

TWO MARRIAGE COVENANTS

David Baker, prepared for the Presbytery fellowship word, 17 October 2021

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Introduction

Hello everyone, we will continue from our session last week, looking at 'The marriage of Christ and the church'. In this session, we will begin by looking at the words of the apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans. 'Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ [through the crucified body of Christ], that you may be married to another, that is, to Him who was raised from the dead.' Rom 7:4.

We know that the One who was raised from the dead was Jesus Christ. Paul said that we may be married to Jesus Christ 'that we should bear fruit to God'. In this session, we will consider some of the background to this verse, because Paul referred to two quite distinct marriage covenants.

Also, we will consider this verse because it identified the reason for the marriage of Christ and the church, which was that we might 'bear fruit for God'.

Paul did not talk about fruit from the ground; rather, he spoke of a very specific kind of fruit - the fruit of the womb. In particular, he spoke of *the motherhood of the church*, bringing forth sons of God, who will serve the Father as priests in His temple. This is 'fruit for God.'

The church and Christ were married at Calvary

In our last session, we highlighted the fact that the marriage of Christ and the church happened on Mount Calvary. This is not what we would usually picture a wedding to be. It certainly was not a romantic setting, but this was the place of the marriage between Christ and the church.

To illustrate this point: in the beginning, the Lord God put Adam into a deep sleep, and He took a rib from his side, and formed and fashioned the woman to be his wife, a comparable helper for him. When the Lord God brought the woman to Adam, Adam proclaimed, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' Gen 2:23. The woman was later called Eve, because she was to be 'the mother of all living'.

In the same way, the church was formed from the physical body of Christ through His offering on the cross. She was formed to be His wife, and a comparable helper to Him.

Paul picked up the direct quote from the Genesis, and applied it to Christ and the church. 'For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.' Eph 5:30. Paul said that we have been taken from His side, and we are married to Him.

The water, blood and Spirit from Christ's side sanctifies the church

One of our key points from last week was that 'the river of the water of life' that contained the water, the blood, and the Spirit of grace and supplication, flowed from the throne of God, through the physical body of Christ on the cross.

It flows from the throne of God, and from the Lamb, the offering of Christ. That river of the water of life is *the full provision for the sanctification and the cleansing of the church*, as Christ's wife. This sanctifying and cleansing process is operative within the context of the marriage union, or the marriage covenant.

We have come to understand that we are not waiting for the church to be perfected at some point in the future before the marriage can take place.

The church is already married to Christ.

The place of the marriage was Mount Calvary, and now there is a cleansing and sanctifying process which is operative for the church, in the context of that marriage union, or that marriage covenant.

Paul understood the mystery of Christ and His bride

Paul explained this point by saying, 'Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church.' Eph 5:25. Here, Paul said that Christ loved His wife, the church, 'and gave Himself for her.'

We know that this was His offering on the cross, where He laid down His life for her 'that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of the water by the word [the fountain that flows from His side], that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot of wrinkle or any

such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish [or blameless]'. Eph 5:26-27.

The foundations of the bride city

We see that the subject of 'blamelessness' is very important in relation to who we are as sons of God, and our participation in the finished offering of Christ.

It is also central to the nature of the bride of Christ. The church is to be holy and without blemish, or blameless. We concluded our last session by saying that the first manifestation of the church as *the bride city*, coming down out of heaven from God, was seen on the Day of Pentecost. We know this is true because, when the apostle John saw the bride city as the centrepiece of the new heavens and the new earth, he said that the city, and particularly its wall, was built on the foundation of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. This is what we saw happening on the Day of Pentecost.

Abraham understood the marriage of the Lamb

Significantly, it was Abraham who received the first revelation of the new Jerusalem as the bride city, even though he saw it 'from afar off'.

In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul explained that Abraham waited, which means that he was *eagerly looking for* this city, which has foundations, during his earthly pilgrimage.

'By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance.' Heb 11:8.

This verse spoke of Abraham going out to the land that the Lord would give to him and his children, as an inheritance. 'He went out, not knowing where he was going.'

But he then lived in that land with a certain 'view' because of the revelation that he had received of the bride city. 'By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents [or temporary dwelling places] with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise, for he waited for the city which has foundations [we know those foundations are the twelve apostles of the Lamb], whose builder and maker is God.' Heb 1:9-10.

The reformation of Abraham and Sarah's marriage

This revelation not only impacted on how Abraham viewed the land; it also had a major impact on how he lived with his family - the culture of his house as he dwelt in tents with Isaac, his son, and then Jacob, his grandson.

Even though Abram had been looking for this city throughout his earthly pilgrimage, it was not until the Lord appeared to him and gave to him and his wife 'a remnant of the Spirit', that they were able to bring forth Isaac as the promised seed. We know that this did not happen until Abram was 99 years old, when the Lord appeared to him and said, 'Walk before Me, and be blameless.'

Abram and Sarai were not born of the divine nature, but they received a unique portion of the divine nature as an anointing upon them when Yahweh inscribed His name into their names, and thereby gave them new names. We recall that Abram's name became Abraham, which means, 'the father of a multitude.' and Sarai's name became Sarah.

The order of headship delivered Abraham and Sarah

We considered the significance of these names in our book that we released at Easter, *The Blessing of Abraham in Families*.

When Abram and Sarah received their new names, they were able to walk together *in one Spirit*. They embraced the order of headship that God had ordained for their marriage. In the order of headship, as they embraced it, they were *delivered from their fallen and familiar cultures*.

They *received the grace of resurrection life* so that they were able to fulfil the mandate that had been given to them, according to the new names that they had received from the Lord. They received the grace of resurrection life that was necessary for them to bring forth Isaac as the promised seed. This was resurrection life, because Abraham's body was 'as good as dead', and Sarah's womb was also 'dead'.

Children in the Old Covenant

When Isaac was conceived in the womb of Sarah, he was immediately adopted by the Father, and regenerated by the Son.

When he was conceived, he received *identity*, but he also had the other law in his heart. He was conceived and was dead in trespasses and sins, but

he was immediately *adopted* by the Father as a son, and *regenerated* by the Son. He was 'made alive'.

Isaac was not born of the Spirit, but he did *possess the right to the inheritance* of everything that had been revealed to his father.

Adoption is the right to the full inheritance and blessing of Abraham. It is the promise of the Spirit.

Significantly, the Law Covenant did not annul, or revoke, this inheritance for every child who was born to believing parents in the nation of Israel. Under the Law Covenant, parents who walked in the faith of Abraham and Sarah continued to receive a remnant of the Spirit as an anointing in their marriages.

And, as soon as their children were conceived in the womb, they were adopted by the Father and regenerated by the Son. This means that, before they were naturally born into this world, they possessed the right to the inheritance of the resurrection body, and the right to participation in the bride city for the new heavens and new earth. Paul was very clear on the fact that the adoption belonged to Israel. Rom 9:4.

The 'promises were seen afar off'

Paul summarised this point by saying, 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were *assured* of them.' Heb11:13.

Their *assurance* was not just that they had *seen* them; their assurance was because of the *adoption*, which was *the right to the inheritance*.

'They were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.' This was the confession that reflected the culture that they were living.

'But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God.' Heb 11:16. That was in relation to *sonship*, which was their relationship to the *Father*.

Paul added, 'For He has prepared a city for them'. This spoke of the bride city, and their relationship with the Son.

In the same way that Sarah became 'a type' of the bride city in bringing forth Isaac, the whole nation of Israel was called to continue to express the motherhood of Sarah by bringing forth sons and

daughters to become sons of God, by adoption, in the womb.

Circumcision was a sign

Circumcision in the flesh for the nation of Israel was the sign of the family's commitment to the covenant that God had made with Abraham. It was their commitment to continue to walk in the faith of Abraham and Sarah, in relation to the culture of their houses and the raising of their children.

The Lord formalised this mandate of motherhood for the whole nation of Israel when He brought them out of the land of Egypt, to become His bride in the wilderness.

From the perspective of the *Father*, God sent Moses down to Egypt, where he was to say to Pharaoh, 'Israel is My son. Let My firstborn son go free.'

Then, in relation to the *Son*, the Son of God, the whole nation was brought out of Egypt as a chosen people, a special treasure, and they were betrothed to the Son.

The unfaithfulness of Israel

However, rather than fulfilling this mandate of motherhood, the nation of Israel became unfaithful to the Lord, and the judgement of their marriage covenant was invoked upon them.

Paul referred to their unfaithfulness, and to the subsequent judgement upon the nation, because of their unfaithfulness. He wrote, 'Do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the Law), that the Law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?' Rom 7:1.

Paul said that an individual was bound under the judgement of the Law of God until they die with Christ. He then proceeded to illustrate this point, but what he said in the next couple of verses was far more than an illustration. He added a number of other points, and opened quite a big subject concerning the nature of the marriage covenant.

He wrote, 'For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.' Rom 7:2-3.

It is helpful to consider the background to this illustration. Paul used this analogy because of its

direct application to the nation of Israel. As we have said, when the nation of Israel came out of Egypt, the entire nation was married to the Son of God under the Law Covenant.

We could describe the Law Covenant as 'the *first* marriage covenant' - between the Son of God and the nation of Israel.

Hosea warned the northern ten tribes of Israel

The ministry of Hosea, then, became quite important on this subject as he ministered in relation to the ten northern tribes of Israel. David ruled over the whole nation of Israel, and Solomon also ruled over the whole nation of Israel.

But, in the days of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, the kingdom was split, and the ten northern tribes under the leadership of the tribe of Ephraim, became known as 'the house of Israel'. The southern two tribes remained under the leadership of the tribe of Judah, and they became known as 'the house of Judah'.

Hosea ministered in relation to the ten northern tribes, or the house of Israel, after they had split from Judah, but before they were conquered by Assyria and scattered among the nations. He addressed them particularly in relation to their unfaithfulness to the marriage covenant.

The prophets had to 'live' their message, not only speak it

Remarkably, the Lord instructed the prophet Hosea to marry a wife who would be unfaithful to him, in order to highlight the unfaithfulness of the house of Israel to their marriage covenant with the Lord.

There are many instances when the Lord asked various prophets to join or live the message as they proclaimed the Lord's word to the people.

For example, Ezekiel had to lie on his left side for 390 days, and to eat only food that was cooked on cow dung, because he was fully identifying with the judgement of the Lord upon the house of Israel. Then he turned over on his right side, and lay there for forty days to identify with the judgement of the house of Judah.

Hosea married a harlot

The Lord asked the prophet Hosea to join His reproach in a very personal and costly way in relationship to the house of Israel and their

unfaithfulness. He asked Hosea to marry a woman who would be unfaithful to him, in order to highlight the unfaithfulness of the house of Israel to their marriage covenant with the Lord. 'When the Lord began to speak by Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea: "Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the Lord".' Hos 1:2.

The whole house of Israel, by that stage, was full of idolatry - full of idolatry and full of unfaithfulness. When they split from the house of Judah, Jeroboam set up two golden calves, so that the people did not need to go down to Jerusalem to take their offerings and their sacrifices. He said to them, 'These are your gods that brought you up out of Egypt.' He established a whole new priesthood. He established new priests. The whole land was characterised by idolatry and unfaithfulness.

The name of Hosea's wife was Gomer and, following their marriage, Hosea and Gomer had three children in quick succession. The Lord told Hosea to give a specific name to each of these children, and each name was very important.

It was significant. It was symbolic, because it identified the predicament of every child that was born in the northern kingdom, or the house of Israel. This was the predicament of every child born, in every house, because of the unfaithfulness of the nation in relation to their marriage covenant to the Lord.

Hosea's children

The first child that Hosea and Gomer had was a son. The Lord told Hosea to call his name Jezreel, which means 'God will sow'. It signified that God was going to bring an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel by scattering the ten northern tribes among all the nations of the world, under the kingdom of Assyria. This was a profound judgement upon them.

The second child was a daughter. The Lord told Hosea to 'call her name Lo-Ruhamah', which means 'not loved.' This signified that the Lord would no longer show mercy to the children of the house of Israel. They were all under His judgement.

The third child was another son. The Lord told Hosea to 'call his name Lo-Ammi', which means 'Not My people'. This signified that the children of the house of Israel, the northern ten tribes, had lost

the adoption. They no longer belonged to the Lord as the children of Abraham. They had become no different from every other nation in the world, and their children were no different from the children born in every other house, in any nation in the world. They were not saved; they were not going to heaven.

The Lord promised a new marriage covenant

However, the Lord also declared, through the prophet Hosea, that He would establish a new marriage covenant with the house of Israel as part of Jew and Gentile in the one body of Christ.

The Lord declared, 'Bring charges against your mother, bring charges; for she is not My wife, nor am I her Husband!' Hos 2:2. Here, God wrote a certificate of divorce against Israel. Having said that, God also said, "And it shall be, in that day," says the Lord, "that you will call Me 'My Husband,' and no longer call Me 'My Master'." Hos 2:16.

When the Lord referred to 'that day', He spoke about the day of Christ's offering, from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross.

It was through the offering of Christ on the cross that *He united both Jew and Gentile* in His physical body, and then brought forth the church from His body to be His bride forever.

The Lord will reverse the curse

Speaking about His offering on the cross, the Lord proclaimed, 'I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the Lord.'" Hos 2:19.

Based on this new marriage covenant, the previous judgements upon the children of the woman would be reversed. So, concerning the judgement of Jezreel, the Lord said, 'Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth.' Hos 2:23.

The *scattering* that occurred in judgement became *sowing* for a faithful remnant who would then be regathered in the fullness of the nations.

He then said, 'And I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy.' That was to reverse the prophecy against Lo-Ruhamah. God said, 'I will have mercy on the child called "Lo-Ruhamah", or "not loved." Then I will say to those who were not My people [or, to the child called Lo-Ammi], "You

are My people!" and they shall say, "You are my God!"'

Paul picked up this major prophetic theme in the Book of Romans, where he noted, 'In the place where it was said, "You are not My people". There you will be called sons of the living God.'

Hosea finished prophesying around 725 BC, which was only three years before the ten northern tribes were conquered by Assyria, and were then scattered among the nations.

Jeremiah prophesied against Judah

Jeremiah prophesied around one hundred years later to the southern kingdom, to the house of Judah. We looked at this in relation to the Seventy Weeks prophecy, because it was Jeremiah who proclaimed that Judah, or the Jews, would be sent into Babylon, where they would be in exile for seventy years.

He sent a letter to the exiles and, as Daniel read that letter, and studied the writings of Jeremiah, he came to understand that that period of exile was coming to an end.

We, also, need to look at the prophecies of Jeremiah concerning the marriage, because he made some important statements concerning the unfaithfulness of both Israel and Judah, to their marriage covenant with the Lord.

Judah became worse than Israel

Speaking to the Jews, the southern kingdom, Jeremiah drew their attention to the unfaithfulness of the northern kingdom of Israel. He referred to them as 'backsliding Israel'.

He said, 'The Lord also said to me in the days of Josiah the king [he was the great reformer; the great king of Judah]: "Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot." And I said, after she has done all these things, "Return to Me." But she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it.' Jer 3:6-7.

Here, the Lord called the ten northern tribes 'backsliding Israel'; and the southern tribes 'treacherous Judah.'

'Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear [it did

not bring Judah to the fear of the Lord] but went and played the harlot also.’ Hos 3:8.

The certificate of divorce was issued at the time of the ministry of Hosea. That was when Hosea said, on behalf of the Lord, ‘She is not My wife, and nor am I her Husband.’

Interestingly, Judah looked on, but did not learn from the mistakes of Israel. In fact, their condition became far worse than the condition in Israel, in relation to their unfaithfulness. Through Jeremiah, the Lord said, ‘And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but in pretence [or with deceit]’, says the Lord. Then the Lord said to me, “Backsliding Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah”.’ Jer 3:10-11.

Jew and Gentile united in the bride city

In a similar manner to Hosea, the prophet Jeremiah also declared that the Lord would make a new marriage covenant.

This new marriage covenant would include ‘backsliding Israel’, if we continue to use that term, as they were scattered among the nations, but then they will be regathered,’ with the fullness of the nations; also ‘treacherous Judah’.

The Lord declared through Jeremiah, ‘Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them.’ Jer 31:31-32.

The Lord spoke of a marriage covenant which had been broken. But He will establish a new marriage covenant, and the new marriage covenant will not be like the old marriage covenant.

The key point is that the Lord promised to make a new marriage covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah that would not be like the previous marriage covenant that He had made with the nation of Israel in the wilderness.

Comparing the two marriage covenants

There are several important differences between these two marriage covenants - between the old, or the first, marriage covenant, and the new marriage covenant.

For example, under the old marriage covenant, the nation of Israel was brought out of the land of Egypt to be joined to the Lord by a covenant.

In contrast to this, the church was taken out of the physical body of Christ, through His offering on the cross. The church was not brought out of the world, as in the first case.

Jesus Christ will unite Jew and Gentile - the whole world - in His physical body.

The world was crucified with Him, and He was crucified with the world. The church was brought forth, or formed, to be His wife, and comparable helper, out of His physical body.

The new marriage covenant is not two becoming one; it is one becoming two.

As we have considered, the most helpful example of the marriage of Christ and the church was the way in which the first woman was formed from the rib of Adam.

In the same way, the church was formed from the physical body of Christ on the cross.

Second, the old marriage covenant did not include *a sanctifying and cleansing process* for the nation of Israel.

In contrast to this, the cleansing and sanctifying process for the church is an integral part of the marriage union for the new marriage covenant. Jesus Christ has already *perfected* the church through His offering on the cross.

Then, as the Husband of the church, He is now cleansing, and continuing to cleanse, and sanctify the church through *the washing of the water of the word*.

This is the word that is ministered to the church through the presbyteries that He holds in His right hand. This is the way in which *the headship of Christ is expressed to His church*.

Third, a remnant of the Spirit was given to a married couple who walked in the faith of Abraham and Sarah as *an anointing of the Spirit*.

In contrast to this, the remnant of the Spirit that is given to a married couple who belong to the church, as the bride of Christ, is their own unique portion of the divine nature.

Their family belongs to the bride city, which has been built upon the foundation of the twelve apostles, since the day of Pentecost. This is the city

which Abraham and the great men and women of faith saw during the Old Covenant. They only saw it 'from afar off'.

But *we belong to this bride city*.

Fourth, a child who was conceived by a believing couple with a remnant of the Spirit, during the Old Covenant, was adopted by the Father and was regenerated by the Son, while the child was still in the womb.

A child who is conceived by a believing couple who belong to the church, the bride of Christ, according to the New Covenant, is adopted by the Father and is regenerated by the Son.

The child also receives the Holy Spirit; so they are *born of the Spirit*.

They receive *the inheritance of the divine nature*, and are caught up to become part of the temple, or house of God the Father in the heavenly places, while they are still in their mother's womb.

Of course, when the child is born, their parents teach and instruct them concerning the various foundations for their salvation, including what it means to 'fear the Lord'; what it means to be 'a friend of God'; what it means to 'present themselves as a living sacrifice'; all of those elements.

In Christ, we have died to the Law

We will consider this in more detail in future sessions. The apostle Paul summarised this whole proposition in our key verse when he said, 'Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ.' Rom 7:4.

Through the crucified body of Christ, we have died to the Law; and we have also died to the previous marriage covenant, or the law of the husband.

'Through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another – to Him who was raised from the dead [that is, married to Christ], that we should *bear fruit to God*.'

This is a most remarkable passage which highlights the two sides of the one offering of Christ.

The one offering of Christ has both abolished the old marriage covenant, and established the new marriage covenant.

Specifically, the death of Christ freed the Jewish nation from the previous marriage covenant so that they were free to be 'married to another'; that is, to Christ.

In one sense, it is the same Husband, but it is a completely new marriage covenant.

In the same offering, Jesus Christ has united both Jews and Gentiles in His body, and has brought forth the church from His body to be His wife under the new marriage covenant.

As we conclude, we note that this verse clearly says that *we are now married to Him* who has been raised from the dead.

The church is *now* married to Christ.

Significantly, it also highlights the reason for this marriage. Why is it necessary for Christ to have a bride? The reason is that the bride is bringing forth fruit to God, and bringing forth sons of God who will serve the Father in His temple.

We will continue to consider this further in our next session.