

Unlocking The Mystery & Treasure Of Our Inheritance

#37 From "I Do" To Spiritual Adultery

In the Bible, Israel is represented as the "Wife of Jehovah," whereas the Church is represented as the "Bride of the Christ (Messiah)." A failure to maintain that distinction will only result in a misinterpretation of what the Scriptures teach.

I. Israel: The Wife Of Jehovah

A. The Marriage Covenant at Mt. Sinai [Ex. 19:4-8]

1. This marriage relationship is confirmed many times in subsequent Scriptures.

Jer. 3:14 Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I AM MARRIED UNTO YOU."

Isa. 54:5 For thy Maker is thine HUSBAND; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel."

2. Ex. 32:2-10 The Israelites' Lack Of Faith while Moses was on Mt. Sinai made them feel insecure. Moses was gone less than 40 days when the Israelites fashioned a calf of molded gold to substitute for the invisible Creator God. In their own minds, they had reduced God to something they could control and call upon when convenient.

B. God Announces His Jealousy Over His Wife, Israel

Deut. 6:10-15 And when the Lord your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you, with great and goodly cities which you did not build, ¹¹ And houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and cisterns hewn out which you did not hew, and vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and when you eat and are full, ¹² Then Beware Lest You Forget The Lord, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ¹³ You shall [reverently] fear the Lord your God and serve Him and swear by His name.

¹⁴ You shall not go after other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who are round about you;

¹⁵ For the Lord your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; lest the anger of the Lord your God be kindled against you, and He destroy you from the face of the earth.

1. God warned Israel not to become an adulterous wife by playing around with other gods.

2. Why? God's burning jealousy, lest it be kindled against her and cause her expulsion out of the Land God gave her.

Deut. 7:6-11 For you are a holy and set-apart people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a special people to Himself out of all the peoples on the face of the earth.

⁷ The Lord did not set His love upon you and choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the fewest of all people.

⁸ But because the Lord Loves You and because He would Keep The Oath Which He Had Sworn To Your Fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

⁹ Know, Recognize, And Understand therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God, Who keeps covenant and steadfast love *and* mercy with those who love Him and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations,

¹⁰ And repays those who hate Him to their face, by destroying them;

He will not be slack to him who hates Him, but will repay him to his face.

¹¹ You shall therefore keep and do the instruction, laws, and precepts which I command you this day.

1. God entered into a covenant relationship with Israel because He loved her & kept the oath.

2. Israel has an obligation. Be a faithful wife to God by being obedient and subject to Him.

Deut. 12:1-5 These *are* the statutes and judgments which you shall be careful to observe in the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth. ² You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. ³ And you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place.

⁴ You shall not worship the LORD your God *with* such *things*. "But you shall seek the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go.

Why did God give this instruction?

1. He wanted to Remove The Temptation to be fickle, unfaithful, and compromising from her.

Destroy everything that would be a temptation to her.

2. Warning: Seek only Him in His sole habitation, even in their homeland. This exhortation to seek Him only and destroy the worship of Canaan's inhabitants shows that God knew that Israel was thoroughly smitten with "the grass is always greener" disease.

3. They failed both to dispossess the land's inhabitants and to destroy their places of worship.

Note: In its carnality, Israel is disastrously curious, thinking that variety of experience rather than the truth of God's Word is the answer to the discontented, rebellious, unsettled impatience of her nature.

Note: Israel is left without excuse for its spiritual adultery.

II. Stage 2: The Great Adultery -Several OT prophets describe her guilt of adultery.

The concept of Spiritual Adultery Against God is a major theme throughout the Old Testament.

The children of Israel tried to mix the worship of other gods such as Baal with that of God.

The Old Testament is a chronicle of Israel's repeated failure to obey God, of its refusal to keep His commandments and statutes.

In Psalms 78:10-11, 40-42, 56-57, the psalmist mentions that Ephraim did not keep the covenant of God; they refused to walk in His law, and forgot His works and His wonders that He had shown them. . . . How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, and grieved Him in the desert! Yes, again and again they tempted God, and LIMITED the Holy One of Israel.

They did not remember His power. . . . Yet they tested and provoked the Most High God, and did not keep His testimonies, but turned back and acted unfaithfully like their fathers.

Moses passed the mantle of leadership to Joshua at the gateway to the Promised Land.

God's Strategy For Success:

1. Joshua 1:6-8 Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷ Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. ⁸ This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

2. God's command to DRIVE OUT the Canaanites would prevent their idolatry from infecting Israel. Like the snake in the Garden, the idolatry of the Canaanites will test the Israelites' loyalty to God and His covenant.

Note: Under Joshua, Israel drove out MOST of the Canaanites.

Joshua 17:13 "When Israel Grew Strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but Did Not In Fact Drive Them Out."

Note: They had the strength, but kept them for tribute. Greed = Sin

Israel fares no better than Adam or Eve did. Failing to remove the temptation of the Canaanites, they soon began "serving" the Canaanite gods, Baal and Astarte [Judges 2:11-13]. It was not merely a question of occasionally bowing before an image or uttering a prayer to a foreign god. Instead, Israel's life and their labor are spent in futile service to idols, as Israel comes to believe their success in labor depends on assuaging the local Canaanite deities.

Josh. 13:1 Now Joshua was old, advanced in years. And the LORD said to him:

"You are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet to be possessed."

1. Israel had not yet fully claimed their inheritance by defeating and dislodging the entrenched inhabitants of their land.

2. Israel OWNED all the land [inheritance] but they DID NOT POSSESS all of it.

3. Therefore, they DID NOT ENJOY all of their inheritance.

Joshua's Farewell: 23:12-13 ..if indeed you do go back, and cling to the remnant of these nations—these that remain among you—and make marriages with them, and go in to them and they to you, ¹³ know for certain that the LORD your God will no longer drive out these nations from before you. But they shall be snares and traps to you, and scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land which the LORD your God has given you.

Tragic Results of Failure To Drive Out

Judges 2:1-5 Then the Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said:

"I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you.

² And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this? ³ Therefore I also said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be *thorns* in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.'" ⁴ So it was, when the Angel of the LORD spoke these words to all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voices and wept.

⁵ Then they called the name of that place Bochim; and they sacrificed there to the LORD.

Message: Your sin and disobedience broke your agreement with God.

Your sin will result in punishment through oppression.

The Nation Of Israel Quickly Decayed After A New Generation Took Over.

Judges 2:7,10 So the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD which He had done for Israel. When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor The Work which He had done for Israel.

It Was The Worst Of Times: Headlines During The Judges

1. Family Feud Leaves 69 Brothers Dead
2. Powerful Government Leader Caught In "Love Nest"
3. Gang Rape Leads To Victim's Death & Dismemberment
4. Girls At Party Kidnapped & Forced To Marry Strangers
5. Woman Judge Says Travelers No Longer Safe On Highways

Deut. 6 had outlined the nation's basic responsibilities:

1. v. 1-5 Love & obey Jehovah as the only true God
2. v. 6-9 Teach your children God's laws; story of redemption; miracles of God
3. v. 10-15 Be thankful for God's blessings
4. v. 16-25 Separate yourself from the worship of the pagan gods in the land of Canaan

Consider: The New Generations failed in each of these responsibilities.

1. They lost their spiritual motivation and commitment.
2. They had no desire to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."
3. They would rather experiment with the idolatry of the godless nations around them.
4. Result = plunged into moral, spiritual and political disaster

Key Point 1: Instead of exhibiting spiritual fervor, Israel sank into apathy.

Key Point 2: Instead of obeying the Lord, the people moved into apostasy.

Key Point 3: Instead of the nation enjoying law and order, the land was filled with anarchy.

Key Theme: Judges 21:25: In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes. Then they soon did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.

Note 1: At Mt. Sinai, the LORD had taken Israel to be His "kingdom of priests," declaring that He alone would rule over them. [Ex. 19:1-8]

Note 2: Moses reaffirmed the kingship of Jehovah when he explained the covenant to the new generation before they entered Canaan. {Deut. 29}

Note 3: After the conquest of Jericho and Ai, Joshua declared to Israel her kingdom responsibilities. {Josh. 8:30-35}

Note 4: Joshua reminded the people again before his death. [Josh. 24]

Note 5: Even Gideon refused to set up a royal dynasty. Judges 8:23

"I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you."

Israel Falls Into Idolatry:

Judges 2:11-13 Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; ¹² and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from *among* the gods of the people who *were* all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger.

¹³ They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.

Note: Even in the days of Joshua, Israel did not fully possess the land. Yet they remained faithful to God and did not worship the idols of the Canaanites. After Joshua's death, they fell into the worship of the grotesque idols.

1. Served The Baals: The Canaanite idol Baal was the god over the weather and nature; essentially the god of agricultural success. People served Baal because they wanted good weather for abundant crops and flocks. He was the "god of personal wealth."

a. Wolf: Baal also meant "husband" or "owner."

When Israel worshiped Baal, they entertained another "husband" or "owner."

2. Forsook The Lord To Serve Baal & the Ashtoreths

a. Ashtoreth was the goddess of love, sex and fertility.

b. Practice of ritual sex with a priestess-prostitute

c. The religion of the fertility gods was accompanied by lascivious practices.

It was found in a degraded form in Canaan which incorporated child sacrifice."

3. Forsook The Lord

a. God said Israel's pursuit of these gods was forsaking Him. He is a jealous God who demands exclusive worship.

4. In The Sight Of The Lord

a. Committed spiritual adultery right before His eyes

5. Followed other gods From Among the gods of the People Who Were All Around Them

a. Influence of the Canaanites they **ALLOWED TO REMAIN** led to idolatry

God's Wrath On Their Sin Of Idolatry.

Judges 2: 14-15 And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. Wherever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for calamity, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed.

1. Anger Of The LORD Was Hot Against Israel

a. His response to their unfaithfulness - No Surprise!

b. He promised this in His covenant - blessings for obedience & curses for disobedience

Note: We serve God under a better covenant. [Heb. 8:6]. When we do not abide in Jesus Christ and things go badly, it is because our actions have consequences and we reap the bitter fruit of not abiding and remaining attached to the Vine.

2. He Delivered Them Into The Hands Of Plunderers Who Despoiled Them

a. Purpose: When Israel was GREATLY DISTRESSED, they would turn their hearts back to the LORD. God's goal wasn't punishment in itself, but repentance.

b. This was a manifestation of God's love for Israel.

Consider: The worst judgment God can bring upon a person is to leave them alone and stop trying to bring them to repentance.

Cyclical Pattern Of Bondage & Deliverance In Judges

Judges 2:16-19 Nevertheless, the LORD raised up judges who delivered them out of the hand of those who plundered them. [Because of His great love for His people - even though they were undeserving]

¹⁷ Yet they would not listen to their judges, but they played the harlot with other gods, and bowed down to them. They turned quickly from the way in which their fathers walked, in obeying the commandments of the LORD; they did not do so.

[They wanted the judges as political and military leaders, but NOT as spiritual leaders.]

¹⁸ And when the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge;

[Source of judges' power to lead Israel in dramatic acts of deliverance]

for the LORD Was Moved To Pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed them and harassed them.

a. Israel cried out to God and depended on Him in times of emergency

b. This principle explains why some people are in a constant state of crisis.

God knows it is the only way they can be kept trusting in Him.

c. God's desire is that we be in a constant relationship of dependence on Him.

John 5:19 Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.

¹⁹ And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them.

a. Pattern of bondage, deliverance and blessing - followed by sin and bondage again

b. Meyer: "The fitfulness of our experience is often attributable to our failure to recognize the Lordship of Jesus Christ."

^{19b} They did not cease from their own doings [their sin was their own doing - from their own corrupt nature] nor from their stubborn [stiff-necked] way.

a. Applied many times to Israel

b. A new environment doesn't always mean a new attitude.

c. Ancient Hebrew word for stubborn [kawsheh] = being hard or severe
To be stubborn against the LORD is to have a hard and unyielding heart = a hard life

God Gives Them Over To Their Sinful Compromise

Judges 2:20-24 Then the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and He said, "Because this nation has transgressed My covenant which I commanded their fathers, and has not heeded My voice, I also will no longer drive out before them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died, so that through them I may test Israel, whether they will keep the ways of the LORD, to walk in them as their fathers kept *them*, or not." Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out immediately; nor did He deliver them into the hand of Joshua.

a. Israel wanted these Canaanite nations around.

God gave them the worst punishment = He would allow it.

b. After setting their hearts on sinful things, Israel found that God gave what their sinful hearts desired.

c. Great danger of setting our hearts on sinful things; God may allow us to have them - thus bringing sin, bondage, and pain into our lives.

Note: The 1st step the new generation took toward defeat and slavery was

1. Neglecting The Word Of God.

II Tim. 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

2. The new generation spared the enemy - 7 tribes failed to overcome the enemy and allowed these godless nations to continue living in their allotted inheritance

3. The new generation imitated the enemy. They became so accustomed to the sinful ways of their pagan neighbors that those ways didn't seem sinful any more.

a. Became interested in how their neighbors worshiped - imitated the pagan worship

b. 1st step away from God: Friendship with the world

c. 2nd step: Leads to being spotted by the world

d. 3rd step: Leads to loving the world

e. 4th step: Leads to being conformed to the world

4. The new generation began to obey the enemy. Israel's enemies became their masters!

Consider: The people wasted their suffering! They did not learn the God's desired lesson for them. They did not profit from their chastening.