter 3:1-6).

In the second chapter of 1 Peter, the Apostle taught about the subjection and submissiveness that God expects Christian servants to show their masters. Then Peter started the very next verse by saying: “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; . . .” (Remember chapter divisions have been made by man; they were not used in the original document.) The foregoing scriptures have sometimes been quoted when referring to a marriage of a believer to an unbeliever; however, the Apostle Peter was referring to a marriage of two believers.

Peter admonished the wife to be in subjection to her own husband so that, if he failed to obey the Word, she might by her obedience to the Word bring him to the place of obedience to the Word. Notice Peter said: “If any obey not the word, . . .” He could not have been talking about a sinner because a sinner cannot obey the Word until he is saved. Peter had to be referring to a saved husband who disobeys the Word of God. In such a case, the saved wife is to set the example for him by her “chaste conversation” or holy behavior. In this way she can correct him and lead him to obey the Word of God. This can never be accomplished by a odious, hateful spirit. A wife can correct, chastise, or lead her husband into new realms of obedience only if she behaves in a chaste, sweet, holy manner.

Sarah, Abraham’s wife, gives us a good example of how a wife’s chaste behavior can influence her husband to obey the will of God. When Sarah told Abraham that Ishmael, the son of Hagar, could not be heir with her son, Isaac, she was reminding him of what the LORD God had told them both before Isaac’s birth.

And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her. Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year (Genesis 17:15-21).

Sarah had a revelation of God’s Master Plan for the life of Isaac, the son of promise. So she reminded Abraham that Isaac was not supposed to share his inheritance with Ishmael, the son of the bondmaid. Abraham knew deep in his heart that sooner or later the two boys would have to be separated, but he had been putting off actually doing it. It is evident that Sarah’s words were spoken in a spirit of love and humility; otherwise, Abraham would not have hearkened to her voice. Although it grieved him greatly in his flesh to send Ishmael and Hagar away, Abraham obeyed Sarah because he realized that she had a revelation of the mind and will of God.

If the husband assumes his responsibility as the spiritual leader of the family and finds the mind of God, the wife is to be in subjection to her husband. However, if the husband is slow in finding or obeying the Word, or if the Lord chooses to reveal His glorious truth through the wife, then let the husband be in subjection to the Word from God that his wife is speaking.

Through the anointed writings of the Apostle Peter, the Lord has revealed that a believing wife can prove her subjection to her believing husband in the following ways:

- *By her holy conversation or behavior, coupled with holy, reverential fear of God.* A believing wife should not have an odious, hateful spirit, lest she fail to obey the Word of God by not having respect and reverence for her husband.
- *By her modest, outward adornment and dress.* A Christian wife should not adorn herself in the fancy hair styles worn by the women of the world, dress herself in elaborate clothes, or bedeck herself with unnecessary, gold jewelry. All this outward embellishment is not motivated by a wife’s desire to please her husband, but a desire to attract the eyes and attention of others.
- *By her inward spirit of meekness and quietness.* When a wife’s spirit is adorned with the true beauty of meekness and quietness, the light of humility glory of the LORD shines out of her eyes and makes her outward countenance truly beautiful. Regardless of how many beautiful trappings a woman hangs on her outward form, she is not truly beautiful as long as she has an odious, hateful spirit within.
- *By her words of respect for her husband.* Sarah showed her respect for Abraham by calling him “lord,” which means master. A Christian wife may not call her husband “lord” or “master,” but nevertheless, the inner respect she has for him will be reflected in the tone of her voice when she speaks to him and about him.

The Apostle Peter told the believing wife that as God required a servant to be in subjection to his master He *likewise* required the believing wife to be subject to her husband.

When Peter spoke to the believing husbands, he repeated the *likewise* that referred to a servant's subjection to his master and the wife's subjection to her husband. Thus, Peter also forbade the husband to have an odious, hateful spirit toward his wife.

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to the knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered (1 Peter 3:7).

Just as the believing servant is to be in subjection to his master, and just as the believing wife is to be in subjection to her husband, so is the believing husband to be in subjection to his wife. The believing husband proves his subjection in the following ways:

- By dwelling with his wife according to knowledge. The word *knowledge* means to acknowledge or confess. Let the husband acknowledge and confess his marriage relationship with his wife at all times, not with the words of his mouth only, but also in his heart when the spirit of adultery would try to tempt him and lure him away from his wife. The word *knowledge* also means to have awareness or understanding. If a believing husband will wait on the LORD in the Word and prayer, God will give him awareness and understanding of his wife's natural and spiritual needs. Husbands who do not spend time in the Word and prayer are not obeying the Word that tells a man to live **with his wife according to** knowledge and understanding.
- By giving honor to his own wife. The word *honor* means to give official dignity, repute, esteem, high regard, great respect, fame, high rank, distinction. Many husbands are more conscientious about noting the accomplishments of other men's wives than they are in giving honor to their wives who faithfully cook their meals, clean their house, and care for their children. This does not mean that a man should not express appreciation for a meal he enjoys at a friend's house, for instance. It simply means that God intends for the husband to give his own wife the place of queen of his household. The husband who wants to have a happy home will give his wife the distinction and rank that is due her as his co-partner in the great institution of marriage.
- By recognizing the unity they have in the spiritual realm, their equality before God, as heirs together of the grace of life. The husband shows his humility and subjection by acknowledging that there is neither male nor female in the grace of life. The husband should recognize that in the beginning, before sin entered into the picture, the male and female were joint heirs of God's ruling and reigning power, and that, now, in Christ Jesus, they again are heirs together of the grace of life.
- By not hindering the prayer life in the Christian home. If the wife fulfills her "*likewise*" of subjection and humility, and if the husband fulfills his "*likewise*" of subjection and humility, God has promised that their prayers will not be hindered. Jesus Christ said: "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:19). Who can agree better than a husband and wife who have been made one in the natural realm? And if they have put on subjection and humility toward each other and have been made one in the spiritual realm, nothing can stand before their prayers.

The Spirit of God first gave the believing husband and wife separate instructions of subjection and humility toward each other. Then He gave seven laws, representing complete instructions, for the two of them.

Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing (1 Peter 3:8,9).

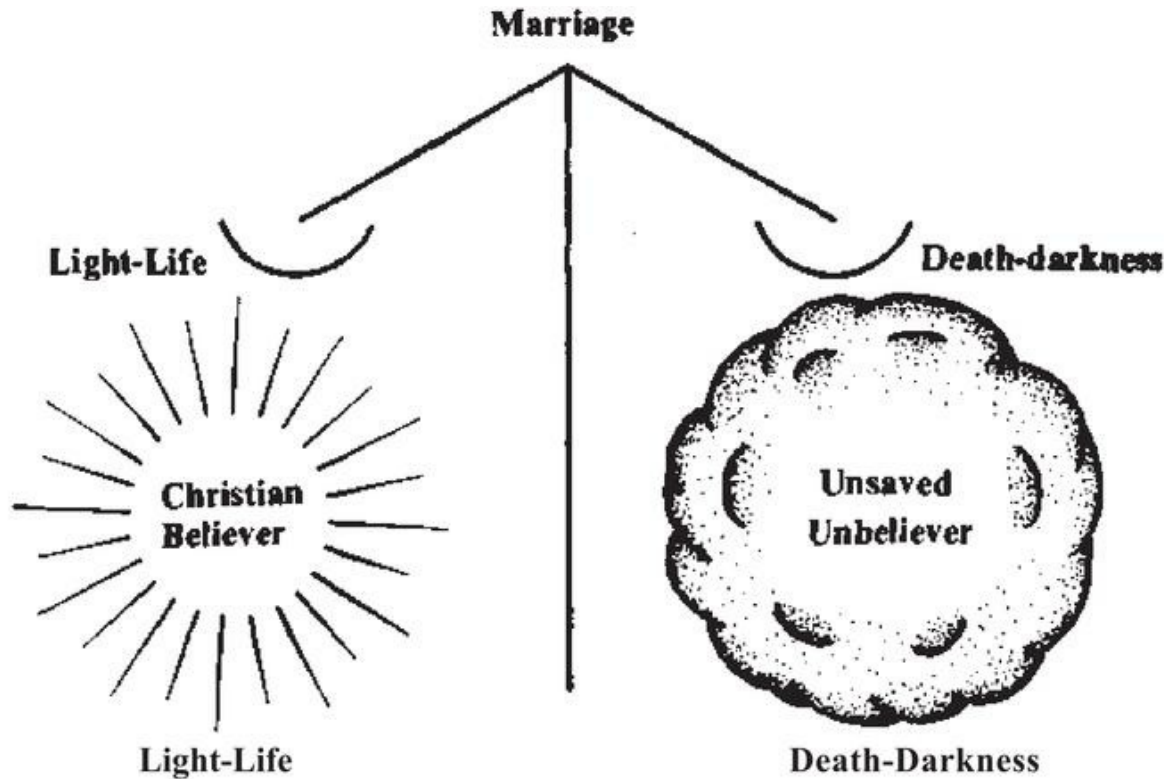
- Be of one mind. The Apostle Paul testified of the *one mind* relationship when he declared: "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3). If this Holy Ghost order is observed in the home, there is just one head or mind in the home. That head is Christ, whose head is God.
- Have compassion for one another. True compassion is related to one person suffering for another so that the two suffer together. When one marriage partner is experiencing suffering and sorrow, the other one should feel a compassionate urge to help by showing deep sympathy.
- Love as brethren. The believing husband and wife are commanded to love as brethren because this love is spiritual and, therefore, stronger than the natural love of a husband and wife. When a married couple are believers, they are children of God, sons of God, or brethren in the LORD. The love of brethren is an eternal love through Christ Jesus, whereas the human love of a husband and wife is earthly and temporal. If a Christian husband and wife would love each other as children of the LORD, their home would not be broken except by death.

- Be Courteous. God wants the believing husband and wife always to be polite, gracious, considerate, and well-mannered toward each other. Many problems and offenses in the Christian home stem from the seeds of discourtesy.
- Do not render evil for evil, or railing for railing. If one believing companion gives evil, the other person is not to render evil in return. If one rails on the other, the offended one is not to respond with more railing. The LORD does not want one Christian companion to minister to the other anything that is morally wrong, injurious, or harmful; anything that is painful or troublesome; anything that threatens or brings misfortune. Neither does the LORD want Christian couples railing at each other; railing is speaking bitterly or reproachfully or complaining violently.
- Give blessing. The marriage of believers should be filled with blessings. Christian couples bless each other through prayer by invoking God's divine blessing or benediction and favor. This includes the grace that is said before and after eating. The Lord wants the husband and wife to bless each other daily by wishing the other prosperity and success in their respective undertakings of life as they go forth in His will. God wants them to bless each other in anything that will bring happiness and joy according to His will.

Believers can have happy, successful marriages if they are conscientious about observing the conditions God has set forth in His Word. Unity in the home comes when the husband and wife are both of the same spiritual tribe and family. If both partners are clean morally and naturally, they have greater trust and admiration for each other. There can be greater harmony in the home if the husband and wife are both believers, not strangers to the spiritual experiences found in God. And love can grow in the home if neither the wife nor the husband hold to an odious, hateful, unforgiving spirit.

II. MIXED MARRIAGE BY CHOICE

When we speak of mixed marriages, we are not referring to interracial marriage. We are talking about the marriages of believers to unbelievers. There are two classes of mixed marriage: one is by choice and the other is by salvation.



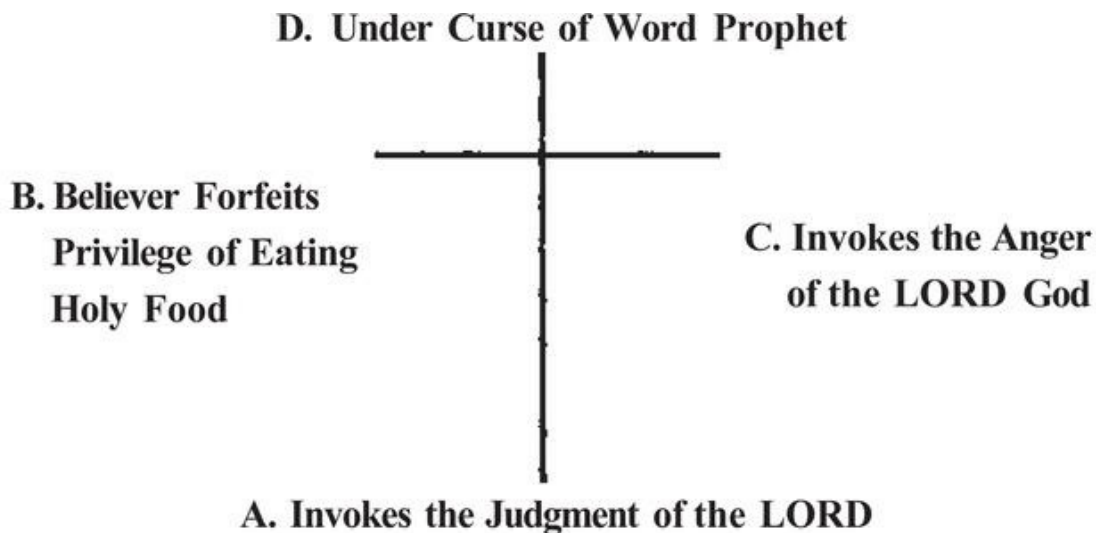
Let us consider what God's Word says about mixed marriages by choice.

When a Christian (who is filled with the light and life of truth and surrounded by the Blood of Jesus Christ) chooses to marry a sinner (who is filled with death and surrounded by the powers of darkness), he or she is walking

contrary to the Word of God; consequently, problems are bound to follow.

Next to receiving our salvation and growing up in the stature of the LORD Jesus Christ, the most serious decision we make in life is who we choose as a lifetime marriage partner. Unfortunately, not all Christians consider the choice of a companion as seriously as they should. Some people may be tempted to think: "Oh well, if my marriage doesn't work, I can always get a divorce, and everything will be lovely." This is not true; divorce does not make everything lovely. Furthermore, believers need to remember that they are under tremendous obligation to obey God's Word which commands us not to divorce. God requires more obedience from a believer than He does from a sinner.

A believer who enters into a mixed marriage by his own choice comes under different laws and requirements in the Word of God than the person who finds himself in a mixed marriage because of having accepted Jesus Christ as his Saviour after he was married. The Word of God reveals the following stature of truth concerning a mixed marriage by choice.



A. INVOKES THE JUDGMENT OF THE LORD

When a believer deliberately chooses to marry a sinner, an unbeliever, he invokes the judgment of the LORD-

And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground; And he said. Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said. Nay; but we will abide in the street all night. And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did brake unleavened bread, and they did eat (Genesis 19:1-3).

The sin of sexual perversion became so prevalent in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah that the cry of their wickedness ascended into the ear of the LORD as a mighty shriek. The LORD did not pour out His fiery judgment immediately, however. He came down to see for Himself if the people's cup of wickedness was full. When He saw that their cup, indeed, was full, He shared with His friend Abraham His plans for destroying the cities. Abraham immediately began to intercede on the behalf of the righteous people in these cities, who would be killed along with the wicked ones. So in answer to the intercessory prayer of Abraham, the LORD sent two angels down to Sodom to lead Lot and his family out of that wicked place.

Lot was a carnal believer who deliberately had separated himself from Abram, the follower of the Law of Faith. When there had been strife between the herdsmen of Abram and the herdsmen of Lot, Abram had given his nephew first choice of the land. Lot had chosen the well-watered plain of Jo dan. Lot did not move his family into Sodom in the beginning; he simply pitched his tent in that direction. Soon, however, he took up residence in Sodom and eventually became well known in the city.

One of God's divine principles is that man becomes like those things that he looks upon. When we pitch our tent, as it were, with our face toward the world, we will soon find ourselves being made one with the thing we have set

before our vision. This is what happened to Lot. Nevertheless, in answer to the intercessory prayers of Abraham, the LORD sent two angels down to Sodom to rescue Lot and his family before the LORD rained down fire and brimstone to destroy the cities.

But before they [the men (angels) who visited Lot] lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: And they called upon Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them. And Lot went out of the door unto them, and shut the door after him, And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof. And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door. But the men put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door. And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door. And the men [the angels] said unto Lot, *Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place:* For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it. [The cry of sin, beloved, has a great cry in the ears of the LORD God.] And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law (Genesis 19:4-14).

Lot had two virgin daughters who must have been believers at one time. (Their virginity in such a sinful place was a witness of their adherence to their spiritual training.) Only these two daughters escaped with Lot out of the city.

Lot's other daughters married men of Sodom who thought he was mocking when he tried to persuade them to leave the city because the LORD was going to destroy it. So Lot's daughters and his sons-in-law perished together when the LORD rained fire and brimstone on the city. Not only is it a serious thing for a believer to marry an unbeliever, but it is also a dangerous thing because the believer exposes himself or herself to judgment that the LORD God pours out upon unrepentant sinners.

And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand and upon the hand of his wife and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city (Genesis 19:15,16).

Lot's married daughters did not flee out of the city of Sodom along with their parents and their virgin sisters. Because they had been drawn into the whirlpool of their husband's wicked, worldly thinking and had turned away from worshipping the living God their father served, Lot's married daughters perished with their husbands when the LORD judged Sodom.

It is very difficult for a believer who marries an unbeliever to remain true to God and the LORD Jesus Christ. One reason is that a believer who has very strong convictions will not marry an unbeliever in the first place. A believer who is willing to compromise his convictions and choose an unbeliever in preference to God and His blessed truth usually will follow his unbelieving mate into the ways of the world. Thus, when God pours out his judgment, it falls upon both of them.

How can there be a oneness of relationship in a home that is built on a mixed foundation of light and darkness, death and life, belief and unbelief in God? The Word of God declares that two cannot walk together except they be agreed. Even if a believer is able to maintain a measure of his commitment to the LORD in his mixed marriage by choice, the suffering of misunderstanding on the part of the unbeliever is a judgment from God on both of them. For instance, the unbeliever usually is jealous of the love the believing companion devotes to God and the time he spends in the Word, prayer, and attendance in the house of God. It is foolish for a believer to deliberately choose to enter into a marriage which subjects him to great suffering in this life and which ultimately subjects him to eternal judgment with his unbelieving companion.

When Lot's daughters married men of Sodom, it is unlikely they expected to die prematurely along with their husbands in the city of Sodom under the fiery judgment of the LORD. Yet that is exactly what happened.

And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord: Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die; Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul

shall live. And he said unto him. See, I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for which thou hast spoken. Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. *Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground* (Genesis 19:17-25).

All the inhabitants of the cities were destroyed, including Lot's sons-in-law and his married daughters. These daughters had been reared as believers in the LORD God. Yet, when they grew up and married unbelievers, the judgment of God was upon them as well as on their husbands. They perished together in the judgment the LORD rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah.

Fire and brimstone — what a frightful example of the class of judgment that can be expected by believers who enter into a mixed marriage by choice! A wise believer will not sell God and His Word for a little fleshly companionship that can be enjoyed only for a short season, for he knows that he will end up under the judgment of God. Wise parents should begin teaching their young children of the serious consequences of entering into a mixed marriage by choice.

B. BELIEVER FORFEITS PRIVILEGE TO EAT OF HOLY THINGS

When the Priest's daughter married a stranger, she suffered the penalty of losing the privilege of being a partaker of the holy food of the Sanctuary.

If the priest's daughter also be married unto a stranger, she may not eat of an offering of the holy things (Leviticus 22:12).

When a daughter of the high priest married a stranger, an unbeliever, she forfeited her privilege of eating the holy food God provided for the high priest (a picture of our High Priest, Jesus Christ) and his family. The holy food eaten by the priest and his family included certain portions of the meat offerings from the Brazen Altar and the bread offering from the Table of Shewbread. All of this was shut up to the daughter who forsook her early training and married a person who was a stranger to the holy *Torah* of the LORD God.

Since God's Word teaches us that all scripture is profitable (II Timothy 3:16,17), we know that Leviticus 22:12 is profitable to us because it teaches a lesson about mixed marriages. The truth of this verse pertains to God's moral law, not the ceremonial law. God eliminated only the ceremonial portion of the law because Jesus Christ fulfilled it. Because Jesus Christ has fulfilled all the sacrifice (providing the Blood, the fire of the Holy Ghost, and the waters of His Name, death, and life), He is able to wash us completely and write His moral law upon the fleshly tables of our hearts. The moral law of God is the same in all generations. Therefore, the moral law that God gave for natural Israel, who were the believers in the Old Testament, is the same moral law that He requires of believers in the New Testament dispensation.

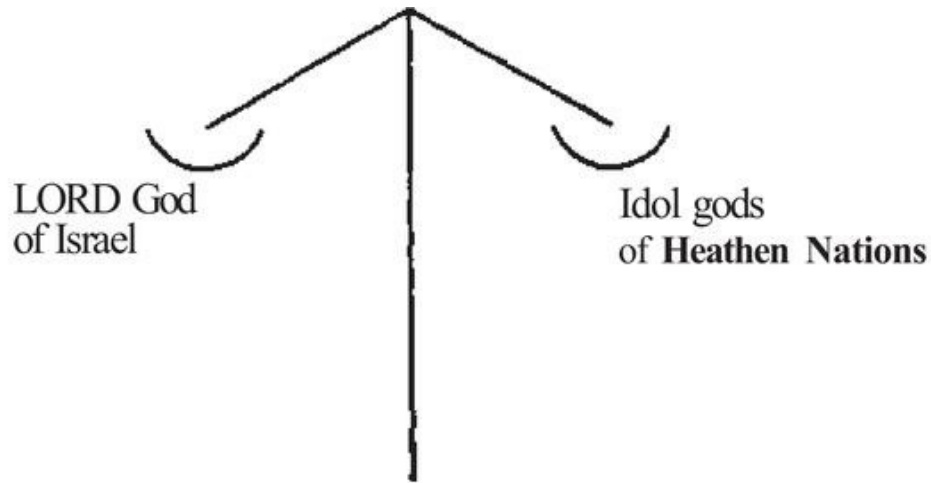
When a Christian deliberately disobeys God's revealed Word, the Bible, and marries a sinner, the hidden bread of God's Word is shut up to him. Forfeiting the privilege of eating the holy bread of God's Word at the Table of Shewbread is too high a price to pay for any human attachment. Since marriage is holy and honorable in God's sight, He does not want His children to choose a mixed marriage in which light is mixed with darkness; He does not want a believer to be unequally yoked with an unbeliever. God is able to raise up a Christian companion for every one of His children who is willing to trust Him. Just as the priest's daughter lost her privilege of feeding on holy meat and bread when she married a stranger, an unbeliever, so do Christians who marry unbelievers lose the privilege of feeding on the depths and heights of God's truth.

C. INVOKES THE ANGER OF THE LORD GOD

A believer who deliberately chooses marriage with an unbeliever summons the great displeasure of the LORD God.

Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God. Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you (Joshua 23:11-13).

Joshua described the trouble, overpowering oppression, shame, and disgrace Israel would bring on herself if she joined herself to the idolatry of the Canaanites. When he spoke of the God of Israel, Joshua used the proper name of LORD in order to distinguish the true God from the idol gods worshipped by heathen nations.



A believer invokes the anger of the LORD God when he disregards God's directive will for his life and deliberately chooses to marry an unbeliever. This explains why the believing partner sometimes says, "I wish I could feel the presence of God as I once did."

The LORD God prophesied the consequences of the children of Israel marrying strangers from unbelieving nations.

1. Unbelievers Shall be Snares

God warned Israel that the idolatry of the heathen nations would be snares to tempt and attract her into the dangerous situation of breaking her spiritual, marriage yoke. If Israel joined her heart to the snares of heathen idolatry, she could expect only suffering and sorrow in her mixed, spiritual marriage.

... but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes; . . . (Joshua 23:13).

The anger of the LORD God is directed against a mixed marriage by choice in both the spiritual and natural realms because the unbelieving partner becomes a snare. The word *snare* means to batter out, a net, to spread out, to entrap, to entangle, insidious. The first thing the unbeliever will do is to entangle the believer in his insidious snare or net of worldly, ungodly ways, preventing the believer from doing the will of God from his or her heart. A believer cannot expect to find joy and happiness in a union in which the soul is being constantly estranged from the LORD God, and God's anger constantly is being stirred against the mixed union. The unbelieving partner is a continual snare and net to provoke the believing companion to do things contrary to the will of God. Thus, mixed marriages are a *snare* to the believer.

2. Unbelievers Shall be Traps

The second thing the unbeliever in the natural realm, or idolater in the spiritual realm, does to the believer is to lead him into a trap. Once the unlawful desires and delights are stirred up in the soul, man is taken captive by his own lusts. His own affection and love for the unlawful things of sin are like steel traps that take his soul captive. Israel discovered this truth when she gave her soul to idolatrous practices. Her enjoyment of the lascivious idolatry was a steel trap that held her captive until the LORD God in His holy, righteous anger chastened and corrected her by casting her into captivity under the yoke of Babylon. Likewise, in a natural, mixed marriage, when the believer develops a taste and desire for the idolatrous, worldly things enjoyed by the unbelieving companion, he or she can expect, sooner or late, the LORD's holy, righteous anger to chasten and correct him or her. God is faithful! He will not be mocked! "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"

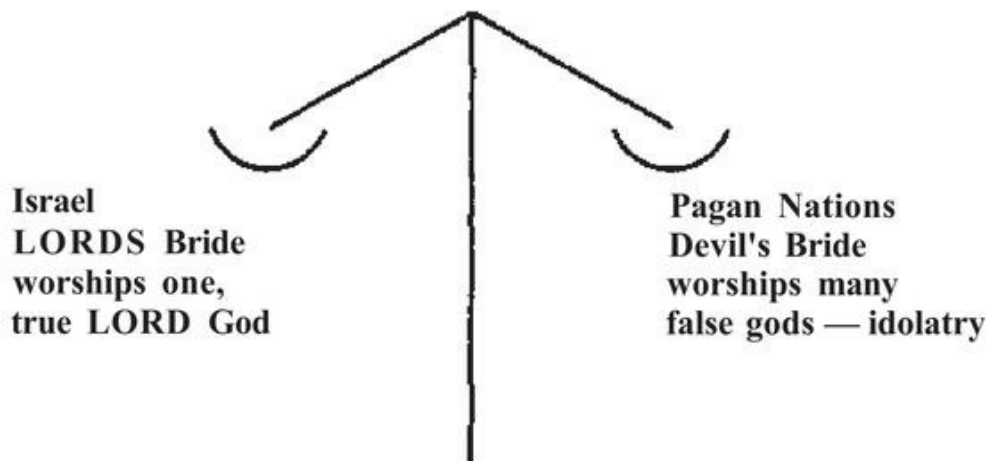
(Galatians 6:7).

... but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, . . . (Joshua 23:13).

The word *trap* means a contrivance that shuts suddenly and often with a spring; any device or contrivance to betray or catch unawares; an ambush; to take by stratagem. How could a believing Israelite expect to have a peaceful union with a heathen unbeliever when the LORD God had prophesied that such a marriage would stir up His anger? Entering into a mixed marriage is like walking into a set, steel trap; it will take the heart and soul captive, bringing suffering and untold pain in its unrelenting death-grip. Mixed marriages are traps to believers.

3. Unbelievers Shall be Scourges in Sides

Before his death, Joshua called the people of Israel together to remind them that they were a separated, bridal nation unto the LORD God, and as such, they should remain separate from the pagan, idolatrous nations round about them.



Joshua warned Israel that God's warnings and threats of judgment were just as true as His promises of blessings. If Israel failed to see the danger in neglecting God's warnings and threats, if she ceased to be watchful for the sin of idolatry and took marriage partners from among the heathen nations, establishing a mixed marriage, she could be certain that God's wrath and anger would come against her unholy union.

Israel could be sure the mixed marriage would be a scourge, a whip, a lash in her side to punish, chasten, and correct her. She would learn through empirical knowledge "what not to do." The mixed marriages would cause her to suffer afflictions, calamities, plagues, and torments until she repented and learned to obey the Word of God. Likewise, when a Christian believer marries a non-Christian or unbeliever, the partners of this mixed marriage can expect to find the same chastisement unless the unbeliever repents and accepts Christ Jesus as His Saviour and LORD. Mixed marriages between believers and unbelievers produce a scourge for their sides.

... but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, . . . (Joshua 23:13).

The word *scourge* means to pierce, to flog, to goad, a whip-like instrument for inflicting pain or punishment; a lash, a vindictive affliction, to chastise for correction, to afflict greatly, to harass. It would be ridiculous for a believer to expect happiness in a marriage union that stirred up God's anger and caused Him to make the unbeliever a lash or scourge to the believer.

4. Unbelievers Shall be Thorns in the Eyes

The fourth thing that mixed marriages by **choice can expect** is thorns in the eyes.

... but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, . . . (Joshua 23:13).

The word *thorn* means to hedge about with thorns, to prick, any sharp-pointed, spiny or prickly process growing on a plant. A thorn is a picture of anything that annoys or torments, a care or a trouble. Many a believer has been deceived into thinking he will find joy and happiness by marrying a stranger, an unbeliever, only to awaken after the marriage to the reality of God's anger and the sharp thorns of torment and trouble. First, the thorn causes pain by pricking the eye. Secondly, the eye will be filled with festering infection that impairs the sight of the eye.

Third, if the thorn is not removed soon, the eye will lose its sight and become blind. Likewise, in a mixed marriage, the unbeliever is a thorn to the spiritual eyesight of the believer. The ungodly thoughts and worldly desires of the unbeliever are like thorns that will produce festering infection in the believer's spiritual eyesight, causing him to lose his vision of Jesus, to become blind to the prize and high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Remember that God's warnings and threats are as true as His promises.

D. UNDER CURSE OF WORD PROPHET

While on his journey to inspect the nation of Israel, Nehemiah, a Word Prophet, saw many mixed marriages between Jewish men and heathen women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. The children produced by these mixed marriages spoke the language of the heathen mother, and the sight of so many children who could not speak the Hebrew language drove Nehemiah into a holy, righteous, zealous frenzy. He knew that these ignorant children could not study the *Torah*, the Law, because they could not speak the Hebrew language. Therefore, he contended with the fathers, cursed them, smote them, plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God that they would put an end to the mixed marriage problem.

In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jew's language, but according to the language of each people. And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves (Nehemiah 13:23-25).

This scripture shows us the curse that goes forth from God's anointed Word Prophet against mixed marriages by choice. When the Jewish remnant returned from Babylon, Ezra built the temple. Later, Nehemiah repaired the walls and gates. Worship in the temple was then restored. After returning to Babylon for a season, Nehemiah came again to Jerusalem and found the children of Israel backslidden and married to strangers. Since Nehemiah was a Word Prophet, he sternly dealt with them. He even went so far as to pluck off their hair and smite them.

Nehemiah's ministry was different from the ministry of the Prophet Ezra who wept over the people. There is a time for the prophet to weep, yet there is also a time for him to stand up and declare God's message of judgment against those who disobey His revealed Word. In this case, Nehemiah was the instrument of God's judgment against those who had entered into mixed marriages by choice.

1. Contended

Nehemiah rebuked, chided, and complained to the parents in the mixed marriages because their children had no clear knowledge of the Jewish language. This reveals the father's total lack of concern in teaching their children the Hebrew language and God's *Torah*. Therefore, Nehemiah held a controversy with them. He defended God's *Torah* by striving and pleading for truth.

In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jew's language, but according to the language of each people. And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves (Nehemiah 13:23-25).

When Jewish men married heathen women, their children grew up hearing a mixture of two languages. Since the children heard the language of their mother more than that of their father, hers was the language they spoke. Their lack of clear understanding of the Jewish language kept them from being able to read God's written Law or Word.

Great suffering is visited upon children born into a mixed marriage! While the parents may both speak in the same natural language, they do not speak the same spiritual language. Children who grow up in a home where they hear more carnal conversations than spiritual ones find it easy to take up the "language" spoken by the unbelieving

parent.

The children of mixed marriages in Nehemiah's day were ignorant of the Hebrew language and God's Word. Consequently, Nehemiah contended with the parents. Mixed marriages in our day also receive contending rebuke from God's Word Prophet.

2. Cursed by Word Prophet

Nehemiah, the Word Prophet, cursed the mixed marriages by choice. He painted the truth before their eyes and planted it in their ears so they could plainly see and hear the mean, vile, despicable, and contemptible thing they had done.

In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves (Nehemiah 13:23-25).

Both the children and the parents in the mixed marriages had to suffer Nehemiah's anointed, truthful, reviling rebukes against their disobedience to the *Torah*. The word *curse*, as it is used in this verse, is not talking about taking God's Name in vain. Instead, it means to utter a wish of evil (misery, woe, or affliction) against someone; to imprecate evil upon, to execrate, to blast, to blight, to vex, harass, or torment with great calamities. The Hebrew word for curse is *kaw-lal*; it means to make light of, to make small and contemptible.

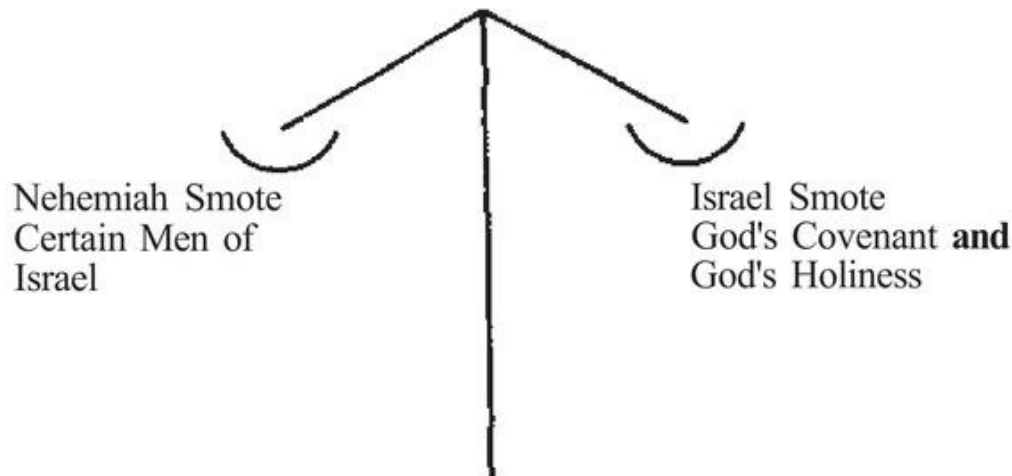
Nehemiah did not curse the men who had married heathen women, strangers to the God of Israel, because he wanted to satisfy his own fleshly anger; he did it to let them see the seriousness of their willful disobedience to God and His Word. It is God's mercy that constrains Him to allow His prophets, His servants, to pray evil (misery, woe, and affliction) on his children in order for them to learn empirically how contrary their way is to the will of God.

3. Smote Certain of Them

Nehemiah's holy zeal to purify Israel as a peculiar, bridal nation to God caused him to use his force and strength in a violent way to free them from their corrupt, mixed marriages with strange wives.

In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves (Nehemiah 13:23-25).

The word *smite* means to strike, to give a blow with the hand, something in the hand, or something thrown; it means to slay, to kill, to assail or visit with something. Nehemiah smote certain of the people in order to make an example before all the others. The prophet's smiting was not a gentle tap; he used tremendous force to show the children of Israel how much God hated mixed marriages by choice. The prophet's motive for smiting some of the people was to stir up the fear of God in the rest of the people, not for his own glory and enrichment. Nehemiah's faithfulness as a Word Prophet constrained him to use violence and force against those under his charge so that he might correct and reform the error in them. Fresh streams of healing waters would be loosed by their confession and repentance. The springs of confession and repentance always release fresh, living streams of healing power. Israel had dealt treacherously with God, broken His covenant, and profaned the holiness of the LORD by marrying strange wives who worshipped strange gods. Therefore, Nehemiah smote them, giving them pain so that they might understand, thereby, the pain they have given God.



Israel smote God's covenant and His holiness; therefore, through his smiting blows, Nehemiah ministered in God's behalf. Israel reaped what she had sown. According to the Law, Nehemiah had them beaten by proper officers.

And it shall be, if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number. Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed: lest, if he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee Deuteronomy 25:2,3).

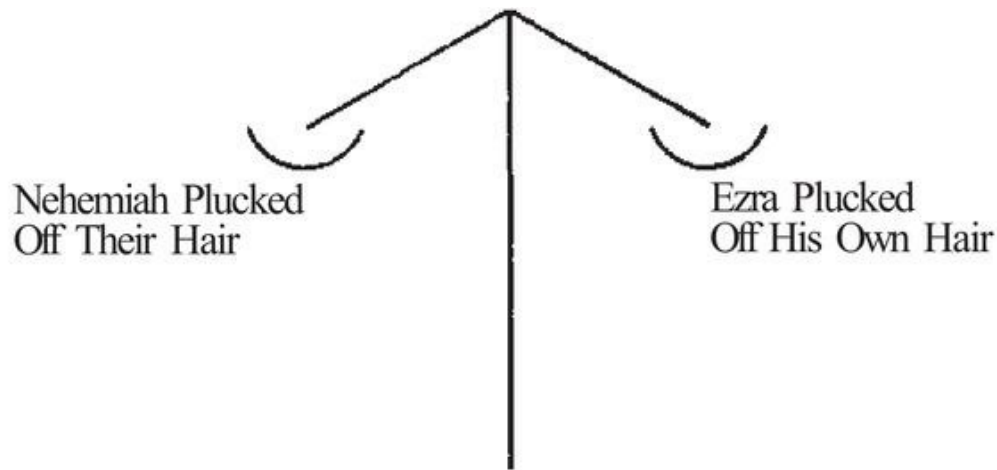
4. Plucked Off Hair

Nehemiah, in his holy zeal, also plucked off their hair. The Hebrew word for *pluck* is *maw-rat* which means to polish, to make the head bald, to make bright by peeling off the hair.

And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and *plucked off their hair*, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves (Nehemiah 13:24,25).

The hair of man is a covering and a symbol of honor and glory. When Nehemiah plucked off the hair of the men who married heathen wives, it was a visible demonstration that they had been stripped of their honor and glory in the spiritual realm. A man who deliberately disobeys the Word of God cannot be clothed with God's glory and honor. The prophet stripped these men of their hair and reduced them to the place of outward shame and humiliation so they could get a vision of the low level to which they had sunk in the spiritual realm.

They had sinned by treason against God's covenant, profaned His holiness, and put Him to open shame. Therefore, through His Word Prophet, God stigmatized them with open shame. Nehemiah plucked off their hair to demonstrate God's holy indignation against the sinners. Israel had not heard when God had demonstrated His grief and pain through His Word Prophet Ezra, by causing him to pluck off his own hair. So God caused Nehemiah to pluck off their hair.



Israel had plucked off God's hair, as it were, through Ezra. Therefore, she reaped what she had sown by Nehemiah's plucking off their hair.

5. Made Them Swear

And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of the people. And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and *made them swear by God*, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves (Nehemiah 13:23,25).

Nehemiah made Israel swear or enter into a covenant of promise that they would not take any more strange, outlandish women as wives. Nehemiah separated, sanctified, and cleansed Israel of her mixed marriages and made them promise with an oath that they would never again relapse into the stain, guilt, and disease of mixed marriages.

A mixed marriage by choice invokes the judgment of the LORD. It causes the believer to forfeit his privilege of eating holy things. It invokes the anger of the LORD God. It brings the believer under the curse of the Word Prophet. Finally, it puts the Word Prophet under obligation to bind the believer with an oath that brings future generations under the judgment of God if the covenant is broken. What a tremendous price to pay for an earthly, fleshly union!

Nehemiah took his stand for clean marriages among God's people in his day, and he was able to testify: "Thus cleansed I them from all strangers." Let us, too, take a firm stand in our generation for clean marriages among God's people.

III. MIXED MARRIAGES BY SALVATION

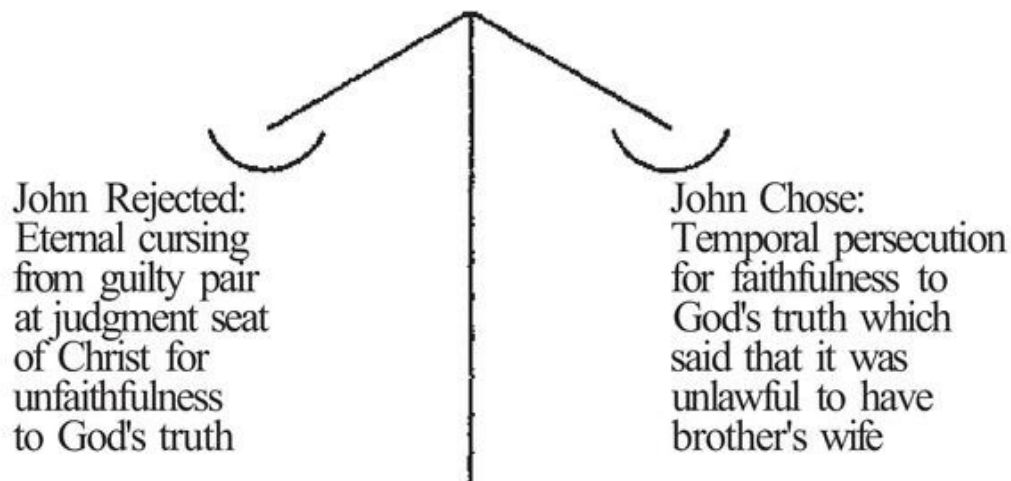
Sometimes two unbelievers marry, but later one of the marriage partners may find salvation through receiving Jesus Christ as his or her personal Saviour and experience the cleansing power of the precious shed Blood of Jesus. The marriage then becomes a mixed marriage of a believer to an unbeliever. God has given certain commandments in His Word to guide and govern this special class of believers who find themselves involved in a mixed marriage, which did not begin as a mixed marriage by choice.

A. RESTORE STOLEN WIFE

The first commandment God gave through John the Baptist to King Herod. John was faithful to declare the truth to King Herod, reproving him, telling him plainly that it was not lawful for him to have his brother's wife. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; . . ." (Proverbs 27:6). John was Herod's friend until he put his finger on his sin of stealing his brother's wife. Herod was guilty of incest which was forbidden of God.

Cursed be he that lieth with his sister, the daughter of his father, or the daughter of his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen. Cursed be he that lieth with his mother in law. And all the people shall say, Amen (Deuteronomy 27:22,23).

John esteemed it better to suffer temporal persecution, from Herod and his stolen wife, for faithfulness to God than to suffer their eternal cursing for his unfaithfulness to God.



And King Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from (he dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, *It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife*. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: *For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly* (Mark 6:14-20).

These verses of scripture show that at one time Herod was a believer in the Word preached by John the Baptist. Thus, his offense was all the more odious before God when he had John beheaded to please his stolen wife, Herodias. John's message of repentance and baptism for the remission of sin prepared the way for the coming of the LORD Jesus Christ.

King Herod feared, that is, respected John as a just and holy man. The Word says that King Herod observed him and heard him gladly and did many things; that is, he did many things that John told him to do in connection with his message of repentance. One of the things that John told Herod to do was to make restitution and give back his brother's wife to him.

According to Jewish history, Herod was first married to the daughter of Aretas, an Arabian king of Petraea. Nevertheless, he became intrigued with Herodias, the wife of his half-brother, Philip I, who was a tetrarch of noble standing. The two eloped in spite of the fact that both of them were legally married to other people at the time.

Upon hearing John's message about her bigamous marriage, Herodias began to plot and plan to protect the stolen bread and waters of her marriage. On Herod's birthday, she sent her daughter in to dance for the king. The girl's dancing so pleased the king that he rashly promised to reward her, even to giving her half of his kingdom. Never did he dream that she would ask for the head of his friend, John the Baptist.

King Herod was faced with a choice: he either had to humble himself greatly and take a stand for God and His Truth, or he had to keep his word and behead John. Herod came to the place in her personal experience with the Word of God, given through John the Baptist, that he had to make restitution, give up his brother's wife, and go on for God, or he had to turn and kill the Truth, so to speak. Because Herod believed John's message, it brought about a mixed marriage situation for him. As a believer, he could no longer hold on to his brother's wife; if he were going to live for God, he was required to put off the yoke of adultery.

King Herod made his choice; he refused to restore his brother's wife. Herod preferred to give up his experience with God's Word and his fellowship with God's servant John rather than to straighten out his marriage.

This Principle involved with Herod and his brother's wife is different than the Principle mentioned in the fourth chapter of Deuteronomy. The Principle in Deuteronomy was this: a man who found some uncleanness in his wife could give her a bill of divorcement according to the Permissive Will of God. If the divorced woman married another man who also hated her and gave her a bill of divorcement, the woman's first husband was forbidden to take

her again to be his wife. When the first husband wrote his bill of divorcement, he gave up all claim to her as a wife; therefore, she legally could be called another man's wife.

In the case of Herod and Herodias, neither one was legally divorced. Consequently, their marriage was not legal in the eyes of the Law nor in the eyes of God. Speaking through His Prophet, John the Baptist, God told Herod that Herodias still was legally Phillip's wife. Herod had stolen his brother's wife; and according to the Word of God, restitution had to be made as in the case of stealing. A person cannot hold on to stolen merchandise and go on for God. God requires restitution for all stolen things, even a stolen wife. If Philip had given his wife a bill of divorcement, then according to Deuteronomy, chapter four, verses one through four, she could have been recognized as Herod's legal wife, although their marriage would have been in the Permissive Will of God.

B. BELIEVER TO DWELL WITH UNBELIEVER IF UNBELIEVERS BE PLEASED TO DWELL WITH BELIEVER

The second command given to a believer is a mixed marriage by Salvation is to keep the keep the marriage together if the unbelieving partner be willing. When a person repents and takes Jesus Christ as his Saviour, he is forgiven for his past sins. The newly saved believer still is legally and morally married to the partner he chose while he was a sinner. God provided revelation in His Word to guide and govern the behaviour of a believer in the case of a mixed marriage by Salvation.

And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife. But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy (I Corinthians 7:10-14).

In verses ten and eleven, the Apostle Paul was quoting words spoken by the LORD Jesus Christ during His lifetime on Earth. Jesus commanded married couples who were both believers to live together; if the woman left her husband, she was either to remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. In verse twelve, Paul began writing under the Divine Anointing of the Holy Ghost. These words were directed to couples whose marriages were mixed because one of them had become a Christian. Since *all* Scripture is given by inspiration of God, the portion spoken by Jesus, and the portion written under the anointing of the Holy Ghost through the Apostle Paul, were equally forceful and equally necessary.

In a marriage in which one partner becomes a believer while the other is still an unbeliever, it is God's directive will for the believer to continue living with the unbeliever and keep the marriage together if the unbeliever is willing to do so. There is hope, and a chance, that the partner who is an unbeliever will be saved as a result of living with a bright and shining believer who is a reflection of the light of Christ.

"For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." If just one partner is a Christian, the children are sanctified and made holy by the Blood of Jesus Christ. That does not mean that the children are not required to make a personal decision for Christ when they reach the age of accountability; they are required to do so. But until that time, the Christian parent has the right to plead the Blood of Jesus Christ, by faith, over the young children to sanctify and keep them holy for God.

C. BELIEVER NOT UNDER BONDAGE WHEN THE UNBELIEVER REFUSES TO KEEP THE HOME TOGETHER

The third law that God gave was for guiding and governing a mixed marriage by salvation, which is the law of freedom for the new believer if the unbelieving partner refuses to dwell with him or her.

But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace (I Corinthians 7:15).

If a sinner refuses to live with a marriage partner who has become a believer, let the sinner depart. The believer is not under bondage to the law of marriage in such cases. However, if the sinner leaves because the believer has a

self-righteous attitude and a hateful disposition, then the believer is at fault and is still under bondage; the yoke of responsibility for the broken marriage rests on the shoulders of the believer in this instance.

The believer is not under bondage to the law of marriage if the unbeliever breaks the wedlock because the believer is walking with God and serving Him by praying, studying the Word, and going to the house of God. The unbeliever who leaves the home because of the believing partner's faithfulness to Christ and His Word bears the yoke of responsibility for breaking the marriage. The believer, then, is free to marry again, this time to a person who is a believer.

IV. MARRIAGE OF TWO UNBELIEVERS

There are no laws in the Word of God that relate especially to the marriage of two unbelievers; however, God's Word does call sinners to repentance and salvation. Until people receive salvation and repentance and are born into the family of God, they are unable to hear the truth of God's Word with their inner, spiritual ears. The Gospels Matthew and Luke prophesy the behavior of sinners in the last days.

And as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark (Matthew 24:37,38).

And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all (Luke 17:26-29).

In the days of Noah, the LORD loosed the fountains of the deep and rain poured out of heaven upon the wicked, unrepentant sinners. In the days of Lot, He rained fire and brimstone upon the unrepentant sinners in Sodom and Gomorrah. Although hundreds of years separated these two events, the behavior of the people had remained unchanged. Furthermore, the eight degrees of pride that existed among the sinners in Noah's day and in Lot's day are prevalent in the world *today*]

A. EATING

Unless eating is done with grateful awareness of God and His provision for His creation, eating is the first sin that continues to draw man away from God and that aids the soul in hastening toward the judgment of God. Eating, in itself, is not a sin. A person must eat in order to continue living. Eating is listed as one of the chief sins committed by the people in the days of Noah and Lot because they did not put gratitude to God in the midst of their eating.

When man leaves God out of the midst of his eating, he shows gross ingratitude, first, for the fact that he is alive to eat, and, secondly, for the food that God so graciously provides in both the natural and spiritual realms. Leaving God out of eating will blind a person to the two kinds of eating he must do both in the spiritual and natural realms in order to be fully satisfied. Men often try to satisfy the hunger they have for the spiritual things of God by eating natural food. After they gorge themselves on the finest food the world has to offer, they may be physically full; however, they are not truly satisfied because they are blind to their need for spiritual food. When the natural belly is full, man prides himself on being filled with **satisfaction to the extent that he feels** no desire to seek God.

Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things) (Philippians 3:17-19).

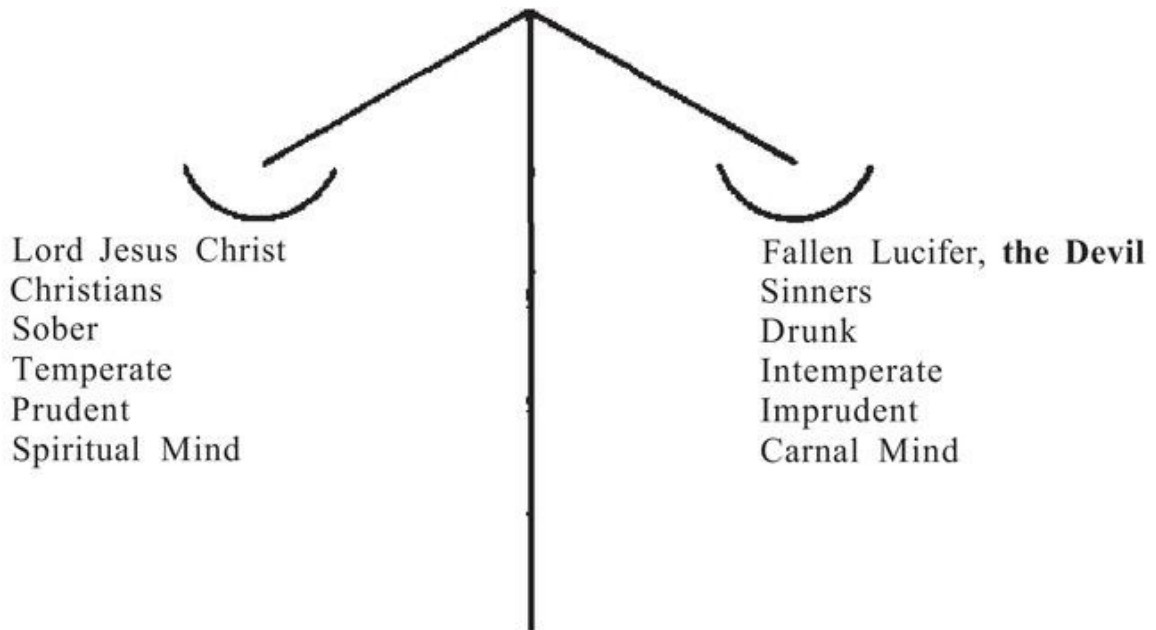
The weeping apostle warned true believers that the empty, hollow professors of religion were enemies of Christ. Their god was their belly. The belly is a wretched idol that constrains men to become gluttons. Through their sensual, lustful appetites, they sacrifice a joyful, happy, and peaceful relationship with God for the pleasure and provision for their belly, their eating. They serve not Christ, but their own bellies. "For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:18). Not only did they sin with their eating, but they gloried in the shame of it.

B. DRINKING

The same thing may be said about drinking as is said about eating. By leaving God out of his drinking, man adds to his blindness, and he tries to satisfy the thirst of his spirit and soul with carnal drink rather than the spiritual drink of God's Word and Spirit. Because the sinner does not know God, nor how to satisfy his soul and spirit, he frequently turns to drinking natural liquids excessively and habitually in an effort to quench the spiritual thirst he feels. Because the sinner is alienated from God, he is lost and undone. Therefore, his redemptive pride of enjoyment through drinking endeavors to quench the thirst and longing of his soul for God **and** for spiritual things. But the inebriated mind does not allow the soul to see the necessity for seeking and finding God.

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit: (Ephesians 5:18).

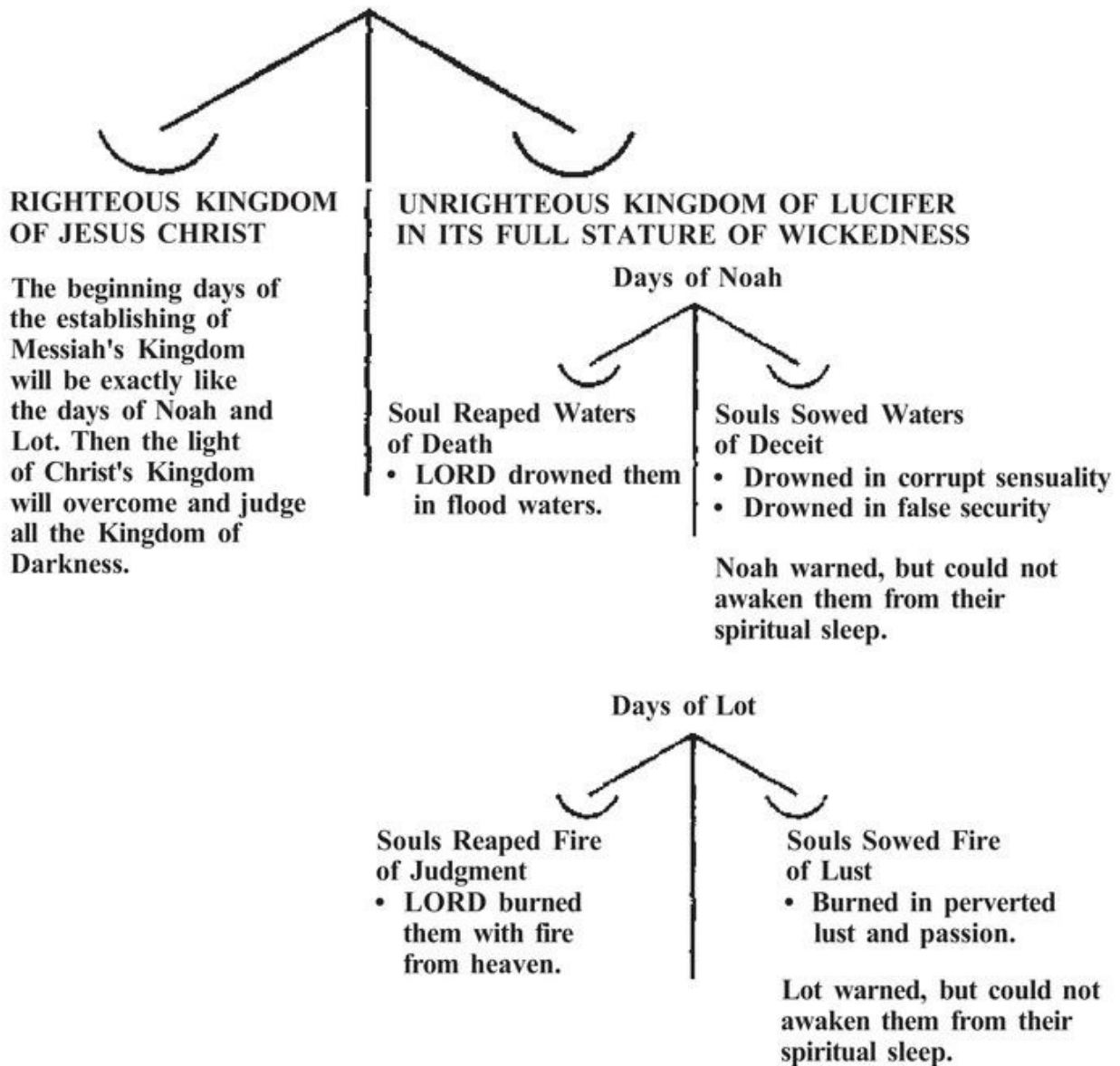
The inflamed, inordinate lusts of drunken sinners prevent them from turning to God. Their reason becomes distorted, and their diseased perception of reality prevents them from seeking God. For this reason the Apostle Paul forbade the Christians to join their chaste, holy conversation to the vile, intemperate, disorderly conduct of drunken sinners.



The sober Christian and the drunken sinner are on opposite sides of the scales with different Taskmasters.

C. MARRYING

The LORD continued to draw a comparative analysis between the days of Noah and Lot and the days of the establishing of the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of the Messiah. The nature of wicked, corrupt sinners is always the same regardless of the day in which they live.



Wicked sinners continue on from generation to generation. In every generation, they marry. They seek their own pleasure and indulge in their own satisfaction. They have no interest in spiritual things. They spend all their days on earth making provision for the flesh and the lust of it. In their diseased perception of reality, they seem to believe that their present, temporal, flourishing state will be an eternal, perpetual state. Therefore, they give themselves over to complete self-centeredness. God gives them no commands concerning marriage because they are strangers and aliens from the house of God and His covenant of truth.

God Himself instituted marriage for believers in Him, so marriage is not a sin. However, marriage was listed as a sin in the days of Noah and Lot because the sinners left God out of their marriages. The purpose of the marriage of sinners is to please themselves, not to please God. They make their own laws according to their own will to guide and govern their marriages. The fact that God made a wife for Adam before he sinned shows that He did not institute marriage among sinners, but among holy, pure people. God did not wait until after man had sinned to give the law concerning marriage. Thus, when people seek marriage before they seek God, they are merely seeking the pride of pleasure. It is a sin to seek *anything* before we seek God.

D. GIVING IN MARRIAGE

The term “giving in marriage” refers to the frequency of divorce in the days of Noah and Lot. They were constantly marrying to build up their family names. They were happy to build up large estates, temporal kingdoms, of this world. They had no concern or care for God’s eternal kingdom. This reveals their pride of self-will, ease, and false security. A marriage that is built on the pride of fleshly pleasure will eventually end in the divorce court because the partners have no fortitude from God to suffer to stay together. People divorce because they love their own wills more than they love the will of God. Their individual pleasures are more important to them than obeying the will of God, which would bring the necessary suffering, chastening, and correction to keep their marriage intact.

E. THEY BOUGHT

These few words in Matthew and Luke show us the condition of pride in the hearts of the sinners in the days of Noah and Lot. The people had no time to seek God or listen to the warnings of Noah and Lot. They were too busy buying in order to fulfill the pride of possession. It is lawful to buy. However, these corrupt sinners fixed their inordinate hearts entirely on buying, on attaining the temporal things of this world, while ignoring the warning call to prepare for the threatening judgments of God that were about to appear. If we buy only for our *need*, there is plenty of time left for seeking God. However, if we buy for the sake of satisfying the pride of possession, we never have time to seek God because this class of pride is like an insatiable leech. It is never satisfied with its present possessions. It is like the horse leech that constantly cries for more and more blood.

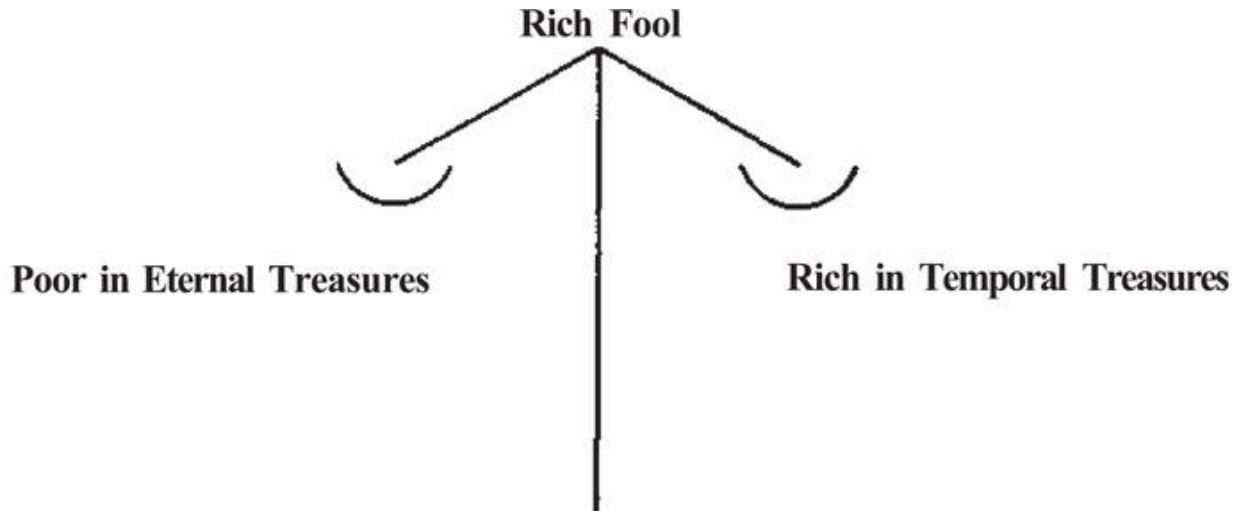
F. THEY SOLD

It is also lawful to sell. But it is not lawful to ignore God and His Law that governs fair and honest business dealings. Therefore, selling was also listed as a sin because God, again, was left out of their lives as they continued in their false security and greedy sensuality. There is nothing wrong with selling for the purpose of making an honest living and meeting one’s needs, the needs of one’s family, and giving God His just portion in tithes. However, when God is left out as the governing center of an individual’s life, that person’s selling ceases to be rightly motivated and moves completely into the category of pride of increase.

G. THEY PLANTED

It is lawful to plant. “A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;” (Ecclesiastes 3:2). Their fault and failure was that their hearts were entirely fixed on their works which excluded God from their lives. When man leaves God, his Creator, out of his life and remains a sinner, his motives for planting are entirely selfish. Instead of planting for the purpose of supplying food for the needy and hungry, or for beautifying God’s green earth for His glory, or for the purpose of working to fulfill the *Torah*, the Law which tells us to work six days, the corrupt sinner plants for the purpose of enriching his own temporal treasury and satisfying his own independent works apart from God. Thus, he delights in exercising his pride of independence and his pride of vain boasting about his possessions. As he feeds his corrupt, independent soul on the beauty of his own plantings and the fruitfulness of his own works, he neither sees a need to plant the Word of God in his soul nor feels a need to behold the eternal beauties of truth and holiness in his heart. In the beginning God did the planting, and then asked man in his holy state to be caretakers of all He had planted. Man carelessly ignored his opportunity to take care of God’s holy plantings. It seems, now, in his sinful, fallen state, man is possessed with an insatiable desire to do his own planting and to be his own caretaker of his own plantings without ever inquiring of God. Corrupt man seems to be trying to prove his independence from God. “Who needs God to plant?” he asks. “I will do my own planting. Who needs to be a caretaker in God’s garden?” he asks. “I will be my own caretaker in my own garden.”

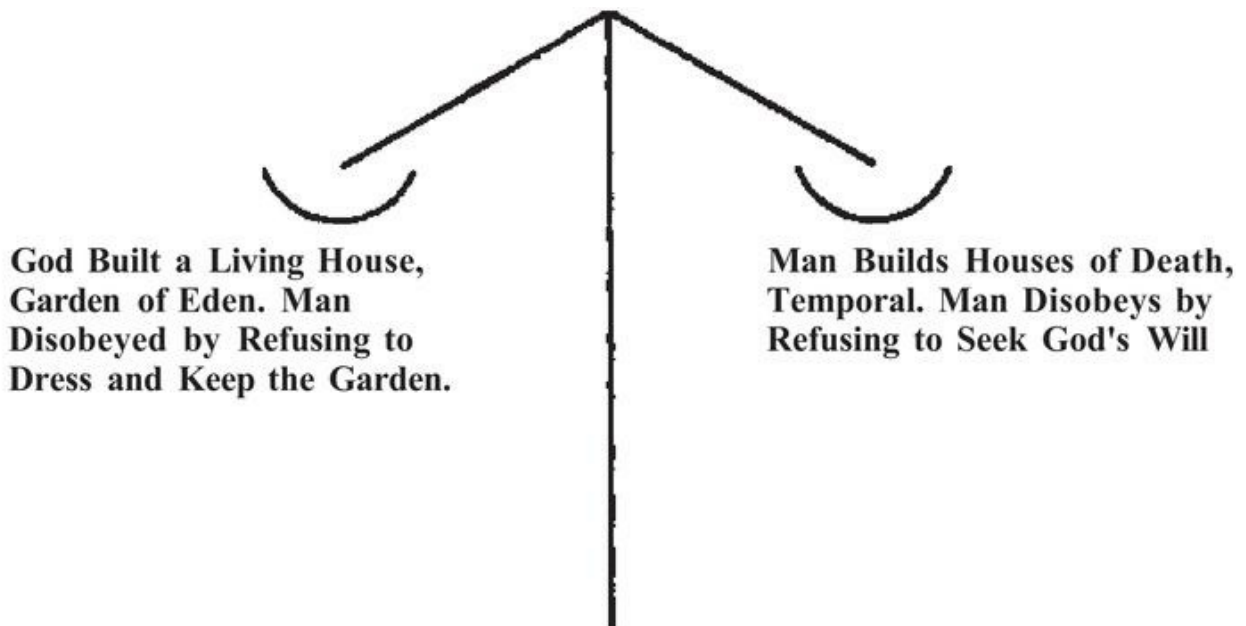
The rich fool is a classic example of the selfish, independent planter and caretaker of his own garden. His proud arrogance blinded him to his poverty toward God.



H. THEY BUILDED

Again, it is legal to build according to the will of God. There is nothing wrong; in fact, everything is right when one is building in the will of God, using the LORD God as the divine Architect. However, when man builds apart from God, his pride of independence rejoices over the works, the construction, the images of his own hands. In the beginning God provided a living house as a dwelling place for man, and He asked man to dress and keep it in humble obedience. Unfortunately, man sinned and lost his house (the Garden of Eden); now he builds and takes care of his works in proud, independent disobedience instead of in shame and humility. Corrupt man never realizes that he is unable to compete with God, or equal the living house that God originally built.

Man was disobedient in God's building, and he is disobedient in his own building.



Moreover, sinful man leaves God out of his master plan, the blueprint, of his temporal building in this world.

All these eight things that were instituted by God in the beginning for blessings to mankind became sin because of pride. Sinful man refused to permit the LORD God to be Ruler and Governor in his life from the beginning. Because corrupt man stubbornly refused to repent of his sin in the days of Noah, God destroyed the world with water. Because wicked man refused to repent in the days of Lot, God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah with fire. Thus, God established the law of sowing and reaping for the sinful man.

Although sinners exclude God from their marriages, their homes, and their business, God forces them to be included in his universal law of sowing and reaping. However, God does use the increase of sinful marriages and the increase of offensive divorces of sinners as a sign of the coming of the LORD Jesus Christ in the air and the “pre” and “post” tribulation judgments that will follow. God does not permit any sinner to escape His judgments. They did not escape in the days of Noah or Lot, and they will not escape in our day. They must reap what they have sown in ungodly marriages. Although they have negated God’s authority entirely, on one side of the scales; on the other side of the scales, they must come under the Just Judge who will measure out their portion of reaping.

In this chapter we have learned that God recognizes four classes of marriages: the marriage of two believers, the mixed marriage by choice of a believer to an unbeliever, the mixed marriage by salvation when one of the unbelievers in a marriage receives salvation, and the marriage of two sinners. It would be wonderful if every marriage were in the directive will of God. Unfortunately, some people do not come to the LORD Jesus Christ for salvation until after they have experienced one or more broken marriages. God always deals mercifully with a person, regardless of what class of marriage he may have. God even extends His mercy to the sinner. Through His longsuffering, God gives each sinner every opportunity to repent before he comes to the final judgment.

Chapter Three

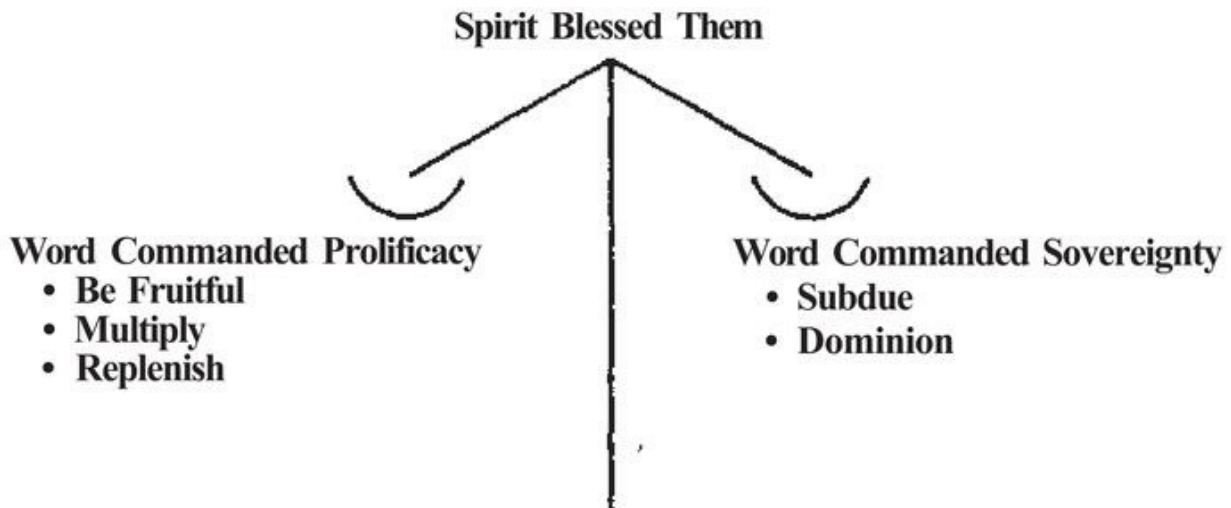
GOD'S BLESSING ON MARRIAGE

God invoked a blessing upon Adam male and female when He performed the wedding ceremony that joined them together in holy matrimony in the Garden of Eden. Our first parents were happy. They existed in the image and likeness of God and had a oneness of relationship with each other. They were the rulers of all the other creation on earth which was subject to them willingly, living with them peaceably, without mutiny or rebellion.

The Creator not only established the principle or law of marriage, but He also breathed upon the marriage relationship a special anointing or blessing that He did not put upon other relationships.

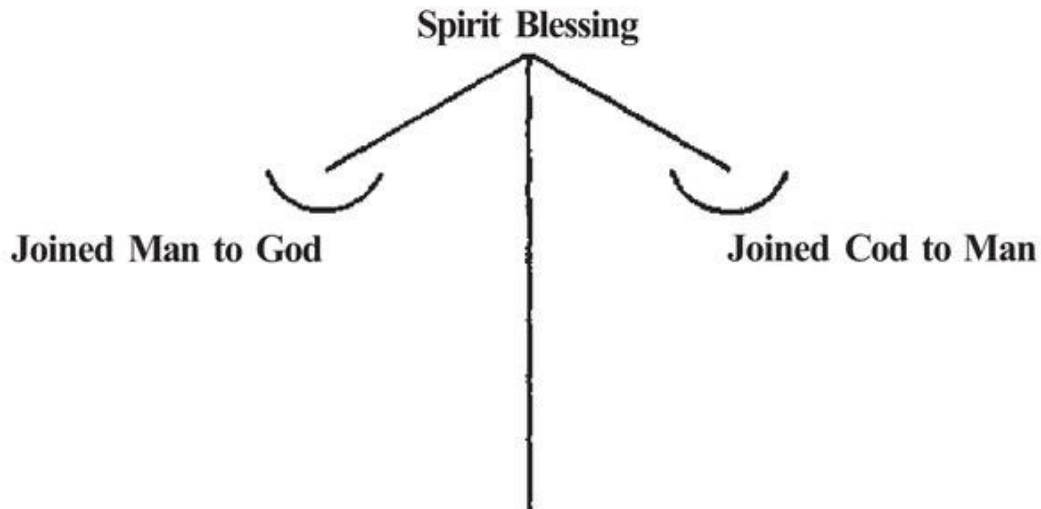
And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the *fish of the sea*, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth (Genesis 1:28).

The Hebrew word for *bless* is *baw-rak* which means to kneel, to bless God (as an act of adoration, gratitude, and praise) and (vice versa) man (as a benefit). It also means abundantly, altogether, congratulate, greatly, salute. The LORD God greatly, abundantly blessed, consecrated, and set apart Adam male and female for His own sacred purposes. The LORD God created Adam male and female in full stature and gave them a threefold experience with His Spirit and Word.



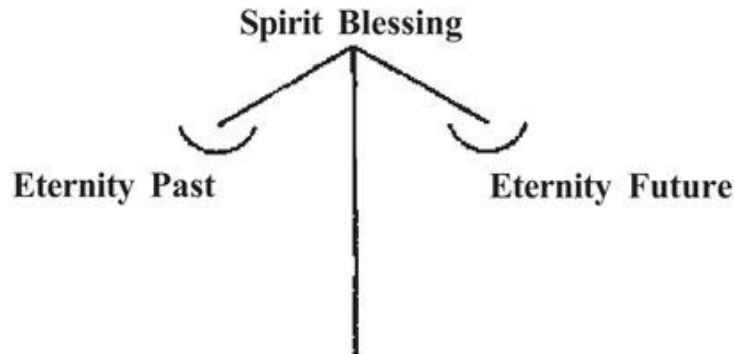
I. THE BLESSING OF GOD'S SPIRIT

The blessing that God's Spirit bestowed upon man had two sides: on one side of the scales, the Spirit joined God to man; on the other side of the scales, the Spirit joined man to God.



A. GOD’S ETERNAL SPIRIT JOINED TO MAN BY BLESSING MAN WITH HIS ETERNAL SPIRIT

The first blessing that God placed on Adam male and female was the blessing of His Eternal Spirit. In order for God to join Himself to man, He had to join all His eternal past and future together in the spirit of man because there is no past or future with God. He is the eternal “I AM.” Through His Eternal Spirit, God condescended to join Himself and His eternal nature of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance to man. Thus, in the greatness and abundance of His blessing on the marriage union of Adam male and female, the LORD God joined heaven and earth together. He joined man to Eternity past and Eternity future.



The LORD God endowed Adam male and female with an infinite, divine, spiritual blessing of eternity past and future.

B. SPIRIT JOINED MAN TO GOD BY BLESSING MAN WITH SPIRIT TO BLESS THE LORD GOD

The second blessing that God placed upon the marriage of Adam male and female was His eternal Spirit which empowered them to bow their knees in gratitude, thanksgiving, worship, and praise to the LORD God, their Creator.

II. THE BLESSING OF GOD’S WORD

After breathing the blessing of His Spirit upon the marriage of Adam male and female, the LORD God uttered special blessings of His Word upon the marriage in the form of commands given to the newly married couple. The LORD God blessed them with His Word of prolificacy and His Word of Sovereignty.

A. GOD’S WORD BLESSED MAN BY COMMANDING PROLIFICACY

The LORD God commanded the new marriage to be prolific, productive, impregnated, fertilized so they could bring forth great fruitfulness.

1. Be Fruitful

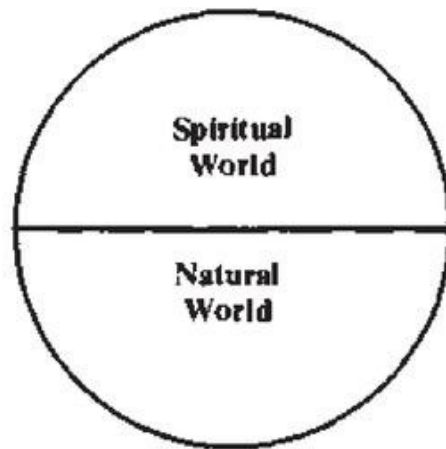
And God blessed them, and God said unto them, *Be fruitful*, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth (Genesis 1:28).

God desired the new marriage to be fertile and productive, generating new seeds of life. He wanted Adam male and female to be abundantly fruitful.

The word *fruitful* means to bear fruit, to grow, to increase. God bestowed upon Adam male and female His commanding Word of fruitfulness. The LORD's blessing refers to Adam's own fruitfulness in personal growth of spiritual life and knowledge. However, God did not want them to be so engrossed in their own personal world of growing spiritually and intellectually that they neglected the physical realm. Their failure to be fruitful in the physical realm would have meant destruction to the earth and the world. God wanted them to build up, not destroy, the earth and the world.

God distinguished between the procreative instinct practiced by animals (which is simply physical) and the procreative power practiced by human beings (which involves free moral choice). God's commanding Word, "be fruitful," reveals that man had to consciously and of his own free, moral will choose to implement God's Master Plan of propagation. The Creator intended for the marriage of Adam male and female to be fruitful and prolific so that they could rule over the earth and the world.

God gave Adam male and female the blessing of His Spirit before He gave them the blessing of His Word that commanded them to multiply. God established this order because He wanted the wheel of man's spiritual world and natural world to be formed completely so that he would be balanced in his relationship to both worlds.



Adam's spiritual world consisted of his spiritual capacity for spiritual growth and moral development. Adam's natural world consisted of both his own personal, mental capacity for intellectual development and the opportunity of filling the natural world with inhabitants on the earth. God created the earth, the ground, for the world of inhabitants to dwell upon. God wanted man to till the soil of the earth and to fill the world with moral, spiritual, and intellectual development.

Had Adam male and female heard their Creator's commanding Word, obeyed, and eaten of the Tree of Life, God would have led them, in His time and directive will, to the Tree of Knowledge. Thus, they would have been fruitful in both life and knowledge, and they could have implemented God's Master Plan for them to rule over the earth by tilling it and the world by growing in moral and intellectual development.

Unfortunately, man disobeyed God and became evil and corrupt. Although fallen man implemented the plan of populating the world and tilling the earth, he did not attain the wisdom and knowledge to rule and reign over the increase of either the earth or the world. Consequently, in our day, we have an earth full of lots of fruits of increase and a world full of people, but we do not know how to properly divide the increase of the earth to meet the need of the hungry population of the world. Therefore, we are plagued with all the accompanying problems of *hungry*

humanity. In spite of the increase of knowledge that we have witnessed in recent years, there still is no one who has the wisdom, knowledge, and enlightenment to govern the people of the world and to solve man's existing problems. Man must wait, then, for the coming of the LORD Jesus Christ, Who is wisdom, knowledge, and light, to rule and reign over the people and to solve the problems of the famines and droughts of the earth and the hunger of the world, both naturally and spiritually.

The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil became a Tree of Death to Adam male and female because it was eaten prematurely, out of the directive will of God. It is dangerous for man to bring forth abundantly and not have the wisdom, knowledge, and holy Sovereignty to control all that has been brought forth. Adam male and female's choice to eat prematurely of the Tree of Knowledge has forced mankind (except for those who live in Christ Jesus) to continue eating from the Tree of Death.

2. Multiply

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and *multiply*, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth (Genesis 1:28).

The LORD's desire was that mankind disperse throughout the whole earth and not all congregate in one particular location. Man's refusal to obey God's will in this matter was the sin committed by the people who lived after the flood.

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, they had found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth (Genesis 11:1-4).

Defiantly and deliberately, these people congregated in one location with one plan — to build the famous Tower of Babel. *Babel* means confusion. There can be nothing but confusion, beloved, when man defies God's will.

God created man with the ability to adjust and acclimate himself for survival in any part of the earth. Therefore, man's task, which is to multiply on the earth, is not attached to any particular country, zone, or climate. In order for man to obey God's command to multiply, he has to be willing to reach out and occupy strange, different parts of the earth's zones and climates. Man always fears marching forth into the unknown, if he is told to do so by God; *however*, if man's corrupt curiosity lures him to explore the unknown, he goes forth with reckless abandonment.

God's second commanding Word to Adam male and female was to multiply upon the earth. The word *multiply* means to increase with children, to be in authority, to bring up, to continue, to enlarge, to excel, to nourish. Before man fell into sin, God blessed Adam male and female with His Spirit and then gave them His Word of promise, which was that they would beget children. God intended for the earth to be filled with fruitfulness and the world to be filled with people.

Now, although man is fallen, there still remains in little children an innocence, modesty, ingenuousness, and tenderness of conscience. It is as if the glory of Eden still lingers over them. The precious bundle of life called a newborn child is like the birth of a new morning when sunbeams lighten the clear skies and sparkle through the fresh air, kissing every dew-laden flower, drawing forth its sweetness. The breath of a newborn baby is the breath of the fresh air that is laden with sweet perfume. The eyes of a babe are the shining hills bathed in the sun's golden light. The voice of a sucking child is the clear skies that ring with the song of larks. The baby's skin is the dewy petals of soft, summer flowers.

As we read in the Word of God about the childhood of Jesus, we cannot help but feel the reverence God intended for man to have for childhood. We cannot help but feel a drawing forth of our innermost heart toward children, a tender love and respect for this great blessing from God. There is no harp or flute that can produce a melody as sweet as a child's "good night."

God blesses the home with children, not only to assure the continuance of the human race, but to enlarge our hearts, to make us unselfish, and to fill us with kindly sympathies and affections. God blesses the home with children in order to give our souls higher aims and to call out all our faculties to extended enterprise and exertion. He blesses the home with children in order to bring around our firesides bright faces, happy smiles, and loving, tender hearts. Truly, God has blessed and gladdened the earth with His gift of little children.

a. Children Are Given By God

And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, Who are those with thee? And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant (Genesis 33:5).

Children are a gift from God. Therefore, parents commit an atrocious crime when they resent children being sent into the home! An expectant mother's resentment of the babe she is carrying in her womb is an offense to both God and the child. Many children, before they are born into this world, are filled with feelings of rejection and rebellion from their mother. Children are God's blessing to the home. Wise parents will receive them with thanksgiving and minister to them in love so the whole family may reap the full blessing promised by God.

b. Children Are A Heritage of the LORD

Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward (Psalm 127:3).

Children are a blessed heritage of the LORD. Christian parents are doubly blessed. In addition to handing down to their children the natural fruits of their hands, they also have the privilege of teaching their children the spiritual principles of truth which they have learned theoretically and empirically as they have walked with the LORD. Thus, their lives will be lived all over again, as it were, through their children.

c. Children Are Like Olive Plants

Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table (Psalm 128:3).

While a man's family is his burden and responsibility, they are at the same time his comfort and delight. The wife is like a vine beside the house. She is not just an ornamental, spreading vine, but she is also a profitable, fruitful vine. The fruit she bears brings honor to both God and man.

The natural vine is a weak and tender plant that needs to be supported and cherished for its beautiful and profitable fruit. The wife is like a vine in the home; she is to give beauty and nourishment to her husband, while he is to support and cherish her. As the "rib-vine," she needs to be by the side of her husband and her house. Children born into this kind of a home are compared to olive plants. In due season these plants become trees that yield fatness which gives light and nourishment to man. Blessed is the marriage that has children about the table; these little ones are like so many living olive plants!

d. Children Are a Crown and Glory

Children's children are the crown of old men; and **the glory** of children are their fathers (Proverbs 17:6).

Children are a blessing from God. Children who are trained properly and able to conduct themselves worthily are a joy of joys. It is an honor to parents to leave behind them children and grandchildren who are growing up and following in the steps of their virtues and maintaining the Christian testimony of the family. It is an honor to a man to live to see his children's children serving the LORD and walking in the will of God. This is, indeed, a crown of glory and honor. Faithful children and grandchildren are a blessing from God and a comfort to their parents in the unpleasant days of their old age.

Yes, God has richly blessed the marriage union and commanded the relationship to be filled with children. Children are given by the grace of God. They are an heritage of the LORD. They are like living olive plants, and they are a crown of glory.

3. Replenish

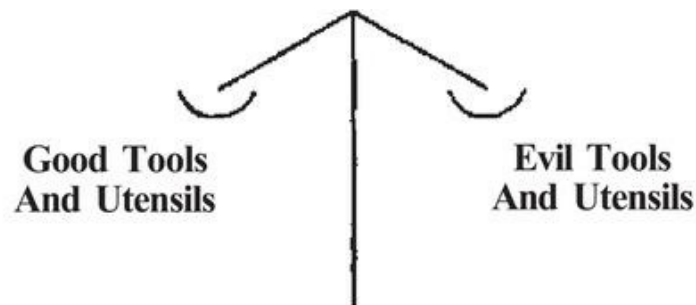
And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and *replenish* the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth (Genesis 1:28).

God commanded Adam male and female to replenish or **fill** the earth. The Hebrew word for *replenish* is *maw-lay* which means to fill (in the sense of accomplishment), fulfill, overflow, furnish, satisfy, have wholly. In this word is the implication of seeking to accomplish and fulfill that which is lacking.

Man, the last of God's creation, was placed on an earth that was filled with vegetation (including the Garden of Eden). God intended for man to eat of wisdom and understanding of the Tree of Life so that he could harness his ingenuity and produce tools and utensils needed to dress and *keep* the garden and, thus, replenish or fill up what he lacked in the garden. God wanted Adam male and female to replenish the tools and utensils that man would need to till the soil.

Unfortunately, man did not obey God's command to eat of the Tree of Life with its wisdom and understanding that would have imparted to him the skills required to devise the needed tools and utensils. Man chose to eat of the forbidden Tree of Knowledge, and he learned, through disobedience, how to harness his ingenuity. Then he promptly used his corrupted ingenuity to cut and sew a fig-leaf apron or armor belt designed to defend himself against the LORD God.

As a result of man's disobedience, all the tools and utensils with which man has filled the earth (from the time of Adam until now) have come from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.



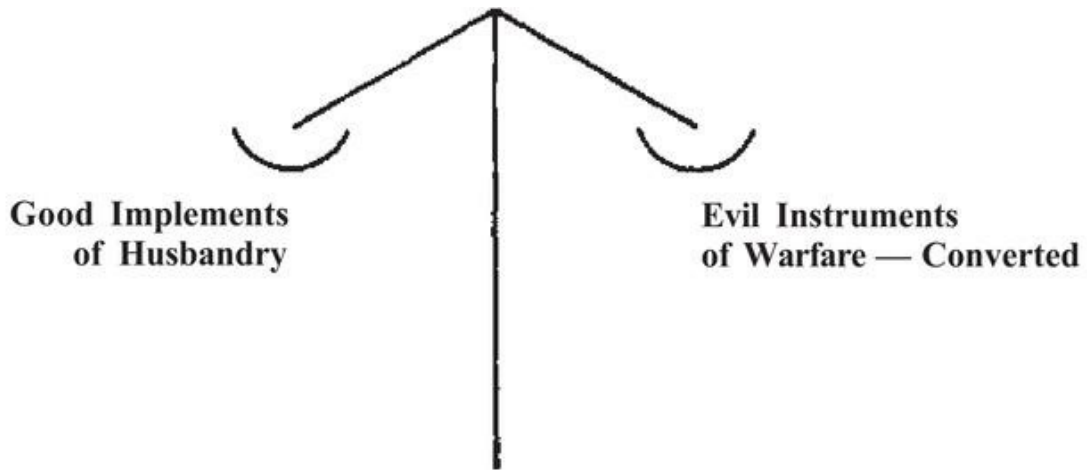
Man has filled the earth with tools and utensils that have been used for both good and evil purposes. For instance, soon after Adam began to fill the world with tools and utensils, Adam's firstborn son, Cain, used one of them to slay his brother, Abel.

When Jesus Christ, the great, sovereign LORD of the earth, comes again, He will abolish all warfare. Men will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more (Isaiah 2:4).

And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nations shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more (Micah 4:3).

When the Messiah, Jesus Christ, comes again and establishes His kingdom of peace, He will fulfill all that Adam the first failed to do. Jesus Christ will replenish the earth with tools and utensils that will be used for good purposes.



Jesus shall rule and reign out of Zion. He shall rule and reign in wisdom and justice over the earth and world. Jesus Christ first will convert the evil tools and utensils into good ones. Until this is accomplished, there can be no true peace. Man is still harnessing his ingenuity to form evil tools of death and destruction. Therefore, he never will be able to control the earth and world that has been multiplied with people. Jesus Christ will harness His ingenuity of wisdom and knowledge to form good tools and utensils. Then He will control the earth and world in peace.

In the millennial reign of Christ, the tools and utensils will be good and holy enough to be used in the house of the LORD. “In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the LORD’S house shall be like bowls before the altar” (Zechariah 14:20). Jesus Christ will fill and replenish the earth with good, holy tools and utensils as God intended for Adam the first to do.

B. GOD’S WORD BLESSED MAN BY COMMANDING SOVEREIGNTY

God’s Word endowed Adam male and female with supreme, unlimited, independent power over all the earth and world. In their marriage union, Adam male and female were to be the royal prince and princess, supreme in excellence and the most noble and gracious of all of God’s earthly creation. They were to be God’s supreme, powerful rulers who exercised the highest authority on earth. They were to be the administrators of God’s moral government on earth and in the world. Through the Word of God, they had the excellence of supreme, uncontrollable power.

1. Commanded to Subdue

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and *subdue* it: and have-dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth (Genesis 1:28).

God commanded man to subdue or conquer the earth and reduce it to a state of permanent subjection. God had given man a superior force and power whereby man, through the Word of God, could have conquered and controlled the earth. Man could have overcome the earth by disciplining it with the truth of God’s Word, forcing it to be the fruitful, productive place that God had intended it to be. Had man obeyed God, his footsteps would have been filled with the kindness and love of God’s *Torah* to which the earth would have responded with gentle submission.

The second blessing that God’s Word of sovereignty bestowed upon Adam male and female was His Word of reigning power and authority.

2. Commanded to Have Dominion

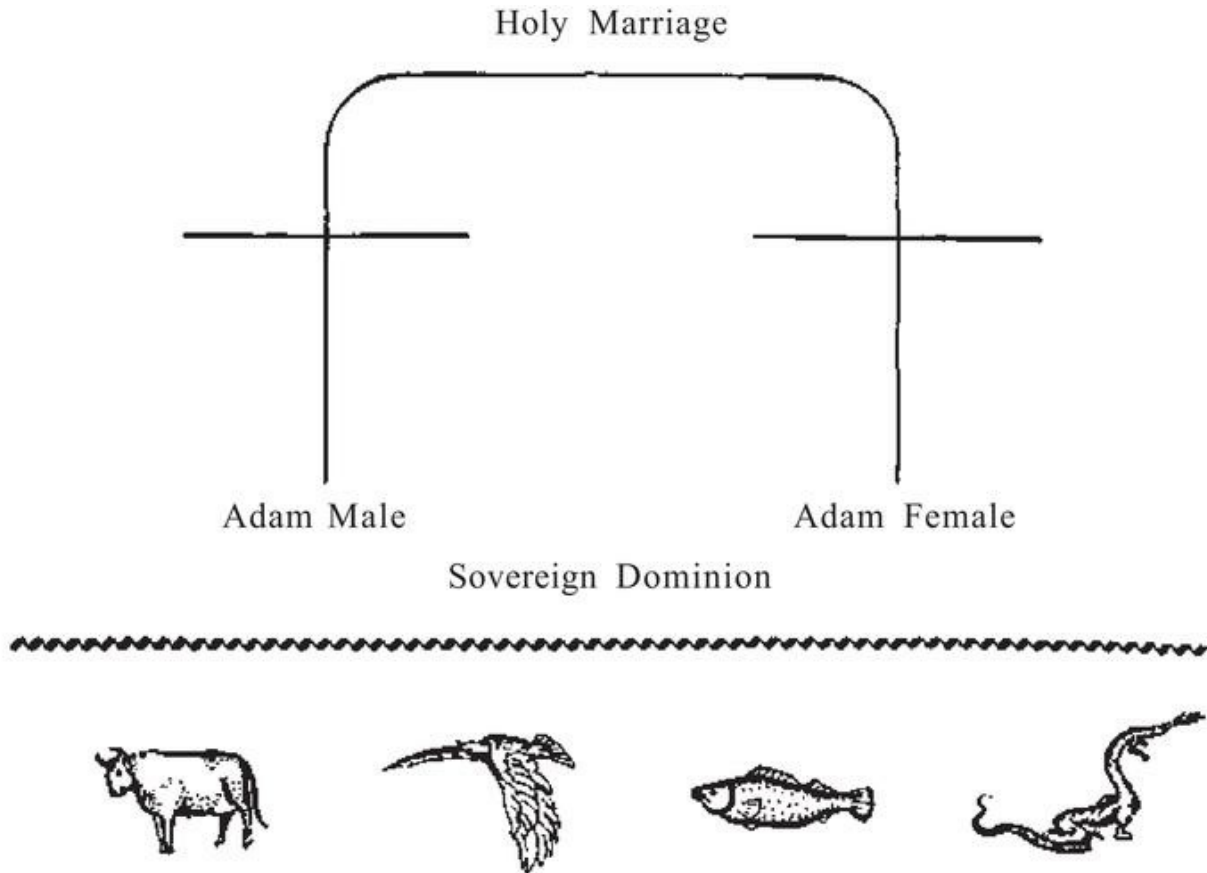
God wanted Adam male and female to rule and reign over the creatures of the earth and to bring them under their control.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and *have dominion* over the fish

of the sea and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth (Genesis 1:28).

God wanted Adam male and female to utilize their ingenuity and their skillful intelligence by ruling and reigning over the creatures, restraining them to abide in their respective domains and preventing them from entering man's domain. If Adam female had been grateful for God's Word that had given her and her husband sovereign dominion, she would have sent the Serpent back to his own domain when he first stepped a foot into her domain in the garden.

God intended for all the creatures of earth to be under the sovereign dominion of Adam male and female.



Instead of exercising her God-given authority, Adam female gave her sovereign dominion over her domain to the Serpent and placed herself under *his dominion* in *her domain*.



Fallen Lucifer,
Spiritual Serpent, Inside
Natural Serpent, Outside

Sovereign Dominion



Adam Female

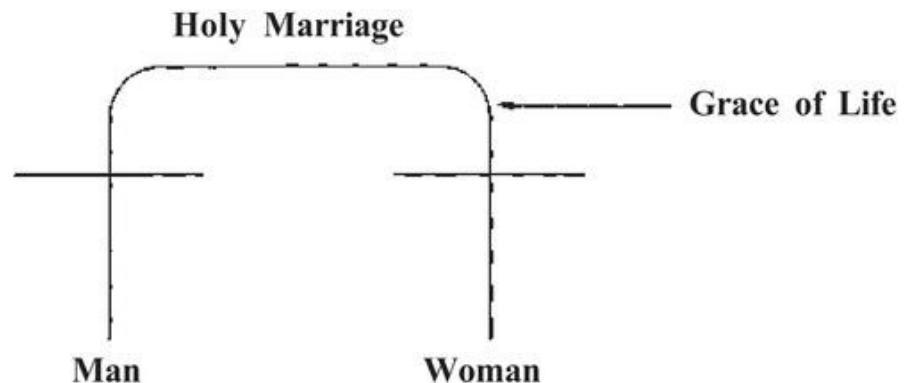
God endowed the first marriage with dominion and sovereign power to govern, control, and rule over the whole earth. Adam male and female had the uncontrolled right of possession to the whole earth to dispose of it at their good pleasure. As the lords and masters of the entire earth, they were given the right, through God's Word, to exercise their power and authority to subdue the earth. Yet Adam male and female gave up their sovereign dominion in the natural and spiritual realms to the Serpent. They chose to be under the dominion of the creature instead of under their Creator.

Fallen, sinful man has lost much of his original reigning power. Nevertheless, fallen man is still filled with an insatiable desire to rule over the earth and make it serve him, and he does make it serve in many ways.

In the New Testament, God again promised subduing and reigning power in prayer to the holy marriage union of a believing husband and wife.

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered (1 Peter 3:7).

The Christian marriage is bound together by the grace of life.



The Apostle Peter graphically described, in the third chapter of his first Epistle, the duties of wives and husbands so that married couples would not defile the grace of life and so that their prayers would not be hindered. The

apostle gave ten commandments for the home. Five of these commandments pertain to the wife, and five of them pertain to the husband.

COMMANDMENTS TO THE WIFE

- Be in subjection to husband
- Have chaste conversation
- Have fear of God
- Have holy, outward adornment
- Have holy, inward adornments of meekness and quietness

COMMANDMENTS TO THE HUSBAND

- Dwell with wife
- Use knowledge
- Honor wife
- Honor grace of life union
- Pray together

When the husband and wife's marriage yoke of the grace of life is not defiled with bitterness, their prayers will not be hindered. Bitterness and disharmony cut the sinews and strength of prayer. Harmony is the channel that guides the prayers of husband and wife into the ears of God.

In this chapter we have seen how God blessed the marriage of Adam male and female with His Spirit and gave them His Word of prolificacy and sovereignty. Although Adam male and female relinquished their sovereign, ruling power into the hands of the Serpent, the same blessing of God's Spirit is extended to marriages of believing couples today.

First God blessed Adam male and female by condescending to anoint them with His eternal Spirit so that they could be joined to His eternity past and eternity future. Then God blessed them with His Spirit so they would be empowered to kneel in gratitude, worship, and praise to their Creator. There can be no lasting creature-creature relationship unless each individual maintains a right relationship with the Creator. When the husband and wife kneel together in gratitude, worship, and praise to the Creator, the LORD Jesus Christ, their natural marriage relationship is blessed with the eternal union of the LORD God.

After blessing Adam male and female with His Spirit, God gave them His commanding Word of prolificacy. The marriage of Adam male and female was to be one of free, moral choice to be fruitful, both in their own personal growth in spiritual life and knowledge and through the children they would beget. God also gave His commanding Word of prolificacy to multiply the inhabitants on the earth and caused natural children to be born. Through their procreative union, the male and female were to bring forth children who would be taught to worship and serve the LORD God. God also gave His commanding Word of prolificacy to Adam male and female to replenish the earth by using their ingenuity to fashion tools and utensils they needed to dress the garden and till the soil.

God pronounced His commanding Word of sovereignty upon the marriage relationship of Adam male and female. They were to rule and reign over the earth, subduing it and taking dominion over all creatures. If Adam male and female had taken God's directive will and obeyed His command to eat of the Tree of Life first, they would have experienced God's true wisdom and understanding that continually would have led, guided, and instructed them in how to rule and reign. Then they would have ruled over the Serpent when he walked into their domain, and there would have been no temptation because the Serpent would have been driven out of the garden before he could have opened his deceitful mouth. However, they disobeyed and lost all.

It is necessary either to use God's ruling power and rule over things that are outside of His will, or else be ruled over by things that are outside of God's will. Fallen man still succumbs to the Serpent's ruling and reigning power because he will not utilize the power of ruling and reigning that he could have through the submitting of his life to Jesus Christ. The Serpent continues to deceive fallen man into thinking that he will receive more by being ruled over by the Serpent than he will if he rules and reigns over the Serpent through Jesus Christ. By taking his own corrupt will, man remains a slave and subdued subject of Satan, instead of taking the LORD's will and becoming a master and king for Christ.

Chapter Four

GOD'S TERMINATION OF NATURAL MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP AND CONTINUANCE OF SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

The natural marriage union between a husband and a wife is an earthly relationship. God's Word teaches that the natural marriage relationship does not extend beyond the grave because it is not an eternal joining. Conversely, the spiritual marriage relationship between Christ and His Bride will continue through the unending ages of eternity because the union is in the spiritual realm.

I. TERMINATION OF NATURAL MARRIAGE

God has set a boundary line or limit to natural marriages. The LORD has confined the pleasures and pains of natural marriage to this present world. Death puts an end or finish to the natural marriage contract. Death completes and concludes the natural marriage union.

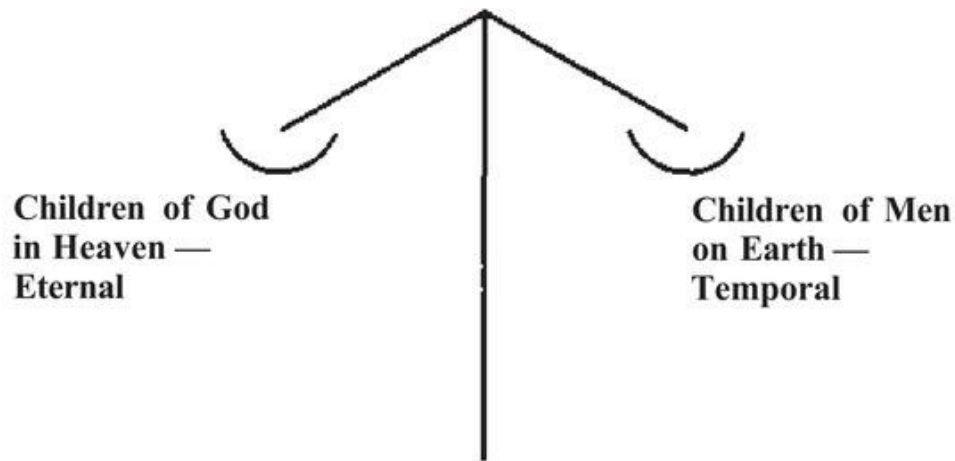
Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked him, Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also: and they left no children, and died. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife. And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels: and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him (Luke 20:27-38).

Every age has produced men of corrupt minds who have endeavored to subvert the fundamental principles of the revealed Word of God. While they call themselves "free thinkers," they are, in reality, false thinkers. It is common for people who seek to undermine the truth of God to perplex it and load it with difficulties in order to try to render it ridiculous and undependable. Nevertheless, God's precious Word lives on, long after its assailants pass the way of all flesh. God's Word is eternal and forever settled in the heavens.

A. DEATH TERMINATES NATURAL MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

A spiritually minded person has no problem understanding whose wife the woman in the foregoing scripture will be. Death puts an end to the earthly relationship of a husband and wife; their relationship as husband and wife will not and cannot be resumed in heaven.

There is a great difference between the state of the children of men on earth and the children of God in heaven; there is a vast unlikeness between this present world and the world to come. In this world, where people are dying and leaving the stage of life, it is necessary for them to marry and be given in marriage in order to furnish the world of mankind with needful recruits. As one generation passes away, another comes to take its place. Marriage also is instituted here on earth for the comfort of human life and as a remedy against fornication so that man's natural desires might be controlled and not become brutal.



When man dies, all temporal things and earthly relationships pass away, and man is left with only the eternal things of God's Spirit and Word that he has put in his soul.

B. HUMANS SHALL BE AS ANGELS IN THE WORLD TO COME

Our scripture text revealed that the world to come is unlike our present world. Our present world is visible; the world to come is an invisible one. Those who are counted worthy to obtain the world that is to come will be "as the angels."

In that invisible world, they neither marry nor are given in marriage because they have entered into the joy of the LORD and are entirely taken up with love and adoration for Him. They have no need for the human joy of an earthly bridegroom and bride. The love in that world will far surpass the most pleasing loves of this world. In that day, the body will be a resurrected, spiritual body; therefore, the sensual delights of the earthly body will be banished. Since there will be no sin or death to destroy the inhabitants in that world, there will be no need for reproduction. In that day, we will be as the angels who are employed continually in a holy ministry of worship and praise to the KING OF KINGS and the LORD OF LORDS.

God terminates the marriages of this world at death and makes their participants as the angels in heaven to serve Him and live in eternal bliss in His presence.

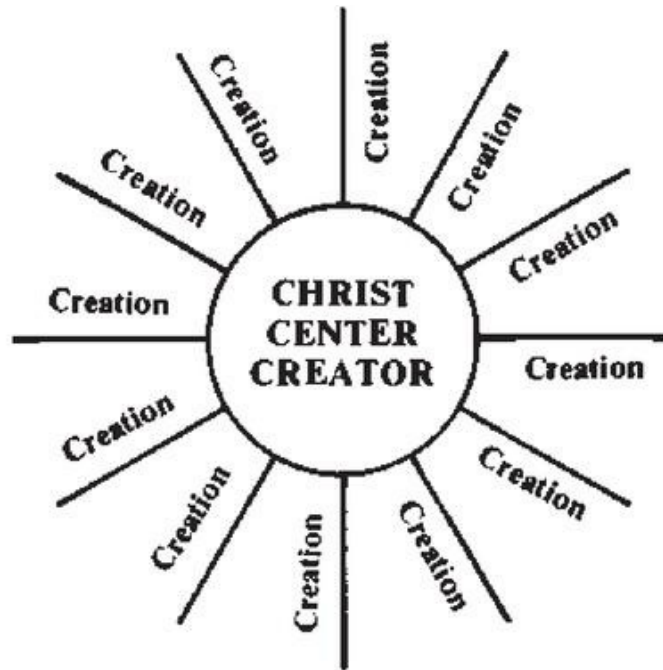
C. NEITHER MALE NOR FEMALE IN CHRIST JESUS

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28). :'

In the Old Testament dispensation, the Law made a distinction between Jew and Greek. The Jew was blessed with higher and holier privileges than the Greek. The Law also differentiated between bond and free or master and servant. The Law separated between male and female; the males were circumcised. But, now, in Christ Jesus, we all are one.

There is neither male nor female in Christ. *ALL* of God's children are called *sons* or children of God. The purpose of the world-to-come is to bring all of God's children who have not grown into full, spiritual maturity in Christ into unity and harmony with Himself through the Lord Jesus Christ. "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:" (Ephesians 1:10).

All creation in heaven and earth came from Christ, and all creation in heaven and earth must be gathered back to *one* in Christ. It is God's wise design that, in the dispensation of the fullness of times, all creation in heaven and earth be gathered together in Christ into one harmonious orchestra and choir.



II. GOD'S CONTINUANCE OF SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

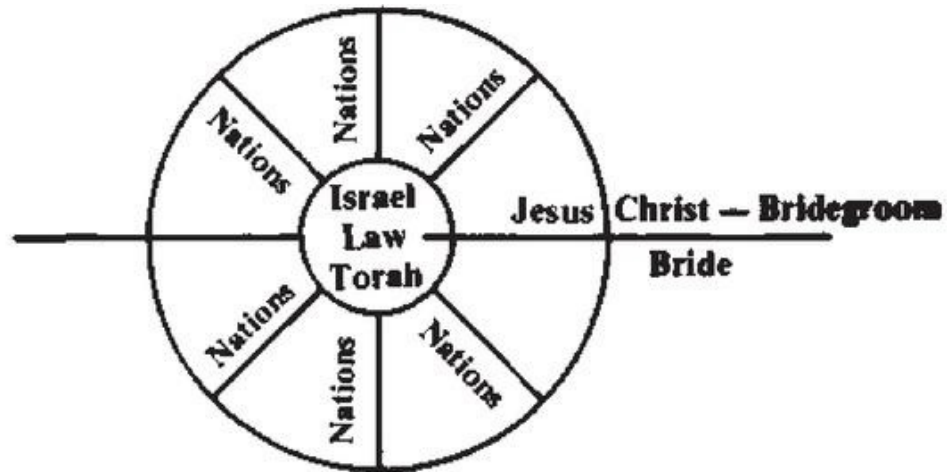
Death does not terminate the spiritual marriage relationship that God has established with the nation of Israel in the natural realm; neither does death bring an end to the spiritual marriage relationship between Christ and His spiritual Bride.

A. NATION OF ISRAEL

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married (Isaiah 62:1-4).

God will not rest nor be silent until Israel, His natural bridal nation, is vindicated and her glory and fame are universally acclaimed and acknowledged. The LORD God will not rest until Israel's children are reunited with their motherland, and He rejoices over Israel as a Bridegroom over His Bride. As a flaming torch can be seen near and far, so will Zion's salvation be brilliantly visible to all. The LORD God will give Zion, Israel, a *new name*, signifying her new marriage relationship with Him. The LORD will lift Israel up in His hand so everyone can admire her, gaze upon her with affection, and see that the LORD has not forsaken His marriage relationship with Israel. The LORD forsook Israel for only a season in order that she might be chastened and corrected of her idolatry and restored as the LORD's legal Wife, for He delights in His eternal marriage union with Israel.

God will maintain His spiritual marriage relationship with the nation of Israel forever in the New Earth. During the millennial reign, Jesus Christ and His Bride will sit upon the throne of David in the city of Jerusalem. Israel will be the hub of the nations, and she will teach the other nations of the world to worship and serve the true and living God.



Later, in fulfillment of the prophecies given by Jeremiah and Amos, King David will be resurrected to sit upon his throne again.

But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them (Jeremiah 30:9).

In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old (Amos 9:11).

In the Perfect Age, after the millennial reign of Christ and His Bride, King David will sit on His throne in the rebuilt city of Jerusalem, and he will lead and guide Israel and all the people of the New Earth in worshipping the true God and His only begotten Son, the **LORD** Jesus Christ.

B. BRIDE OF JESUS CHRIST

The Bride of Christ is made up of the group of believers who, in this life, have grown unto the measure of the fulness of the stature of Christ, have put on white linen and sun glory, and have made themselves ready to be counted worthy to be His Bride.

And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God (Revelation 21:9,10).

The Apostle John saw the New Jerusalem, the Lamb's Wife, victorious and triumphant in her full, mature growth in Christ, having the glory of God shining in its full brightness, radiance, and resplendence. The Bride will be beautiful because she grew in the image and likeness of her Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. She will be comely because of her Bridegroom's comeliness Now, He is shining on her with His glory and grace.

And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever (Revelation 22:3-5).

The Bride will live eternally with her Bridegroom, the LORD Jesus Christ, in a state of supreme felicity, in the paradisiacal New City. The Bride will see the face of God and serve Him. The Bride's mouth will be an eternal oratory chapel, filled with thanksgiving and praise. The LORD's Name will be written in her forehead. The Bride's mind will be eternally engraved with the holy Name of the LORD. She will not only freely serve her LORD, but she will help Him rule and reign forever. Her dominion will be with perfect, joyful wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. The Bride will be eternally filled with comforts, delights, and satisfactions as she walks in the light of His glorious presence throughout eternity.

Since the Bride's marriage or oneness of relationship with Jesus Christ is in the spiritual realm, and not in the

temporal realm of this earth, their marriage relationship will continue forever in the New Jerusalem. In eternity, in the Perfect Age, Jesus Christ and His Bride will rule and reign out of the New Jerusalem over all of the new heavens and the new earth.

In closing this study of the stature of truth concerning marriage, let us restate the main points as they are revealed in the Word of God:

- God's revelation of marriage was given in the Garden of Eden when He joined Adam male and female in holy wedlock. God's directive will is for a **man to have one wife and** a woman to have one husband.
- God's Word recognizes four classes of marriage, for God knew that not all men would accept His directive will for their marriage. In His great mercy, God made provision in His permissive will for the virgin wife whose husband wanted to divorce her, for the mixed marriage by choice, for the mixed marriage by salvation, and for the marriage of sinners.
- God's twofold blessing of marriage included the blessing of His Spirit which joined God and His eternal nature to Adam male and female and which joined them to God, empowering them to kneel in gratitude, worship, and praise to their Creator. His commanding Word of prolificacy gave them a choice for fruitfulness in personal growth of spiritual life and knowledge and in the conception of children. His commanding Word of prolificacy blessed their procreative power in the natural realm so they could multiply and cover the earth with children who would worship and serve the LORD God. God's commanding Word of prolificacy blessed their ingenuity so they could replenish or fill the earth with the necessary tools and utensils to dress the garden and to till the ground. God gave Adam male and female His commanding Word of sovereignty so that, through their ruling and reigning power and authority, the earth could be subdued and all creatures brought under their dominion. All of these blessings and gifts are still available to all marriages in which the husband and wife are believers in the LORD Jesus Christ.
- God terminates the natural marriage relationship at death because it belongs to this temporal, earthly world. The spiritual marriage relationship which God has with the nation of Israel, and the one which Christ has with His Bride, will be continued in the unending ages of eternity because these relationships have their union in the spiritual realm.

May the LORD Jesus Christ clothe our hearts with His resplendent robe of glory and grace. May we so live that our words will not cloud our LORD's brow with sorrow, or our deeds dim His eyes with tears of grief. May we strive to have an upright heart before Him, full of mercy and good fruits. May we all live in this world in such a way that we can give a good account of our lives when we stand before the divine and glorified Jesus Christ, to Whom be the glory, power, dominion, majesty, and excellency forevermore!

— The End —