

**Series: God & Man & Woman #785**

**Title: Genesis 2.24, Part 3**

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world! Our text in the Bible is Genesis chapter 2 and verse 24. And we're asking questions of the text, this first one being, why does God have Moses write this statement on marriage here, right at the beginning of man and woman? Yesterday I proposed to you that while Genesis 2.24 is definitely about the marriage between Adam and Eve, it is about *more* than that. The reason this statement about marriage appears so early in the Bible, the reason the first man and the first woman are wed in just the second chapter of Genesis, is because God is teaching us about the nature of the relationship of us to Him.

Listen to this: the first marriage points us to the marriage between God and us! No wonder the Lord prominently places these words so early on in His Book, written for us. And we started to see how it is that God is married to us, as we considered the Israelite people. In the Bible's Old Testament Israel is pictured as being married to God. Israel is God's chosen people and He chose them and married them. The covenant that God made with the Jews at Mount Sinai is seen as a marriage.

We read from Ezekiel chapter 16, verses 8-14. And I recommended all of the chapter to you. I will quote from Ezekiel chapter 16 again. And then I cited two other texts: Jeremiah 31.32 and Isaiah 54.5. In each of these passages God makes it clear that He has married Himself to Israel. He is a husband to them. And early on, this marriage gets off to a good start. Consider, for example, how God assessed the early days of the marriage in Jeremiah 2, verse 2. I'll read that for us.

Jeremiah 2.2, **"Thus says the LORD, I remember concerning you the devotion of your youth, the love of your betrothals, Your following after Me in the wilderness...Israel was holy to the LORD..."** That last part was actually from verse 3 (Jeremiah 2, verses 2 and 3).

Maybe you have done that concerning your marriage to your husband or to your wife? Sometimes anniversaries are a good time for this. You sit down over dinner and reminisce? And you both remember the start of the marriage: your devotion to one another, your love, and how wonderful was this; how healthy. Many married people want to get back to that after many years pass and some of the tribulations of life together begin to mount. Ah, those were the days! We look back fondly.

Well, God looks back fondly on the way His marriage to the Israelites began, because what started off well makes a sharp turn for the worse. Israel cheats on God. Israel (the wife) cheats on God (her Husband). Israel commits adultery in a *very* big, bold, and public way. We can stay right in Jeremiah chapter 3 to read about this. Listen to Jeremiah 3, verse 20. **"Surely, as a woman treacherously departs from her lover, so you have dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel,' declares the Lord."**

Or, come back with me to the Book of Ezekiel chapter 16, and let me read verses 32-35. Here, God compares Israel to a harlot. A harlot being a prostitute. **"<sup>32</sup>You adulteress wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband! <sup>33</sup>Men give gifts to all harlots, but you give your gifts to all your lovers to bribe them to come to you from every direction for your harlotries. <sup>34</sup>Thus you are different from those women in your harlotries, in that no one plays the harlot as you do, because you give money and no money is given you; thus you are different. <sup>35</sup>Therefore, O harlot, hear the word of the Lord."**

These are strong words, and I remind you: they come from *God*. Actually, Israel is worse than a harlot. The harlot gets paid for sex. The prostitute prostitutes herself or himself for money.

But in the case of the nation of Israel *they* actually paid, *they* bribed the gods (small g) they slept with to come and commit adultery with *them*! *They* paid tributes to the godless nations around them. God says of His own people, His wife, **"...no one plays the harlot as you do..."** The Lord calls Israel an **"adulteress wife."**

Prostitution is horrific and awful in every way. To prostitute oneself is sin. To visit with a prostitute is sin. But the reality is that prostitution has destroyed many a marriage. With the proliferation of online sex, perhaps (perhaps) the days of men and women hooking up with a prostitute in-person, on a street corner or in the back of a car has lessened. But if you are (or were) married to someone who broke the covenant of marriage by committing the act of adultery with a harlot, then you know the deep pain this has caused you. And if this is public knowledge, then you have faced the shame that comes along with it. I am sorry this has been your reality, and I pray God will give you His love and His grace so that you can be completely healed of the competing emotions of anger and sorrow.

Have you heard of a man named Hosea? He's not around anymore, but he was a real man, a prophet. And there is an entire Book of the Bible dedicated to his story. It is thirteen chapters long (so not so short) and it is found among the prophetic books towards the end of the Old Testament. In the first half of the Book we meet Hosea and his adulteress wife, Gomer. Hosea was faithful to her but she was not faithful to him. This symbolizes how unfaithful Israel was to God.

What is *very* intriguing is that God commands Hosea to marry Gomer. But repeatedly she abandons him for her other lovers. In the early chapters Hosea compares Israel to one who leaves marriage for the life of a harlot or prostitute. This is all designed to show how God was married to Israel but Israel turned to prostitution, cheating on God. Listen, if you would, to Hosea chapter 1, verse 2, **"When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea, 'Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the Lord.'**" This reflects the adultery of Israel. (Hosea 1, verse 2.)

Also Hosea chapter 9 and verse 1. God speaks again, **"Do not rejoice, O Israel, with exultation like the nations! For you have played the harlot, forsaking your God..."** That was Hosea 9, verse 1.

So what does all this lead to? God is married to Israel. He is a husband to them. But, while this marriage got off to a good start, it turns bad when Israel turns to harlotry. They forsake God. What this leads to is divorce. The unstoppable adultery, the lack of repentance from their adultery, led God to issue a divorce certificate to His bride Israel. Listen to these profound words from the Lord God in Jeremiah chapter 3, verses 6-10. Yes, we are back to Jeremiah 3.

**<sup>6</sup> Then the Lord said to me in the days of Josiah the king, 'Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there.' <sup>7</sup> I thought, 'After she has done all these things she will return to Me'; but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it.**

Let me just interrupt here for a moment. Israel is the northern kingdom and Judah the southern kingdom. In dramatic language God is saying He thought once Israel had finished her adultery they would return to be faithful to their husband, God. But they did not. And this influenced Israel's sister, Judah, who then followed Israel into adultery. Let's continue at verse 8. (Jeremiah 3.8.)

**<sup>8</sup> And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also. <sup>9</sup> Because of the lightness of her harlotry, she polluted the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. <sup>10</sup> Yet in spite of all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to Me with all her heart, but rather in deception,' declares the Lord."** If you want to read this for yourself, it is Jeremiah 3.6-10.

And right there God brings up divorce. **"...I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce..."** The divorce is associated with exile. It is true that God hates divorce, except in the case of ongoing and unrepentant adultery. That is all I have time to say about it, but thankfully God invites His bride to return to Him. You see, God *loves* His bride. God loves His people, and He does not want to go through with the divorce. He has too much mercy, grace, and well, love. So, let's end our week together again in Jeremiah chapter 3.

If you are willing, this weekend, read Jeremiah chapter 3, verses 12-14. We are going to open up with this on Monday, so get prepared. See how God invites faithless Israel to return to Him! That's Jeremiah 3.12-14. I hope you will read this, and then join me again on Monday as we continue to discover who God Is.

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