



FEED MY SHEEP

PUBLISHED BY JAMES W. BRUGGEMAN
STONE KINGDOM MINISTRIES
P. O. Box 6388
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God Gets Married!—Then Divorces!!

In the first issue of *Feed My Sheep* (FMS), we discussed the sheep motif in the Bible. It was clearly established from numerous Scriptures that sheep are a symbol of the Israel people and no one else. The Israel people (or parts of Israel) are, upon occasion, pictured as other animals as well [lion, ass, bull, calves, unicorn, etc.], but the primary animal symbol is sheep. Thus, when Jesus instructed his apostles in Matthew 10:6 to “go only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel,” he was clearly telling them to discriminate (Gasp! How politically-incorrect of the Savior!) as to whom they were to preach and to heal. This was God’s (Jesus’) Plan: first, Israel. Later, Jesus revealed that his Plan includes blessings and salvation for non-Israelites as well. This was to be where his wife would help him. [Hear our recent two-tape message: *The Samaritans*.¹]

In this issue we will present some foundational materials on another theme: God’s marriage and divorce. I used the exclamation points in the headline because those two simple statements (God gets married—then divorces) are startling to most Christians. One reason is because their spiritual shepherds have never revealed this simple truth to them. The truth be known, most ministers themselves are ignorant of this fact, because if they knew it, then they would not preach that divorce and remarriage are sins. They are not. But we are getting ahead of ourselves, so let us return to that portion of Scripture which is seldom studied in any depth in modern churches: the Old Testament. Even at that, God’s marital status is discussed in the New Testament as well, which leaves no excuse for “New Testament churches” not to have learned this very important doctrine. Nevertheless, all true doctrines have their genesis in the Old Testament. A verse pregnant with meaning is found in Isaiah 54:

Isa. 54:5 For thy Maker is thine husband;

YHWH of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.

Here in one verse, God declares that he is the Creator; he is Israel’s husband; he is her redeemer and holy one, and ultimately he will be known as the God of the whole earth. If God is Israel’s husband, when did the wedding occur? We find that when the children of Israel came out of Egypt, they were as a child being born.

KJV Hosea 11:1 When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

Depending upon the particular theme in view, God describes his Israel people collectively as an animal, or as a plant, or as a tree, and as a human being—either male or female. So although, in the above citation, Israel is described as a son called out of Egypt; elsewhere, Israel is referred to as a woman in Egypt—which we will discuss in a succeeding FMS. (Incidentally, Hosea 11:1 therefore was also a Messianic prophecy applied on the personal level to the Christ child when he had to flee Herod. When Herod died, then the Father “called [his] son out of Egypt.”) In the third month after the exodus, the Israelites had come to Mount Sinai with Moses. Here God is treating Israel as feminine, for this was

Their wedding ceremony.

God (Yahweh²) is the groom;³ Israel is the bride. Moses plays the part of the minister (“go-between”). In the first several verses of Exodus 19, Yahweh reviews how he rescued Israel from their oppressors in Egypt. Then he tells her that if she will be an obedient wife, she will be a special treasure to him “above all people.”

Exo 19:5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar [special] treasure unto me above all people: for all

the earth is mine:

Just as when a man chooses a woman to be his wife, that does not mean that the man hates all the other women of the world. So in like manner, God chose one people (Israel) to be his wife. This does not mean that he hates all the other women (peoples, nations) of the earth. It is true that God declares that he will have age-long (not infinite) enmity against certain peoples. That is because he has specifically created them to be enemies for those ages. Nonetheless, God does love the world (John 3:16, 17), his enemies temporarily excepted. But he chose one “woman” to be the recipient of his special love, to be his mate, his helper in carrying out his plan for the world—which is to bless all the families of the earth (Gen. 12:3). Yahweh’s side of the marriage covenant vows continues in Exo. 19:6. God promises his bride, Israel:

6 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.

Priests are intercessors (go-betweens). God would use Israel as the nation which would serve as intercessors between God and the rest of the world. The word *holy* means *separate, set apart for a special purpose*. Israel was to be set apart from the other nations of the world in a number of ways. Obviously, just the fact that she is married to God sets her apart. Another way she was separate was that only Israel was to have God’s laws—at first.

Psa. 78:5 For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children:

1 Chron. 16:17 And hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant,...

Eventually, God’s laws are to be applied over the entire planet.

Isa. 11: 9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of YHWH, as the waters cover the sea.

To teach and administer “the knowledge of YHWH” is part of Israel’s wifely duties. And so Moses, the minister presiding at this wedding, asked the bride if she would be obedient to her husband.

Exo. 19:7 And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which YHWH commanded him.

The bride replied: “I will,” and “I do.”

8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that YHWH hath spoken we will do....

She lied! She did not realize it at that time. She really thought she would obey him. She had the best of in-

tentions. After all, she had just been rescued by her hero from that big, old bully Egypt. Her knight in shining armor had just come in and swooped her off her feet, carried her safely through the Red Sea, killed the dragon in the Red Sea, and rode off with her into the sunset of the Sinai desert. Her heart melted in her infatuation with him. She would need many testings and trials in order for infatuation with him to be transformed into true and mature love for him. But for now, this wedding day was the happiest day of her national life.

Three days after the initial wedding ceremony, the wife came to hear the instructions of her new husband. She trembled in fear as his booming voice came through the thick clouds on Mount Sinai (v. 16). In chapter 20 of Exodus, Yahweh gives his wife ten all-encompassing primary laws, the Ten Commandments. But the more he spoke, the more fearful she became, until she finally backed away from him and told Moses, the minister, to continue to be the go-between between herself and her new husband. What an odd thing to ask of a minister! —to serve as a go-between on the third day of her marriage. Looks like a rocky start to this marriage.

And indeed it was. Having sent Moses up the mountain to get the detailed instructions (the statutes and judgments and ceremonial rituals), the bride immediately began committing idolatry (spiritual adultery), by fashioning a golden calf for worship purposes. The bride was “playing with fire.” He had told his beloved at the outset not to tempt him:

Deu. 4: 24 For YHWH thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God

Exo. 20: 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I YHWH thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

The family farmstead

God had also instructed Moses on the construction details of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. This would be the place where the outward appearance of God’s dwelling with his bride would manifest in brilliant light. Without getting into too much detail here, the Tabernacle has to do with the bedroom part of a marriage. Even so, YHWH the husband had prepared for his bride “a home on 40 acres”—the Promised Land.

After a 40-year “honeymoon” in the desert where the bride finally learned to trust and obey her husband (somewhat), he took her into their new home in Canaanland. But again, the marriage proved bumpy as the bride alternated between obedience and disobedience.

This brought periods of prosperity followed by periods of chastisement in the form of alien invasions and oppression for the Israelites (*Vid.* The Book of Judges).

During the reign of King David, the house was re-modeled (the tribal factions unified). The house was also enlarged with a couple of additions (i.e., the political-military influence of Israel was extended from the Euphrates to the river of Egypt). The high point of the marriage had to have been when, under David's son, King Solomon, the temple to YHWH was dedicated in Jerusalem and God glorified it with his brilliant presence (2 Chron. 7). The temple replaced the portable tabernacle of their wilderness days.

The wife continues "seeing other men"

Unfortunately, towards the latter part of Solomon's glorious reign, he backslid into idolatry, taking the nation with him. Solomon's fame and the power and riches of his Israel kingdom was known throughout the world. As was common custom, political alliances were cemented by marriages. Thus Solomon "collected" wives as a schoolboy might collect model cars or airplanes. Solomon had 300 wives and 700 concubines, many of whom were, of course, foreigners. Tragically, he allowed these women to continue to worship their heathen idols in their quarters in his palaces, and eventually Solomon was seduced into worshipping them as well.

Meanwhile, the people were now being heavily taxed to pay for all of Solomon's great public works projects. Instead of pleading to their husband, YHWH, for relief from the high taxes (Sound familiar?); the people, also, turned to foreign gods. This idolatry was in God's eyes adultery and prostitution. The prophet Hosea was commanded by God to marry a prostitute so that the events in Hosea's personal life could be used as an allegory of God's marriage to Israel.

Hos. 1:2 The beginning of the word of YHWH by Hosea. And YHWH said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land [i.e., the nation] hath committed great whoredom, departing from YHWH.

As the divine marriage continued downhill, the husband used various means to alternately coax and threaten his beloved wife back to his bosom. After Solomon died, Yahweh actually split his wife into two separate houses (1 Kings 12). When Solomon's son, Rehoboam, refused to reduce the high taxes of his father, but instead increased them, a tax revolt was provoked. Ten of the twelve tribes of Israel seceded from the union, forming the northern Kingdom or House of Israel under the kingship of Jereboam. They made the city of Samaria their capital

and Jereboam immediately set up golden calf worship there.

Retaining Jerusalem as their capital, the remaining two tribes of Judah and Benjamin were thereafter called the (southern) Kingdom or House of Judah. From this point onward until the times of the New Testament, God dealt separately with these two sisters, Israel and Judah, the wives of Yahweh-God. Many ministers and theologians fail to distinguish between the very different prophecies concerning the future roles for these two sisters. Hence, there is much confusion about "who's who" in the realm of prophecy in the church today.

Over the next 210 years, the northern House of Israel generally continued in their adultery and whoring around with foreign gods. Yahweh warned this wife (as he did Judah) many times of severe consequences if she did not quit committing adultery. For example,

Amos 5:26 But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves.

27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith YHWH, whose name is The God of hosts.

God divorces one of his wives

She did not repent of her idolatrous/adulterous behavior, so the die was cast. From 745 to 721 B.C., God brought the Assyrian armies into Israel to deport the people to a far off land. That is to say: Yahweh divorced his wife, Israel, and sent her "out of his house" (the first Promised Land). This was in keeping with his own law found in Deuteronomy 24:

KJV Deuteronomy 24:1 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.

This divorce is confirmed by Jeremiah who began his ministry ca. 640 B.C. and which lasted until beyond the Babylonian capture of Judah in 586 B.C.

Jer 2: 6 YHWH said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel [not Judah here] hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot.

7 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.

8 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;...

So one of the sister-wives of God, the northern House of Israel, was divorced by God and she was sent packing and out of his house—old Canaanland. One would think that this would have had a sobering effect on her sister, the House of Judah, and that she would “straighten up and fly right.” Jeremiah continues...

Jer. 3:8: ...yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.

9 And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks.

God made it clear through Jeremiah that committing idolatry by worshiping other gods in the land of Israel was the equivalent of a wife bringing a man who is not her husband into her husband’s house and fornicating with him. What was worse is that Judah pretended that her heart was all for her husband Yahweh:

Jer. 3:10 And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith YHWH.

11 And YHWH said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah.

In other words, in God’s eyes, at least when Israel committed adultery, she did not deny to her husband what she had been doing. Judah, on the other hand, believed that since Solomon’s temple was in their land, that they were free to do whatever they wanted as long as they said they “believed in the Lord.”

Jer. 3: 4 Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of YHWH, The temple of YHWH, The temple of YHWH, are these.

9 Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not;

10 And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?

Is this not what many Christians do today? They go to church, a house of worship (the temple of YHWH), and give lip service to God by claiming the name of Jesus; yet they are taught that the “law was nailed to the cross” (i.e., “we are delivered to do all these abominations”). While most of them won’t murder and commit adultery, they are in disobedience to most of God’s laws because all they know is the summary form of the law, the ten commandments; they are ignorant of the statutes and judgments, and hence violate them daily. Will judgment not come upon us as well?

Furthermore, is it not plain to the reader by now that—contrary to what many denominations teach—getting a divorce and being divorced are not sins? If divorce were a sin, then God sinned! That cannot be! Hence, divorce is

not a sin—it is the result of sins! Divorce is the last resort in a marriage where one or both partners fail to abide by the marriage covenant. For a deeper study on this subject, including how certain New Testament scriptures are misunderstood and misapplied to forbid divorce and remarriage, request our two-tape set (#’s 125 & 126): *Divorce and Remarriage*. Thus far, we have seen that one of the sisters, Israel, was divorced and sent out of her husband’s house. Yet, her treacherous sister Judah played the harlot even worse, and even pretended to be “a good wife.” Yet astonishingly, God did not now divorce her, too! Why not? We will continue this theme in the next issue.

ENDNOTES

1. For the benefit of readers new to our ministry: Since I am a “circuit-riding” Bible teacher and I do not teach the same congregation each week (rather, on a monthly basis), my general practice is to present messages in two-hour segments, rather than one hour. Thus my “two-tape” messages are almost always one continuous message. Therefore, if one requests only “part 1,” of a given set, one will likely find the message left hanging, sometimes right in the middle of a thought as the tape ran out. Hence, when requesting tapes, we suggest always ordering the two-tape set, unless I have noted otherwise. The suggested offering is \$4/tape.

2. In most English Bibles, when one sees the word “Lord” in either all caps [LORD] or in upper and lower caps [LORD], it indicates that the Bible translators have removed the sacred name of our God, which is YHWH (as transliterated from the Hebrew letters, and pronounced Yahweh {Yah-way}). It will be our general practice to reinsert the sacred name where it belongs, either as the tetragrammaton (YHWH) or as the pronounced name (Yahweh).

3. God of course is a spirit, which is incorporeal. God created man-(kind) in his own image... “male and female created he them.” Though a non-physical being as “the Father,” God too has both masculine and feminine aspects. We will elaborate on this in a future FMS. For the most part, however, when God chooses to anthropomorphize himself, he chooses the masculine gender. Thus, in the marriage motif, God is the groom.

Feed My Sheep is a part of the teaching ministry of James Bruggeman and is sent out freely upon request. The tithes and gifts of those who are fed by it make it possible for us to continue in ministry. Contributions may be sent to Stone Kingdom Ministries, P.O. Box 6388, Asheville, NC 28816.