

Sermon to the Saints of God assembled at Topeka, KS: Sunday, May 19, 2019

Betrothal

Last time I preached, we talked about the fundamental building blocks of the human creation –“... *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? 6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*” (**Matthew 19:4-6**) Humans are either male or female, and they are only to be cleaved together (spiritually and physically) in marriage - that holy institution from which humans are to reproduce, and preserve the heritage of God in the earth by teaching it faithfully to their sons and daughters. If the Lord has appointed marriage for a man, he leaves the headship of his father, in order to establish a new body, wherein he takes on authority and accountability to rule his house well in the sight of God. In addition, God appointed that holy institution to perpetually teach mankind about the covenant relationship between God and His elect people. “*This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*” (**Ephesians 5:32**) Today, we will consider another facet of this great mystery: betrothal – the transitional period between a promise to marry, and the marriage itself.

- What is betrothal, and how was it practiced in the scriptures?
- What does betrothal teach us about our relationship with God?

What is betrothal, and how was it practiced in the scriptures?

- At its core, betrothal is simply a promise between two people to marry. It is similar to the modern concept of engagement, but it is more binding. While we do not actually practice betrothal, I suggest to you dear friends that we ought to ensure that our practical approach to “engagement” aligns with the doctrinal truths bound up in betrothal.
- There are two English words that the scriptures use synonymously to describe betrothal: betroth and espouse.
 - Espouse - 7 occurrences:
 - mnesteuo: “to be promised in marriage; to be betrothed”
 - Betroth - 13 occurrences:
 - ya’ad: “to meet, gather, assemble, by appointment.”
 - ‘aras: “to betroth, engage.”
 - Consider the English verb “betroth”. “be” – being, existing, proceeding; “troth” – truth. This is all about a promise – entering into a betrothal is a very serious matter – you are proceeding from that moment maintaining the truth and certainty that you have committed

to do a thing, and you have established trust that it will in fact be done. You are proceeding from that moment in truth and in trust; faithfulness is required!

- While the scriptures certainly speak to betrothal, it is difficult to get a complete picture of the practical details. That lack of specific details tells us that there is not an exact practical path for us to take when it comes to engagement. Another thing that clouds this issue, is the misbehavior of men throughout the ages, such that this beautiful doctrine is abused and maligned. It is vilified and dismissed as the practice of an oppressive patriarchy that treats women like property to be bought and sold against their will, as mere business interests, and / or sexual objects. There is no doubt that such things have happened throughout history, including in the scriptures, and yet that's not what the scriptures teach, and it's not the behavior that you see from the people of God. Wicked men will always find a way to corrupt a good thing, and twist it to their own purposes. Consider the shocking wickedness and corruption in the filthy "marriage" industrial complex that our generation has built. The fact is that the people of God can walk uprightly before God in these matters regardless of the construct that our generation is employing. Just keep in mind that I'm not addressing the ways that betrothal has been abused, but am focusing on what it is at it's heart, and how it was **appropriately** utilized in the scriptures.
 - Betrothals were influenced by parents, and were to be done with their consent.
 - **Genesis 24:1-7** *"1 And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. 2 And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: 3 And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: 4 But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac. ... 7 The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence."*
 - **Ruth 3:1-4** *"1 Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? 2 And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshingfloor. 3 Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man, until he*

shall have done eating and drinking. 4 And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do.”

- Again, people often equate betrothal with “arranged” marriages. The fact is that most societies throughout history, have practiced arranged marriage. However, even within a society that practiced arranged marriage, you see from the above examples from scripture, that the people of God have never looked to force or coerce anyone into marriage. What folly! It is a clever satanic lie to equate appropriate parental involvement in this most sensitive and important of matters with the notion of some archaic, freedom-crushing, sex-trafficking, woman-hating boogeyman.
- Godly parents invest their lives into preserving the heritage of God, by raising their children to understand and obey His commands; they must not get lock jaw and step aside as their children consider one of the most impactful things that they will ever do in their lives, and at a time when their pride, lust and hormones are high, and their experience, patience, and sobriety are low. It is the solemn responsibility of any parent that loves God, and loves their children, to soberly help them through this sensitive matter. They must know the frames of their children, and prayerfully help them accordingly: whether to marry, and who to marry.
 - I would not want to push my children towards marriage; in fact, **1Corinthians 7:36-38** says that I ought to use my influence to provoke them toward sober consideration of a celibate life focused on service to God. In the event that they have soberly considered the scriptures, and express a desire for marriage to a person that the Lord has put in their path, my only interest is ensuring that they are equally yoked together in faith, and that they are both in an appropriate position to pursue such a thing.
- Betrothal was done with the desire of both the man and the woman. It was not forced or coerced.
 - **Genesis 24:56-67** *“And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master. 57 And they said, We will call the damsel, and enquire at her mouth. 58 And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go. 59 And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham’s servant, and his men. 60 And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the*

mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them. 61 And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way. ... 64 And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel 65 For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a vail, and covered herself. 66 And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. 67 And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death."

- Remember, friends, that we are dealing with the Sovereign God of creation – the God of providence, who has appointed all things for His own glory, and for our good. That God has dispatched His holy angels to directly participate in these matters. That God has woven together incredible paths and circumstances that bring people together in marriage.
 - **Proverbs 30:18,19** *"18 There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: 19 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."*
 - Do you ever just sit in amazement at the work of God? I can watch a bird flying – I can see that it got from here to there – I know it happened, and yet I am mesmerized and in awe of the fact that it happened. Similarly, when the providence of the Almighty plays out in the matter of the marriage of His saints, I can see the work after it has happened, and be in awe of it, but there is no way that I could have predicted, or produced the path – or the outcome of the matter. To think that we are able to bring something to pass by force of will and effort is foolish and destructive to ourselves and others. If it is not going to happen, then you cannot force it to happen! Trust God! Married or not, faith and contentment with God must be the foundation of each of our lives.
- Betrothal appears to have been sealed with an oath to God, similar to the vows that we make at a wedding. At the end of the betrothal, there may not have been additional vows to make at the actual marriage event.
 - Scripturally we know that two things happened when the betrothal ended and the marriage began:

- The bridegroom received his bride, and consummated the marriage. (**Genesis 24:67**) The walk in faith and trust was done, and the walk in sight, and in presence began.
 - In some instances, we see a celebration – the marriage supper. (**Matthew 22**)
- A dowry was given as the earnest of the oath. The dowry is the bride-price that the prospective husband paid to the father of the bride. The dowry was both compensation to that family for the loss of their dear daughter, as well as a demonstration of the young man’s willingness and ability to care for his wife. It showed an understanding and respect for the responsibility that the new husband was taking on – the gravity of the situation. He recognized that he was removing this woman from the safety of her father’s headship, and taking her to himself. It demonstrated his understanding that a good wife is of great value (**Proverbs 31:10; Proverbs 18:22**).
- There was an established dowry among the Jews:
 - **Exodus 22:17** *“If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins.”*
 - Sometimes the dowry didn’t take the form of money:
 - **Genesis 29:18, 20** *“18 And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. ... 20 And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.”*
 - **1Samuel 18:25** *“And Saul said, Thus shall ye say to David, The king desireth not any dowry, but an hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king’s enemies. But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.”*
 - This concept of the dowry points to the readiness of the husband to “take” a wife unto himself. I focus particularly on the husband, because the burden is primarily on him: he is the head; he must be the savior of that new body; he must be the one dwelling with his wife according to knowledge. Does he know what he is about in this life as a servant of God? Does he understand, and is he prepared, to take on the yoke? There is no particular age that drives this question, and there is no objective scriptural benchmark to measure against. This has to begin in a man’s heart, between himself and the Lord. This is also where parents are of great value to their children – they know the burden, and they know the frame of their children; they have to assess whether they think that their children are ready to start down this path, and then be prepared to help them through it. Beloved – please listen to the wisdom of your parents in these matters.

- The husband gave gifts to the bride, as tokens of his love; gifts that outwardly identified her as his betrothed.
 - **Genesis 34:12** *“Ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me: but give me the damsel to wife.”*
 - **Genesis 24:53** *“And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things.”*
- The best I can tell, betrothals generally lasted about one year. The betrothed man and woman returned to their father’s house, where their focus was on individually preparing themselves - practically and spiritually. For instance, she had a wedding garment to prepare, and he had to prepare a place for them to live, and the means to support his new family.
 - Consider the preparation that you do when a new baby is on the way, and think of this in those terms. A new body is being formed in the universe! Learn what you can about the responsibility that you are taking on, so that you know what you need to do when you get there. Don’t just learn those things in theory, but implement them immediately in the context of your father’s house. Time to double down!
 - Preparing to be a husband? Spend your time and focus appended at the hip with your father, with fresh eyes on the burden that he carries, learning to consider the weight of accountability in making decisions that you have second guessed. Drink in wisdom that you can bring to bear when you assume the headship of your own house. Practical wisdom is good, but spiritual wisdom is better. For instance: what does it mean to be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience? (Titus 2:2) How do you establish your house on the rock of faith? How do you dwell with your wife according to knowledge?
 - Preparing to be a wife? Spend your time and focus appended at the hip with your mother, putting fresh eyes on the burden that she carries, and considering those things that you have taken for granted. What does it mean to be sober, to love your husband, to love your children, to be discreet, chaste, keepsers at home, good, obedient to your husband that the word of God be not blasphemed? (Titus 2:4,5) What does it mean to be a help meet for him?
- Betrothal is a deadly serious matter, and should be seen as such. It should not be embarked upon lightly.

- Once a person was betrothed – even though they were not yet married - the words “husband” and “wife” began to apply. The only reason to break the betrothal was the “cause of fornication” (**Matthew 5:32**), and it required a divorce to accomplish it.
 - **Matthew 1:18** *“18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.”*
- The penalty for having sex with a betrothed woman is the same as the penalty for adultery: death.
 - **Deuteronomy 22:22-29** *“22 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. 23 If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; 24 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. ... 28 If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; 29 Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel’s father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days.”*
- Remember – this matter of betrothal is a promise that is held in trust. There is certainty here. Once you embark upon this path, you are now about the business of cleaving to your spouse; this is not the time to stop and smell the roses! Turning aside makes room for satanic confusion. Once the matter is established, faithfulness is required. Consider how the Lord views it when His people aren’t faithful to Him in His absence. Once the matter is established, it is a deadly game to try to turn a person away from their betrothed – consider how the Lord views it when someone tries to turn His people away from Him! Don’t do it! There must be confidence that there aren’t people working against the interest of the betrothed – sowing confusion and doubt that turns them aside from preparing themselves individually.

What does betrothal teach us about our relationship with God?

- God – in the office of the Father – spiritually betrothed Israel to himself, but she dealt treacherously and committed whoredoms against him, for which cause He wrote her a bill of divorcement.
 - **Jeremiah 3:8-9** *“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; 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.”*
- Even so, God will keep His covenant with Israel, and will betroth her again to himself in the form of 144,000 faithful Jews, who will maintain their virginity walking uprightly before him during their 1000 year betrothal. (**Revelation 14**) After that period, God will consummate that relationship by coming down to dwell with them eternally in a renewed earth. (**1Corinthians 15:24; Revelation 21**)
 - **Isaiah 62:1-5** *“1 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. 2 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. 3 Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. 4 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. 5 For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.”*
 - **Hosea 2:14-20** *“14 Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. 15 And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. 16 And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi [Husband]; and shalt call me no more Baali [lord]. 17 For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name. ... 19 And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. 20 I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.”*
- At the same time, in the office of Jesus Christ, God has spiritually betrothed the Church to himself. Consider the Apostle’s words to our friends of faith at Corinth: *“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one*

husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” (2Corinthians 11:2) Let us consider the manner in which our Lord Jesus Christ came into this earth to betroth His bride.

- He betrothed us with His desire, and gave us faith whereby we desire Him, and profess our love before men. (**Luke 22:15, 16; 1Timothy 6:12**)
- He came with the consent of His Father. (**John 8:28,29**)
- He paid the dowry with His very life. (**1Peter 1:18,19**)
- He left gifts for His bride; gifts that uniquely identify her as His!
 - **Ephesians 4:8-12** “8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. ... 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”
 - **John 14:25-27** “25 These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. 26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. 27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”
- He has returned to his father’s house to prepare a home to receive his bride into.
 - **John 14:1-3** “1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”
- He has left us to prepare, to be faithful, and to watch for His return.
 - The Hebrew word for bride is “Kallah”, which comes from “Kalal”, meaning “to make complete; to make perfect”. This is a time of labor; His bride is industriously preparing!
- He has sworn an oath to come again to receive His bride, in joyous celebration at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb:
 - **1Thessalonians 4:16-18** “16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

- **Revelation 19:5-9** “5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. 6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. 7 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. 8 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. 9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”
- **Revelation 21:2** “2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

I want to leave you with this final concept that gives me great hope and joy. It is captured beautifully in the juxtaposition of two passages in Deuteronomy. Both have to do with exemption from military service. The first passage applies to people who are betrothed. The second passage refers to people that have been newly married.

- **Deuteronomy 20:5-7** “5 And the officers shall speak unto the people, saying, What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it. 6 And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not yet eaten of it? let him also go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man eat of it. 7 And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her.”
 - Why are these categories of people exempted from military service? The focus and mindshare of these people would be consumed with these other matters, which would make them distracted, and therefore dangerous to the unit. Indeed, building a house is an all consuming proposition. Preparing to be married is all consuming; not in a way of smitten fantasy, but in a way of sober, focused preparation!
 - More importantly, all three of these categories are used throughout the scriptures as metaphors of the work that we have to do while we faithfully await the return of our Lord. It is work that is specific to each of us. It is the primary focus of our lives. We must prove faithful in the work, and the trials that have been uniquely appointed for each of us. Beginning the work is not enough; we must be found faithful at the END of the work. If we are not, then another will take our place. Friends, this is the nature of our walk in faith. From the moment of our profession of faith in Christ, until the

moment that we look upon our bridegroom's blessed face, we are in a state of betrothal. We must labor; we must watch; we must be faithful.

- **Deuteronomy 24:5** *“When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken.”*
 - Here the man is excused from military service, because he should be given space to pour his love and affection upon his wife. In the flesh, this is a brief moment in time, and it is imperfect.
 - However, this is a beautiful type of Beulah land, that lies just before us! Our Lord will pour his attention and affection upon us for ever! Herein we will know love, peace, and rest in Christ!
 - In that light, consider the Apostle's instruction: “those that have wives be as though they had none.” (**1Corinthians 7:29**) We can, and should, dwell in love and joy with our spouses, and yet while we are in this flesh, it is all fading, and we are full of labor and sorrow. Our lasting joy and solace is NOT in the betrothal period – it is in the marriage to come!

I love you all. Amen.