
POLYGAMY

What Does the Bible Say?

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Unless otherwise indicated, Bible quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible

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PREFACE

One of the most puzzling questions, if not the most puzzling, is on the subject of polygamy. Nearly everyone who reads and studies the Word of God has this question in mind.

Personally, I've been searching for a convincing explanation for more than a decade. There were many interpretations that I read from various sources but I was not completely satisfied as some of the Bible passages were unclear still, to me. I thought I would never get a satisfactory answer until one day, God delivered this answer in a "package" in a distinct manner!

It happened one evening.

A sister from Australia, with whom I had the privilege of sharing the Word of God on many important topics, was confronted by a loved one on this question—on the practice of polygamy in the Old Testament. She wanted to know the answer for herself and also to get back to that loved one who asked the question. She asked her brother to contact me and get the answer emailed at the earliest.

That weekend I was out of town. I was impressed to contact her brother who told me about it. I assured him I would come home the next morning and would give him the answer. But I did not know the answer up until that moment but right afterthis happened!

Immediately after I hung up the phone, as if in a "package", God planted the seed in my mind. With these strong impressions from above I was sure I could now develop a convincing answer from scripture.

And there it was! All the spiritual ingredients were now in my mind; I had to just put it words in a right sequence with the passages from Scripture.

Polygamy: What Does the Bible Say?--is the outcome of that unique experience that I had. I sincerely hope and pray that this book will be a blessing to all who are searching for the truth in this matter and consequently are able to set their minds free with regards to this “controversial” subject

--Michael Pedrin

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CHAPTER 1

Polygamy and The Bible

The question on the practice of polygamy in Bible times has intrigued nearly every Bible student. When I discussed this question with some people I realized that some of them were sure that polygamy was a wrong practice. But they found it difficult to understand and explain this custom that was commonly practiced in the Old Testament times—even among God's people. Others felt that it was permitted then but was done away within the New Testament times. Yet, others feel it was okay then and now, as long as it is legally permitted by the law of the land.

When we prayerfully search the scriptures an amazing truth unfolds. God permitted this practice, sinful though it was, and used it as a tool to teach spiritual lessons of the plan of salvation.

The Consistent Word:

The truth of the Bible is simple and clear. God never commanded anyone to have more than one wife. Throughout Scripture we see the consistent Word of God, even with regard to this issue.

Look at the first man, Adam. God gave him one wife, Eve. God commanded them to fill the earth with their children.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it.
(Genesis 1:28)

Though God told them to be fruitful and multiply, God did not give Adam more than one wife for an easier way of multiplying and replenishing the earth! This makes it very clear that it was not God's plan for man to have more than one wife, even in a sinless environment.

Lamech, the Father of Polygamy:

The first one to take more than one wife was Lamech. He was the seventh from Adam, in Cain's line, the lineage that went away from God.

And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. (Genesis 4:19)

On the other hand, the seventh from Adam, from Seth's side, the lineage that was faithful to God, was Enoch, who walked with God and was translated to heaven (See Hebrews 11:5). This is an interesting parallel running from two streams—one, earthward, and the other, heavenward. So Polygamy was an invention from the children of "Cain, who was of that wicked one" (1 John 3:12).

Evil started to multiply rapidly and barely 1500 years after creation God decided to destroy the entire world because of the terrible sins that prevailed over the entire human race. Only one family—Noah's—was found righteous before God. Aside from the sins of crime and violence, there was this disregard for the purity of marriage too. The Scripture declares:

That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took

them wives of all which they chose. And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man. (Genesis 6:2, 3)

The scripture says, “They took them wives”. Even the decedents of Abel, who were called “sons of God” departed from the marriage pattern of the Garden of Eden and followed the father of polygamy, Lamech, in choosing them “wives”! Not only that they choose the polygamous lifestyle by intermarrying with the unbelieving decedents of Cain, who were called the “daughters of men”.

But Noah and his three sons followed the model that God had set in the beginning. All these men were married and they had only one wife each. It is written:

Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark. (Genesis 7:13)

Noah, his wife and their three sons and their wives—eight people—were saved during the flood. Peter clarifies to us the number of people who survived the flood.

The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. (1 Peter 3:20)

God's Constant Reminder:

God constantly reminded His people about monogamy in marriage, which was His will for all. To the kings of Israel He said:

Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away. (Deuteronomy 17:17)

To the Bishops or elders of the church God said:

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife. (1 Timothy 3:2)

If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God. (Titus 1:6, 7)

To the deacons the command is:

Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. (1 Timothy 3:12)

To everyone, Paul wrote, about loving one's wife (and not wives):

Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband. (Ephesians 5:33)

The Psalmist wrote about a blessed man—the man who fears the Lord. Notice, the word wife is in singular form.

Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD. (Psalm 128:3)

Even Solomon, before he transgressed the rules, wrote under inspiration about one's "wife" and not "wives".

**Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. (Proverbs 5:18)
Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD. (Proverbs 18:22)**

During the time of prophet Malachi there was a departing from the rule of marriage that God setup. Notice how God rebukes His people:

Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. (Malachi 2:14, 15)

“The wife of thy covenant” is made “one” with the man. But the man “dealt treacherously” with her.

Our Lord Jesus too emphasized that in marriage—the one where God is involved—involves only two who are joined to become one, and not three or more. He said:

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? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. (Matthew 19:4-6)

Paul repeats what the Master said:

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. (Ephesians 5:31)

And to the Corinthian church Paul wrote:

Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. (1 Corinthian 7:2)

The will of God regarding marriage is clear throughout the Bible—in the Old and New Testament—one man one wife.

But man, in his desire to fulfill his lust and follow the customs of the world departed from the command of God, time and again. Even great men of faith faltered and became polygamous. In the subsequent chapters we shall look at these godly men and the consequences that they reaped by departing from the divine pattern of marriage.

CHAPTER 2

The Bride Of Jesus

Before we look into the family lives of some of the holy men of God in the Old Testament we need to realize that the whole system of the Old Testament was a symbol of something to come. The Old Testament ceremonies and the lives of the patriarchs and the men of God contained the gospel message in symbolism, though not a perfect reflection of Christ, as nothing and no one can reflect Christ, the perfect One and His perfect gospel.

For example, the animal sacrifices were pointing to that great sacrifice on Calvary. Even all the feasts of the Old Testament, all their solemn assemblies, were a shadow of the gospel. In all of it, God was trying to teach His people how He was going to save humanity in the symbolic language of the Old Testament. God has used various symbols and permitted various events to happen to reveal the gospel in reality—the gospel in Jesus Christ!

Paul wrote to the Romans:

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of

the scriptures might have hope. (Romans 15:4)

All things recorded in the Old Testament, Paul said, is for our “learning”. And while we learn and study the “patience” of God in dealing with His people, we “might have hope”. Yes! God’s saving grace is revealed in these symbols.

Slowly, the fullness of the gospel was being revealed to man. The apostle Paul said:

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.

(Romans 16:25)

The gospel of Christ was a “revelation of the mystery”. And the apostle says, it “was kept secret since the world began”. God was slowly revealing the gospel of Jesus, which was kept secret by gradually unfolding the mysteries of the gospel.

The progressive nature of spiritual light is like the light of the sun which progresses from dawn to midday. The wise man wrote:

But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. (Proverbs 4:18)

As the gospel was being unfolded steadily and finally reaching its climax when the Lord Jesus came, to whom it pointed to, not just men of God but even the angels of glory were interested to peep into the mystery of it. Peter talks about the angels who were deeply interested to see Christ’s life on earth, because that was the revelation of the mystery of the gospel that was kept secret. It was getting unfolded beautifully in the life of Jesus Christ from Bethlehem to Cavalry. Peter wrote:

The gospel...which things the angels desire to look into. (1 Peter 1:12)

The reason angels desired to look into the gospel in reality was that they found it very fascinating and mysterious in certain ways as they had been looking at the symbols of the Old Testament—in the sacrificial ceremonies and in the lives of the patriarchs and godly men—and studying the details as God was unfolding it step-by-step. When the gospel, in reality, was revealed in the life and death of Christ, what a joy it was for the angels to behold the greatness of the gospel!

The Old Testament contained the gospel in symbolism. Paul wrote in the book of Hebrews:

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. (Hebrews 10:1)

The law of Old Testament, that is, the laws of sacrifices in the writings of Moses, was “not the very image of the things”, but “a shadow of good things to come”. Also, all that happened in the Old Testament too were shadows of the gospel to come, in its dimness.

Did Abraham, the father of faith, know the gospel? Yes, he did! Paul wrote:

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham. (Galatians 3:8)

And Jesus also told the Jews of His day:

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. (John 8:56)

Who Follows Whom?

We need to realize, one important thing, about the symbols of the Old Testament and the realities of the New Testament. Were the realities following the symbols or the symbols following the reality? Looking at an event from the right perspective is important.

Let us look at one of the symbols in the Old Testament.

Passover was a great feast for the children of Israel. It was a symbol of the real deliverance to come. Apart from that it was also a memorial of the deliverance from Egypt to Canaan when God, on that very day, delivered them through Moses, His servant.

God gave the date of the Passover which needed to be remembered down the ages. He revealed through Moses:

In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD'S passover. (Leviticus 23:5)

God specified the date when the Passover was to be celebrated for a bigger reason than the commemoration of a past event. Who was the essence of the Passover? The New Testament makes it clear:

Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.
(1 Corinthians 5:7)

The Passover was nothing but a symbol of Jesus, who was sacrificed for our deliverance from sin.

Jesus Himself said:

For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words? (John 5:46, 47)

Christ was telling the people during His time if they really believed Moses they would have believe Him, because Moses wrote about Christ. Not just Moses but even the Old Testament prophets wrote about Jesus who is the theme of scripture. Jesus to the religious teachers of His day:

Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. (John 5:39)

The Passover, for example, was nothing but a symbol of the gospel, which would become reality in Jesus. It was Christ that would be sacrificed for our deliverance, the true deliverance—of the soul. Jesus said:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin...If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. (John 8: 34, 36)

So, Jesus was the real Passover Lamb.

Did Jesus die on that 14th day of the first Jewish religious month, the day when the Passover was celebrated? Absolutely! The date of the Passover was given around 1500 years in advance because Jesus the real Passover Lamb would die on that particular date!

Behold the scene at the hall of Judgment. Jesus is already in the hands of the wicked men. Caiaphas leads Him to Pilate's judgment hall while many yell out loud to put him to death.

Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover. (John 18:28)

They, in their blindness, could not see that Jesus was the real Passover! They were more interested in the symbols, and missed out the reality. They did not know that the symbol had no virtue in itself. They missed the mark so badly that they ended up killing the Son of God and fulfilling prophecy at the very date and time as predicted.

Jesus died exactly on the Passover day, the 14th day of the first Jewish month; exactly the same time, the same hour, the same minute when the Passover lamb was to be slain in the temple. When the divine clock struck He cried out with a loud voice “it is finished” (John 19:30).

God is a great timekeeper. Everything was well thought of and planned by God. The apostle wrote of the coming of Christ:

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son. (Galatians 4:4)

According to the time predicted by Daniel in Chapter 9 the Messiah arrived at the baptism scene in the very year as foretold. Also, the year of His death met its accurate fulfillment just as the pen of Daniel had inscribed. And Jesus the Passover Lamb of God died on the very date, at the very hour and minute as given in the ceremonies of the Passover in the writing of Moses, 1500 years before the event took place.

The important question is—did Jesus die on the 14th day of the first month, at the right time, because it was the Passover, and He was trying to keep to the timing of it? Or, did God tell Moses to have the 14th day of the first month as Passover, because His Son would die on that day, that particular hour and minute? Which one is true? Well, that can be found out easily.

Which is the symbol and which is the reality in this case? The symbols were the Old Testament ceremonies; the reality was Jesus Christ. So it was not Jesus trying to fit into the symbols but rather, all the symbols were there to fit the reality! So Jesus died on the 14th day of the 1st Jewish month, at the right time, not because it was Passover but rather the 14th day of 1st Jewish month which was celebrated as the Passover because in the future, the Lamb of God was to die on that very date and fulfill the symbolic prophecies!

The New Testament, time and again, emphasizes that the Old Testament symbols of Jesus were a shadow.

Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. (Colossians 2:17)

Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things. (Hebrews 8:5)

For the law having a shadow of good things to come. (Hebrews 10:1)

To understand the functions of the shadow just consider the shadow of our body. Does the body follow the shadow or the shadow follow the body? We know that the shadow is not the leader but the follower. Sometimes the shadows may be ahead of us as we walk; sometimes it can be behind us; and sometimes at the side of us or under us. Wherever the shadow is does not matter; the shadow just shows us that there is a substance that it's reflecting.

So also the shadows of Calvary—some were before the cross, some were after. The Passover was before, and the Lord's Supper was after. The

reality of Jesus was not trying to fit into the symbols or shadows of the Old Testament but instead the Old Testament shadows were manifesting beforehand pointing to the reality of Jesus, the substance!

Look at Pentecost: The Feast of Weeks, was celebrated on the 50th day after the first fruits (Leviticus 23:15, 16). The first fruit was on the 16th day of the 1st Jewish month, i.e., the day Jesus rose (See 1 Corinthians 15:20). The 50th day after His resurrection is called Pentecost. We know from Acts chapter 2 that the Holy Spirit came down on Pentecost.

The question is—did the Holy Spirit come down on the day of Pentecost because it was the day of Pentecost? Or, did God command Moses to have the 50th day after the first fruits as Pentecost, because the Holy Spirit would be coming on that day? The Holy Spirit was the reality! It is the shadow that follows the substance and not the other way!

The gospel is beautiful but we need to look from the right angles to see its beauty.

Eternal Chords of Love:

The greatest mystery is God saving lost humanity through the Person of His Son, Jesus our Lord. And the mystery deepens further as we come to see that Jesus binds Himself to the human family with eternal chords of love and not just for a while He was on earth.

“God is a Spirit” (John 4:24) the Bible declares. And this God to save humanity took the human form of flesh and bones to live with us and die for us. Paul called it a great mystery when he declared:

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh. (1 Timothy 3:16)

Being immortal in His Spirit nature, it was impossible for Him to die and therefore He took our form of coming in human flesh to die for us on the cross and give us hope of an eternal salvation.

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. (Hebrews 2:14)

After His triumphant resurrection Jesus continued to retain the human body that He willingly took. He told His doubting disciples:

Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. (Luke 24:39)

The one who came from heaven now accomplished the task at Calvary and would be returning to heaven. Jesus said:

I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. (John 16:28)

But when Jesus ascended to heaven He went with a nature that was distinctly different from the one which He had when He came from heaven. He has carried the human form into the courts of glory. Humanity, in the Person of Jesus, is now glorified in the midst of the angels of glory. There is a touch of divinity to humanity because the Son of God is Son of man even in heaven and for all eternity.

You can see this truth clearly reflected in many of the verses for the Bible. For example, Paul talks about Jesus the only mediator. He wrote:

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 2:5)

He is called “the man Christ Jesus” because Jesus has retained humanity in the courts of heaven too. Describing the judgment scene the apostle wrote of Christ the Judge:

Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. (Acts 17:31)

God will be judging the world “by that man” Jesus Christ.

Jesus Himself tells us why the Father wants His Son to decide on the judgment day:

And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. (John 5:27)

Daniel also saw the “Son of man” in the heavenly judgment scene which was shown to him centuries before it could happen.

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. (Daniel 7:13).

Not only is Jesus presented as the “Son of man” in the heavenly courts as our Mediator and Judge but also He will be revealed as the “Son of man” even when He comes back as King the 2nd time in power and glory.

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

(Matthew 24:30)

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. (Matthew 25:31)

Not only does Jesus bear the human form for all eternity but also, He willingly retains the marks of humiliation that He received from the nails and spear.

Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. (John 20:27)

Prophet Zachariah was shown a conversation taking place with Jesus sometime in eternity in the future. Someone asked Jesus about the marks on His hands:

And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. (Zechariah 13:6)

The Chord of love with the human family is eternal indeed!

The Marriage of the Lamb:

In the Garden of Eden God united two individuals as one in Marriage. He declared:

They shall be one flesh (Genesis 2:24).

In another garden, the Garden of Gethsemane, in His last prayer, Jesus prayed to His Father about oneness:

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. (John 17:21)

As the triune God is united as one, God desires that His people too be united as one. God adopts the symbol of marriage to show the oneness He desires us to have with Him too.

In Ephesians Chapter 5 Paul talks about this mystery of marriage. He is talking about the shadows and the substance—marriages on earth and the marriage of Jesus. He writes:

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this

cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:22-32)

Paul is talking about a “great mystery”. He says it is Christ and the church becoming one. Husband and wife are symbols of it.

In a marriage, the husband and wife are first for each other, then for the rest. As it is written:

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. (Genesis 2:24)

The same way the church and the believers have to give their first allegiance to Christ. The Bridegroom made it clear:

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. (Matthew 10:37)

The believers are the church. We come from various backgrounds. All of us have various histories and for sure, our histories are no good. It is written in the Word of God about all of us. It simply says:

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

There is none righteous, no, not one: (Romans 3:10)

Who constitutes the church? It is the people who believe in Jesus. In the most famous verse of scripture Jesus talks about the ones who will be saved. He says:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

The people who form the church are, one different from the other, yet united like the various parts of our physical body. Paul used the human marriage and the human body as symbols of Christ's Marriage and Christ's Church. Paul said:

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:12)

The body is the church. Various members are there with different backgrounds, and it is Christ that keeps us united as one. Though all have sinned, He offers us a gift that we don't deserve:

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

He calls everybody to be a part of the holy bride. He said:

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)

I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. (Matthew 9:13)

He is calling everyone to be one with Him. And marriage is a symbol of oneness.

The Holy Spirit is the one who is uniting us to Christ. Those who are already a part of the body will be instruments of the Holy Spirit to bring in the others. Look at the invitation recorded in the final book:

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And

let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. (Revelation 22:17)

The open invitation by the Holy Spirit and by God's church is, "come". Finally when Jesus comes, He takes all the saved ones, who are washed and made clean and overcomers by His grace, to heaven. Revelation records the scene, and behold, it's a marriage scene that was presented to John:

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 19:9)

For the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. (Revelation 19:7)

It's a marriage scene!

Please notice how the noun is in singular as in "wife" and not plural as in "wives". The church, or the body, is always portrayed as "one" though there are many members.

Though marriage is a reality for the human family, at the same time the human marriage is a symbol of the Marriage of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, with His bride, the Church.

That is the ultimate truth about marriage. It carries a gospel message in it. As man and woman are united as one in marriage, God desires that Christ, the Bridegroom, and the believers, the Bride, be one as well.

The Final Marriage:

All the sacrifices of the Old Testament were pointing to the one great sacrifice of Calvary. And when the one it “foreshadowed” arrived, the “shadow” of the sacrifices disappears and ceases to continue. When a symbol meets reality, it would have fulfilled its purpose and therefore it must end. When Christ was sacrificed for our sins all sacrifices of the Old Testament met their fulfillment and ceased at the cross.

In the same way the human marriage is the shadow of the marriage of Christ with His Church. And when the marriage of the Lamb finally takes place, the symbol ceases. Therefore Jesus said:

For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. (Matthew 22:30)

Yes, marriages will forever cease to exist as it is now, in the human realm, when it culminates and reaches its destiny and fulfillment in the bigger marriage of Christ and the church on the “sea of glass” (Revelation 15:2) where every believer will be involved and part of it. Though we will not marry or be given in marriage to each other we will, in one sense, be all married, spiritually speaking, to the Lamb of God.

Right now, Christ the bridegroom is holy but His bride is not. God stepped into human history and became one like us so that we could become one like Him.

As He is holy He wants us to be holy as well before we enter into the wedding ceremony of the Lamb. He said:

Be ye holy; for I am holy. (1 Peter 1:16)

Paul, who talked about the church being the virgin of Christ talked also about the virgin being spiritually ready and pure. He wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

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. (2 Corinthians 11:2)

Yes, before the marriage actually takes place, God will have all His saints, pure and holy, washed in the blood of Jesus, because the Bridegroom is spotless!

Isaiah records the famous invitation from the Bridegroom to His bride:

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. (Isaiah 1:18)

Finally, God is going to have a pure, holy and spotless bride ready to be united with Him forever as one with His people.

Remember that the bride was not holy, pure, and sinless from the beginning. Isaiah wrote:

All we like sheep have gone astray. (Isaiah 53:6)

But God has called us and separated us to be His people.

The church, in the Greek language is, "Ecclesia", which means, "Called out". He has called us from darkness into His marvelous light to be the bride of the Lamb, Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 3

Polygamy and the Mystery of the Gospel

Let us together unravel the mystery of polygamy that was practiced in the Old Testament, even by God's people; and let us see why it was done, why God allowed it and why He still took them and used the patriarchs to proclaim His name.

Consider Jacob:

Jacob was the father of the 12 tribes which became the chosen nation of the Old Testament. We may not be wrong to say that Jacob was the worst among the Patriarchs. He was born a grabber, holding on to the heels of Esau, his brother, when he arrived. With shrewdness he bargained to steal his brother's birthright. And with lying and deception he received the covenant blessings from his father.

Jacob was the son of Isaac who in turn was the son of Abraham. And these three Jewish patriarchs we the greatest in the Bible as you can see God, throughout Scripture, has been declaring about Himself:

I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob (Exodus 3:6; Mark 12:26).

In Genesis, we have the story of Jacob recorded. He had four wives and 12 sons from all his wives, and one daughter as well (See Genesis 29, 30, 49). His sons are important because they are the 12 tribes of Israel who received the covenant promise. These 12 children were from the same father but from four different mothers!

In Revelation chapter 21 we see John beholding New Jerusalem in heaven, and he describes the holy City. He writes:

Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (Revelation 21:11-14)

In heavenly Jerusalem there are 12 gates, and on each gate a name is written. The names are those of the children of Jacob, the 12 tribes of Israel. On the foundations of the wall are the names of 12 apostles of the Lamb. (Of course Mathias replaces Judas. And one of the children of Israel, Dan, is also replaced by one of the sons of Joseph, Manasseh, for apostatizing).

The names inscribed there convey the gospel message of how God saves!

This city of God has been there from ages past. When did God write these names? Surely not after Jacob's children were born, or after the 12 apostles were called. It was there from the beginning. Talking about the city, Jesus said:

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. 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. (John 14 2:3)

He did not go to build mansions; He went to prepare a place in those mansions that were previously there. All the names on the gates and on the foundations were already there, obviously!

Angels would have looked at the gates and the foundations, and especially at the names inscribed therein and probably would have wondered and asked God as to whose names they were? None of the angels would have had these names (as all have a unique name, I am sure). None of the intellectual creatures of the other worlds have these names too. God would have answered these inquiring minds probably by saying—*"Hold on, it is the mystery of the gospel that has been hid since the foundation of the world!"*

It was being unfolded slowly. When Jacob's 12 sons were born, and when he was naming them, one by one, by the inspiration of God, the angels would have immediately realized that these are the people! And they would have looked at God and said—*"Now we begin to understand!"*

They would have watched closely the lives of these 12 men and the life of Jacob and his 4 wives—and would have been puzzled! Why has God inscribed the names of these 12 sons of Jacob in the heavenly gates, when these were all having questionable traits of character, some so strong that you wonder whether they were worthy to be recognized not just in heaven but even on earth. But when you look at it from God's perspective God was actually unfolding the mystery of the gospel of how God saves sinners from all backgrounds.

He was trying to say to the angels of glory, *"I am going to save people who have spoilt their names, who have a terrible history, whose parents have had great faults"*. God was trying to teach, through symbolism, how He is going to save people in His kingdom.

When we look at Jacob and his children, we might feel like asking God—"How could you accept Jacob and his children and write their names in heaven's gate?" But we sometimes forget that we are not better than them. All who enter these pearly gates were sinners like them. And Christ said:

I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. (Luke 5:32)

Sin is sin whether big or small, and the:

The wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23)

And if anyone is saved in the kingdom of God they are all saved by grace and nothing else.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8, 9)

Consider Abraham:

Abraham had two wives at one time—Sarah and Hagar. (When Sarah died, he got married to Keturah). We know their story as recorded in Genesis Chapter 16. Look at how the great apostle, Paul, connects the two wives of Abraham and their children on a spiritual level.

For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. Stand fast

therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

(Galatians 4:22 to 5:1)

Paul calls the marriages of Abraham to Sarah and Hagar and the two children that these two women bore, an “allegory”. It was symbolizing something in the spiritual realm. Paul also compares them to the “two covenants”.

You see, even when the patriarchs married more than one wife, though it was wrong in itself, and forbidden by God, He didn’t stop it. Also it was recorded in scripture because out of something bad God was trying to teach us a good spiritual lesson. It was a shadow of the gospel of how God saves!

We may think God could have had better names inscribed on the 12 gates than the children of Jacob. There was Abel, Job and Daniel, etc. about whom nothing negative is mentioned in scripture. They almost had a flawless spiritual record, though we understand all have sinned.

But why did God prefer the names of the 12 sons on Jacob instead? God wanted to give everyone a hope in this world of making it to glory. If God could save those 12 men He can save anyone else! That was what God was communicating silently by inscribing their names in His palace.

These 12 children, though they had one father, they were from 4 different mothers—two were wives of Jacob and two were concubines. It was not their fault to be born in a polygamous family. But they all make it to glory finally.

Even today, there are many children who are born out of a polygamous relationship and many others are born out of the wedlock too. Like any

other child, they stand a fair chance to inherit the kingdom of God as they are innocently born.

Jephthah, the mighty judge over Israel for six years, was an illegitimate child therefore his brothers drove him away later after the death of their father. (See Judges 11:1-3). But this illegitimate child was used by God to deliver Israel from her enemies.

What it teaches us is God can use people regardless of their flawed background. Yes, none can change their background, but by God's grace, we all can have a glorious future in His eternal kingdom if we meet the conditions of salvation. Jephthah's name is in the honor roll of faith in Hebrews 11:32.

Jesus told Nicodemus, the ruler of the Pharisees, who came to Him by night:

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:17, 18)

The whole world, without Jesus, stands condemned. But with Jesus, whatever the history, does not matter.

“Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

The soul that believes is not condemned. His history does not matter when it comes to salvation. The blood of Jesus makes the difference and it cleanses all sins of the past and empowers the individual for the future.

Jacob, his wives, his sons, and all those who have lived such polygamous and sinful lives were not condemned forever. Yes, in God's sight every sin stands condemned but in Christ there is hope of eternal salvation for every sinner.

We sinners should be thrilled and excited to know that we serve the God of Jacob! Jacob means a deceiver, a cheat, a grabber, a supplanter. But Jacob got converted at some point. Remember him wrestling with the divine Being? God testified of his conversion:

And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. (Genesis 32:28)

Jacob then said:

For I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved. (Genesis 32:30)

That is where God changed his name from Jacob to Israel. When we come to Him God does not chase us away, He accepts us just as He accepted Jacob. He is not calling the righteous, but sinners to repentance. That is the gospel. Jesus said:

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. (John 6:37)

All these patriarchs and prophets were human beings just like us, having their own struggles and complications. Their histories were no better than ours. Apostle James, talking about Elijah the great prophet of the Old Testament, wrote:

Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are. (James 5:17)

They were just like us. Some of them faulted greatly, but they turned back.

All sins can be forgiven except the sin and blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. (See Matthew 12:31). Murder, adultery, idolatry or breaking of any of the Ten Commandments is not the unpardonable sin. Polygamy is also not an unpardonable sin. The scar of some sins, though forgiven, remains long though. Some actions of ours cannot be undone.

For example, if a person steals, he can ask for forgiveness and what he has robbed. But, if one kills, life cannot be restored (unless God works a miracle) and that is where God also forgives when genuine repentance is seen.

Abraham, Jacob, Solomon and many other men of God had more than one wife, which was not directed to be so by God. For their errors they had to face all the consequences. You can see the heart of Abraham broken for his son Ishmael and he pleads with God for the son of Hagar the handmaid, when quarrel erupted in his peaceful family because of the two wives and the son of the strange woman (see Genesis chapter 16). Similarly Jacob also had a lot of family problems. But God still accepted them because it couldn't be undone.

By God's grace they all were overcomers. He wrote the names of the twelve tribes on heavenly gates just to show us that He is saving people from all backgrounds of life, even though people commit certain things that cannot be undone! He says, "I am the God of Jacob", most of the time in the Bible, because we are all like Jacob. He wants to give us hope!

A Real Jew:

Only a Jew will be saved in God's kingdom. But who is a real Jew? Paul writes:

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. (Romans 2:28, 29)

A real Jew is not a literal child of Abraham, but the spiritual child of Abraham. And real circumcision is not the cutting of the foreskin but the cutting of sin from the heart!

Jesus had many confrontations with the Pharisees who thought they are special because they were the descendants of Abraham. Look at this one. Jesus began:

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. (John 8:32-39)

Jesus continues further:

Ye are of your father the devil. (John 8:44)

He told the literal children of Abraham that their father was not Abraham, but the devil. Yes, a Jew is not one outward but one inward. And if a literal Jew doesn't believe in Jesus, "the son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1) then he is not a Jew in God's sight, but a gentile!

The physical differences and parameters that exist are all dissolved in Jesus Christ our Lord. Paul wrote:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:28, 29)

The truth can't get clearer than this. The children of Israel, in God's sight, are not the literal Israelites themselves i.e. the literal seed of Abraham. But they are the spiritual Israelites, believers in Jesus Christ (whether literal Jew or literal gentile). And these are not found in one country or race but are scattered all over the world, in every nation, kindred, tribe and tongue. Anyone belonging to Christ is the child of Abraham and is an Israelite, and has the promise to Abraham fulfilled.

Revelation 7 talks about God's last days' saints, the living saints, 144,000 in number. It states:

And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to

the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. (Revelation 7:2-4)

Remember, “He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly...but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly” (Romans 2:28). It is spiritual Israel that John writes about. He continued:

Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nepthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand. (Revelation 7:5-8)

God's people, who are alive at the coming of Jesus, are all the children of Jacob, in the spiritual sense. And in what way are we like Jacob and his children? We all have faulty pasts, like Jacob and his children had. But God's grace did not cast

away Jacob and his children, although they were born from 4 different mothers.

The message from God is clear throughout all these stories. He simply says—*“As I accepted Jacob and his 12 children, in spite of all their histories, I will accept you too, when you repent. Your names will be written and retained in the book of life just as I have written their names on the pearly gates!”*

As Jacob overcame his weaknesses and sins, God’s promise is for all who overcome as well. Jesus said:

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. (Revelation 3:5)

We all have to endlessly thank God for Jesus Christ His Son who divided history! It is His story that changes us from Jacob to Israel, from a deceiver to an overcomer, from someone faulty to someone faithful.

Jacob went through a time of trouble, wrestled with the divine Person and overcame. Our lives are no better than his. God has to put us also through a similar experience like Jacob’s. It is called “Jacob’s trouble” because we have Jacob’s problem, Jacob’s character, one way or the other! Jeremiah writes:

Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. (Jeremiah 30:7)

It is a prophecy of last day's saints, who will go through a time of trouble such as never was. Daniel too recorded about this trouble. He wrote:

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. (Daniel 12: 1)

This trouble is the time of "Jacob's trouble". Before Jacob returned to his father's house he had this terrible experience. We too, before we reach our heavenly Father's house, we will have "Jacob's trouble", and a supernatural deliverance as Jacob had; for we are all in the category of the 12 tribes of Israel from God's point of view!

The four wives of Jacob also symbolize the four corners of the world. From North, South, East and West God will gather His children to His eternal Kingdom.

Thank God we serve the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. They had their weaknesses but they overcame them. God so loved them that He took them back when they sought after Him. And it is written:

Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God. (Psalm 146:5)

The God of Jacob is our refuge and strength and deliverance.

The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee. (Psalm 20:1)

God will defend us but not our sins, when we come to Him in repentance. He knows how to save us from our enemies here and our unseen enemy of our souls. When the woman caught in adultery was dragged to Jesus, He saved her from all her enemies who wanted to stone her to death and he saved her from the eternal condemnation that troubled her soul.

Nowhere in the Bible has God commanded the practice of polygamy or gave license to it. But when His people practiced it, He permitted it but disciplined them later.

Some think because God didn't stop it but permitted it to happen therefore it should be okay to practice it. Well, that logic is not sound. For instance, look at the story of our first parents. Did God command Adam and Eve to sin in the Garden? No! But when our first parents chose to sin He did not intervene and stop them. He went behind them with His love to bring them back and made a way of escape through His Son.

Man has to suffer the consequence, nevertheless. Adam and Eve, for their one sin, though forgiven in Christ, had to be driven from the garden home; and the man had to earn his living by sweating and toiling. All the terrible sins that exist today are a direct consequence of their sin. Similarly the patriarchs were permitted to choose what they wanted to but they had to bear the consequences, and the results of their choices have affected their generations to come!

God likes to save and not destroy. Polygamy was not an unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit. This sin could be pardoned but the consequences couldn't be undone.

All those things that happened in the Old Testament were written down for our admonition, Paul says—to give us hope. They were the shadows of the gospel. God allowed the Holy Spirit to write down these histories, just to teach us the gospel as to how God saves His people, fully and freely.

God is trying to teach us that we have salvation in Jesus in spite of all that has ever happened. Paul wrote:

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. (Hebrews 7:25)

Those who have gone to the “uttermost” can be pulled back. Thank God we serve the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. God invites, cleanses, and accepts us just as we are. He is able to save us by His power.

Thank God for the gospel in symbolism that was portrayed in the married lives of the patriarchs. What hope and clarity it gives to a hopeless soul!

God is going to unite us with Himself in oneness on that great wedding day—the wedding of the Lamb. But right now He wants to cleanse us all from our sins and be holy by the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

This is the truth about Polygamy: Christ accepting people just as they are with all their mistakes and follies, and gathering the broken pieces of people’s lives to Himself in a grand union which culminates with the eternal marriage of Christ the perfect One and His Church, saved by grace! What an awesome God we serve. If He does not do what He does for humanity, none would be saved! Paul said:

POLYGAMY

For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones....This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:30, 32)

CHAPTER 4

A Closer Look at the Song of Solomon

Some have wondered if the book “The Song of Solomon” should be a part of the Holy Scriptures. The reason given is because of its “explicit” content.

Ever since the famous king of Israel wrote it, it has been a part of the Holy Scriptures. Even when our Lord was on earth this book was an integral part of the Hebrew canon. If at all it was a mistake in having it included, wouldn't the Messiah inform us about it when He came?

Paul wrote of the Old Testament scriptures of which Song of Solomon is part of it:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. (2 Timothy 3:16)

King Solomon, the man gifted with wisdom and words, wrote and spoke a lot during his life which was a blessing to all. We are told:

**And he spake three thousand proverbs:
and his songs were a thousand and five.
(1 Kings 4:32)**

Out of the 3000 proverbs we have many of them in the book Proverbs though not all. And out of the

1005 songs we have just one which is a part of the Holy Scriptures. It is also believed that couple of songs, (Psalms 72 and 127), were written by Solomon. But we don't have the rest of songs!

In fact, the Jews considered the Song of Solomon as one of the most important pages of the Holy Writ. Rabbi Akiba (50-135 AD) wrote in Mishnah (Yadaim 3:5) the following about this poetic love story: *"... the whole of the world is not worth the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel; all the Writings are holy, and the Song of Songs is the holy of holies ..."*

The theme of this Song is about the love and relationship that Solomon, the author, had with his Shulamite bride. In beautiful poetry the wise man pens down many details about their love for each other. Only if all married couples had such intimate love for each other, what a world of blessing it would be!

1 Corinthians Chapter 13 is considered to be the chapter of divine love in the Bible. And, I believe, the Song of Solomon is the book of marital love in scripture.

Marriage is a divine institution and not a human invention. As God, who is love, is the Author of marriage, the theme of marriage is love as well. Sexuality in the context of marriage is a divine blessing to husband and wife. It is through this process that procreation takes place, which is the will of God. It is God who has created the human body of man and woman to feel for each other and enjoy the intimate gift within the context of marriage.

Some cultures and practices of society in the East and West have gone to two different extremes. One extreme states that sexuality even

in the framework of marriage is not a heavenly gift, but a carnal and debasing thing. The other extreme goes beyond the framework of marriage and glorifies it beyond the boundaries of divine guidelines.

A Divine Parable:

Apart from it being a description of love a relationship that should bind man and his wife it serves another purpose as well of reflecting the relationship between Christ and His church. From the physical realm God wants us to understand the spiritual intent of it as well. It is a divine parable of romance that God wants his church to be engaged in with the divine Bridegroom.

In any parable one cannot take all the details and allegorize it. That will then give us the wrong idea and the intent of the author would be lost. For example, consider the parable of the lost sheep told by Jesus as recorded in Luke chapter 15. We know that the lost sheep symbolizes a sinner who is lost in sin.

Going into all the details and trying to compare all the aspects of a sheep to a person is not what Jesus intended us to do. For example, sheep have four legs but man has two; sheep have no reasoning power but man has; sheep are most submissive, but man is not. And talking about the numbers, we cannot take it as it is and bring out a percentage figure and declare that 99% of the people are safe and only 1% is lost! It is only a parable. The theme of it has to be captured. Only those details which can be supported from other parts of Scripture have to be taken keeping in view that the interpretation of it should not contradict the plain teachings of Scripture elsewhere.

Let us now explore the spiritual message of this classic inspired work of literature. Who does King Solomon symbolize? And whom does the Shulamite bride represent?

Throughout Scripture God has adopted the symbol of marriage to portray His intimate relationship that He has with His people, the church. Since marriage is the closest bond of love that man knows, God chose this to be the figure of His love for us, most of the time. In Isaiah, God said:

For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the LORD hath called thee as a woman. (Isaiah 54:5, 6)

God is the husband, and His people on earth, the church, is His bride.

In Jeremiah the Lord pleads with His bride. He said:

Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you. (Jeremiah 3:14)

In the New Testament too this language is carried forth as seen in many passages. To the Corinthian church Paul wrote:

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. (2 Corinthians 11:2)

John the revelator, in the visions of Patmos, recorded what he heard in heaven. Notice the language of the heavenly feast. It is the same language—the marriage language.

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. (Revelation 19:7)

The Comparison:

Solomon represents Christ in this passionate book.

a) Solomon, was the son of the greatest king of Israel—King David. Jesus is the Son of the greatest King of the universe—God the Father. From the human side Jesus is also called the Son of David in the Bible. In fact that is how Jesus is introduced in the first verse of the New Testament:

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David. (Matthew 1:1)

On one occasion, when talking to the Jews, Christ compared the wisdom of Solomon to His own wisdom. He said:

Behold, a greater than Solomon is here. (Matthew 12:42)

b) As Solomon sat on the throne of his father to rule Israel so also Jesus sits on the throne of His Father to rule the universe. Jesus said:

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. (Revelation 3:21)

c) Solomon, the great king, loved an ordinary girl and married her. Christ, the King of kings, loved ordinary people who constitute the church, and becomes one with her in marriage.

d) At the beginning of the song, the Shulamite bride told Solomon:

I am black. (Song 1:5)

But Solomon declared:

Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair. (Song 4:1)

Isn't this the beautiful truth of the gospel? On our own, we, the church members, are stained with sin. But when we come to Christ He washes us, clothes us and makes us white. John recorded what the heavenly messenger told him about God's people:

These are they which... have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Revelation 7:14)

It is the blood of the Lamb that gives us a different color, a color of purity and holiness.

e) Solomon told his bride:

Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee. (Song 4:7)

How beautifully it portrays what Christ will do to His church finally! Paul used nearly the same language when describing the church that Christ will come to take home:

That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. (Ephesians 5:27)

f) Describing his beautiful wife, Solomon tells her:

Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue. (Song 4:11)

How fitting it is to what David, the father of Solomon, wrote, regarding the Word of God in our mouths:

**How sweet are thy words unto my taste!
yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!**
(Psalm 119:103)

Solomon mentioned, "Milk and honey". O yes! That phrase is familiar too. Moses recorded about the land that God was to give His bride:

**A land that floweth with milk and honey;
as the LORD God of thy fathers hath
promised thee.** (Deuteronomy 27:3)

g) In describing the movements of the feet of his bride, Solomon wrote:

**How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O
prince's daughter!** (Song 7:1)

How similar it is to the words that describe the outreach work of the church. In portraying the work of the church, Paul quoting prophet Isaiah, wrote:

**How beautiful are the feet of them that
preach the gospel of peace, and bring
glad tidings of good things!** (Romans 10:15)

h) The work of the Shulamite bride was to feed the flock as a shepherd:

**O thou fairest among women, go thy way
forth by the footsteps of the flock, and
feed thy kids beside the shepherds'
tents.** (Song 1:8)

Didn't Jesus bid Peter, and all his church members, to do the same?

He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. (John 21:16)

i) The sense of belongingness is so precious in their relationship:

My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies. (Song 2:16)

God too, wants us to know how special and dear we are to Him. He said to His bride:

O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. (Isaiah 43:1)

j) Solomon uses a lot of references from nature to describe his love and the relationship. And much of these are employed even in describing the relationship between the church and Christ throughout the Bible.

Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves. (Song 7:12)

And Christ said to His church:

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. (John 15:5)

k) The Shulamite describing Solomon says:
Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke...? (Song 3:6)

Didn't God lead His bride out of the wilderness in pillars of smoke or pillars of cloud during the time of Moses? Nehemiah wrote:

Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness:

the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day. (Nehemiah 9:9)

l) Though the Shulamite was the bride of Solomon, they addressed each other with different family terminologies at times. Solomon said:

How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices! (Song 4:10)

She replied:

O that thou wert as my brother. (Song 8:1)

Even though the Bible uses the husband-wife relationship between Christ and the church, often even other family terminologies have been used too. Christ is also called the brother of the church! Paul wrote:

For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. (Hebrews 2:11, 12)

m) King Solomon says of his bride:

Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies. (Song 4:5)

Isaiah the prophet sheds light on this:

Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts...But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon

**precept; line upon line, line upon line;
here a little, and there a little.** (Isaiah 28:9,
13)

The Word of God is the milk “drawn from the breasts”. Didn’t Peter too compare the Word of God to milk? He wrote:

**As newborn babes, desire the sincere
milk of the word, that ye may grow
thereby.** (1 Peter 2:2)

“Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins”, Solomon wrote. The church feeds on, and feeds others with, the two breasts that are twins—The Old and the New Testament—which constitute the complete Word of God. We have to “desire the sincere milk of the word”, Peter wrote.

n) Look at how Solomon describes his bride:
**Who is she that looketh forth as the
morning, fair as the moon, clear as the
sun, and terrible as an army with
banners?** (Song 6:10)

John the Revelator also described the church in nearly the same language:

**A woman clothed with the sun, and the
moon under her feet, and upon her head
a crown of twelve stars.** (Revelation 12:1)

o) The Shulamite bride said about Solomon’s love:

**He brought me to the banqueting house,
and his banner over me was love.** (Song
2:4)

Hasn’t God’s love too, thrilled His people? John wrote:

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. (1 John 3:1)

p) The bride of Solomon said to her husband:
Draw me, we will run after thee. (Song 1:4)

God also draws us with His cords of love:

The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. (Jeremiah 31:3)

Yes, more than any other book in the Bible, the Jews loved this book a lot because it showed them constantly their intimate relationship they had with the King of the universe.

Unfortunately, many times they proved unfaithful to their heavenly Bridegroom. And through many of the prophets God communicated His displeasure. He said:

How is the faithful city become an harlot! (Isaiah 1:21)

The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. (Jeremiah 3:6)

Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD. (Ezekiel 16:35)

By constantly reading the divine love story in the book, 'The Song of Solomon', the Jews reminded themselves about their standing with

God. And the Christians should remind themselves that they are His bride and remain faithful to the heavenly Bridegroom.

Yes, the story of “The Song of Solomon” is a story of love. And the story of the Bible too is the same story! “God is love”—that is the central theme of the Bible; and in the heart of the Old Testament Scripture God placed this book of love!

CHAPTER 5

Solomon and His 1000 Women

The Book, ‘The Song of Solomon’, as we have seen in the previous chapter, shows the love that should exist between a husband and a wife. Symbolically it also portrays the love relationship of Christ and His Church. Yes, Solomon symbolizes Christ in this song, and his Shulamite bride represents the church.

But one might say—Was Solomon the best person to represent Christ? Didn’t he have a bad and immoral life with 700 wives and princesses, and 300 concubines? (See 1 Kings 11:3, 4).

Definitely Solomon’s history was no good. Then why did God choose Solomon to write this book and be a symbol of Christ in the union of marriage?

The Other Figures:

Before we proceed to see why Solomon was to be the figure of Christ in portraying the love relationship of Christ with His Church, let us look at a few other people who represented Christ one way or the other.

a) The first man, *Adam*, was a representative of Christ. As Christ is “the Son of God” (Mark 1:1), Adam had this title too. Luke records:

Adam, which was the son of God. (Luke 3:38)

Apostle Paul compares Adam and Christ in Romans 5:12-21. Also in his epistle to the Corinthians, Paul refers to Christ as:

The last Adam. (1 Corinthians 15:45)

Adam was the ruler of this planet; Jesus, the true Son of God, is the ruler of the entire universe.

b) *Abel* also symbolized Christ. Jesus talked about the shed blood of Abel just before His own experience at Calvary. Jesus said:

The blood of righteous Abel. (Matthew 23:35)

Paul the great apostle compared the blood of Abel to that of Jesus:

And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. (Hebrews 12:24)

As his own brother, for no fault of his, killed Abel, Jesus was killed by his own nation, for no fault of His. John records the sorry story:

He came unto his own, and his own received him not. (John 1:11)

c) *Melchizedek*, King of Salem, the priest of the most High God, was a symbolic representative of Christ. As far as the priesthood was concerned, he represented Christ. Christ is called the High Priest of the heavenly sanctuary:

After the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 7:11)

d) *Isaac* was another symbol of Christ. God told Abraham to offer his dear son as a sacrifice (See Genesis 22:1-14), thus symbolizing the Father sacrificing His Son, Jesus. Paul calls Isaac as father Abraham's:

Only begotten son. (Hebrew 11:17)

Isn't Jesus also called the "only begotten Son" of God the Father? (See John 3:16). Paul calls Isaac:

A figure. (Hebrew 11:19)

Yes, he was a figure of Jesus in many aspects.

e) *Moses* was another symbol of Christ. As Moses was used by God to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, God the Father used His Son to deliver all who believe in Him from Satan's bondage of sin, death and the grave. Moses himself said of the coming Deliverer and compared Christ to himself. Moses said:

The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken. (Deuteronomy 18:15)

In the book of Revelation there is a very special song that God's special group of people will sing. It is called:

The song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. (Revelation 15:3)

Yes, Moses and Christ had similarities. Even Paul compared the faithfulness of Moses to that of Christ:

Christ Jesus; Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. (Hebrews 3:1, 2)

There were many other people as well who symbolized Christ and His ministry in a certain aspect.

The *animal* sacrifices in the Old Testament, also, reflected the coming Messiah.

A Review:

We have seen that Adam was a symbol of Christ. But we cannot take all the aspects and actions of Adam and draw a parallel picture to Christ. No! There is no perfect comparison to the perfect One. God enquires:

To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. (Isaiah 40:25)

Adam fell into sin. But Christ didn't. Adam was a created being, but Christ is the Creator. Therefore, only what the Bible compares of both of them has to be compared, and not the rest. There cannot be a perfect symbol of Christ at all.

Abel was a righteous man. He accepted God's plan of salvation and offered an animal sacrifice to God. But Christ, the most righteous One, whom *Abel* prefigured, offered no animal sacrifice, as He did not sin, but He offered Himself as our sin offering. Therefore, only what God intended has to be compared, and not everything else.

Melchizedek was a High Priest during the time of Abraham. We have no history of him before his meeting with Abraham and no record of him after he blessed Abraham. But as far as Christ, the true King and High Priest is concerned, we know His history and His future too. He is the:

Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.
(Revelation 1:11)

Isaac was a symbol of Christ too. But all the details cannot be taken in our comparison of the two. *Isaac* was ultimately not offered as a sacrifice, but it was only a test for him and his father. But *Jesus*, the Lamb of God, was indeed offered, and was resurrected the third day from the grave, after He conquered death, sin and the devil on the cross.

Moses was a type of Christ too. As *Moses* died and was resurrected to heaven, bodily (See Deuteronomy 34:1-6, Romans 5:14, Jude 1:9 and Matthew 17:1-9), so too was Christ.

But *Moses* was not a sinless person. He killed an Egyptian in a fight; also he disobeyed God when he struck the rock instead of speaking to it. Even in the deliverance similarities, we see that it cannot be a perfect symbol. *Moses* led the children of Israel only to the borders of Canaan, but could not take them through. But Christ, the real Deliverer, perfected it on the cross and will take us through to Heaven at His Second Coming!

The *animals* of the sacrifice though it typified *Jesus* the Lamb of God who would be sacrificed for our sins we cannot take every detail of it and compare it to Christ. Only what was intended has to be compared.

Literal and Prophetic Sons:

Why is Christ compared to Solomon, and the Church to the Shulamite bride? Were Solomon and his wife the best couple on earth? Surely not!

We don't have a problem with the Shulamite bride representing the church. She could be a proper symbol of the bride of Christ, but, what about Solomon? Was he fit to represent Christ with all his dark history?

Well, we have already seen the serious faults among God's people in the Old Testament who symbolized Christ. We have observed only that which has to be compared has to be, not all the other literal details.

Let us now see why Solomon was chosen to write that book which reflects the supreme love of Christ.

One of the famous titles the Messiah was known by was, "The Son of David". The first verse in the New Testament identifies Jesus thus:

Jesus Christ the Son of David. (Matthew 1:1)

In the last chapter of the Bible, Jesus Himself says:

I am the root and the offspring of David.
(Revelation 22:16)

All the people who read the Old Testament Scriptures understood Christ to be the "The Son of David". Listen to the dialogue between Christ and the Pharisees:

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions. (Matthew 22:41-46)

Jesus was the “Son of David”, from the human side. Isaiah the prophet recorded this of Jesus, the Son of God, coming to earth:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:6, 7)

The throne that Jesus is going to sit upon the earth when it's made new is called—the throne of David. Prophet Jeremiah also links Christ and David and the throne to one another. He wrote:

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Jeremiah 23: 5, 6)

It is upon the throne of David that our Lord Jesus will reign forever—that was not at the first coming, but after the Second Coming.

Now, who was the literal son of David that sat upon David's throne as his successor? We all know it was Solomon. King David told Bathsheba, his wife:

Even as I swear unto thee by the LORD God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead; even so will I certainly do this day. (1 Kings 1:30)

And it happened:

Then sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father; and his kingdom was established greatly. (1 Kings 2:12)

Yes, Solomon and Christ had things in common!

Solomon sat on the throne of David, for he was the literal son of David. And Jesus Christ is the Son of David too in the prophetic sense, and will sit upon the throne of David forever! That is the prime reason king Solomon was compared to the King of kings, Jesus Christ.

Their Marriage:

The great and touching truth of the Bible is the union of Christ with His church. Who is Christ?

King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
(Revelation 19:16)

The same Chapter of Revelation 19 that talks about His powerful reign as King of kings, also talks about His intimate love for His bride. It talks about His marriage, where He becomes united as one with her. John records:

The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.
(Revelation 19:7)

We know that the bride of Christ is His people, the Church.

They two—Christ and the Church—becoming one at marriage is a mystery. Paul wrote:

They two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning

Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:31, 32)

It is a mystery how God loved fallen humanity so much, to come so close to us in an inseparable bond. O what unfathomable love, which for all eternity, we shall dig deeper and never exhaust!

Look at what the bride of Solomon told her husband about her looks. She said:

I am black but comely. (Song 1:5)

But Solomon replied:

Behold thou art fair, my love; behold thou art fair. (Song 4:1)

Jesus, the true King, said in Isaiah, to His bride:

Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. (Isaiah 1:18)

All of us are unworthy, yet God so loved the world. All our righteousness and the best we have, are filthy rags (see Isaiah 64:6). Yet the King of kings, who will sit upon the eternal throne of David, loved us so much, and is going to be one with us, in the bond and mystery of symbolic marriage. Praise God!

Truly, as Solomon, the great king loved and married an ordinary girl, so Christ the King of kings loves and marries a symbolically ordinary woman.

The Other Wives:

One might say: But Christ has only “one” bride called the church whereas Solomon had several hundred wives and three hundred concubines? Yes, that is true. The Scripture clearly states that regarding Christ’s bride:

There is one body...one Lord. (Ephesians 4:4, 5)

The body is the church. Paul himself wrote:

The church, which is his body.

(Ephesians 1:22, 23)

The book of Revelation records the word 'wife' in singular. It reads:

The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

(Revelation 19:7)

As there is only one Lord, there is only one true bride that Jesus has.

Jesus warned us of the counterfeit "christs". He said:

For there shall arise false christs

(Matthew 24:24)

Paul too warned us of the same:

For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. (1 Corinthians 8:5, 6)

There are counterfeit brides too. Isaiah the Prophet has written a very interesting verse about the many brides in the last days that are supposedly married to the one Lord Jesus. He said:

And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach. (Isaiah 4:1)

We have seen that a "woman" in Biblical symbolic prophecy, represents a church (Jeremiah 6:2 and 2 Corinthians 11:2). And number "seven" represents all or completeness (Revelation 5:6).

Isaiah wrote about the day of the Lord. He said, “In that day”, that is, the Day of Judgment and the Second Coming of Jesus. Christ also referred to it when He said:

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (Matthew 7:22, 23)

All these “brides” have the “name” of Christ attached to them as their husband, yet they are not following Him and His Word fully. All call themselves the body of Christ, but Christ has only “one” body that He loves and acknowledges.

In the same way though many women claimed Solomon as theirs, Solomon loved and acknowledged his love only for the Shulamite bride. She alone, represents the true bride of Christ, though other women claimed that they were connected to him. As Solomon had children through other women Christ truly has His children in other folds, outside the true Church, as well. Jesus said:

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. (John 10:16)

The truth is simple and plain: King Solomon, the biological son of David, represents the King of kings, Jesus Christ, the prophetic Son of David. As Solomon sat on the throne of his father David and ruled, so will Christ sit on David’s throne and rule

forever! As Solomon's love for his bride, the Shulamite woman, was deep and intense, so is Christ's love for the church, except stronger! As Solomon had many other children through different women who bore his name, so too Christ has many of His children in other folds who belong to Him!

Solomon ruled for 40 years and died, but King Jesus rules forever! The Shulamite woman lived and died, but the church of the living God is still alive! Jesus said of the Church:

The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18)

Solomon indeed was a symbol of Christ as far as his title "The Son of David" goes, and also in the great wisdom that he possessed and in his love for his Shulamite bride who was a symbol of the true church of God, picked out from nowhere to be the bride of the King!

CHAPTER 6

The Two Most Beautiful Women

It will be very hard to pick up the most esthetically pleasing woman that ever lived on this earth, as we don't have the pictures to do the judging. But without any doubt Eve would have been the loveliest of all, having been shaped by the Master Artist Himself. That most beautiful woman belonged to Adam, the first man, the king of this planet.

Satan spoilt that innocent beauty that was radiant on her face, one decisive day.

Another woman now is at the center of attraction. All eyes are on her; she is more admired by all. She is also the wife of someone very important. She is the bride of the last Adam, Jesus Christ!

In the entire Bible, only once Jesus is addressed as Adam. The great apostle Paul, who understood a lot of mysteries by the Revelation of God, recorded this of Jesus Christ:

And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. (1 Corinthians 15:45, 47)

Paul calls Christ the “last Adam”. For sure, then, Adam and Christ had a lot of similarities.

Their Title:

They both had a common title. Luke, in the narration of the human genealogy of Christ, calls Adam as “son of God”. He wrote:

Adam, which was the son of God. (Luke 3:38)

Jesus, as we all know, in the famous text of John 3:16, is also called the Son of God. Adam and Jesus both had this common designation, though Adam was a created being and Jesus is the Creator of all. The true Son of God is the “alpha and omega” (Revelation 1:8); He is God in the fullest sense. He has no beginning and no ending; He is the divine Son of God.

Jesus is the ruler of the entire creation of God. He is called:

KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.
(Revelation 19:16)

Talking about Christ, in his epistle to the Colossians, Paul writes:

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. (Colossians 1:15-17)

Christ is called “the image of the invisible God”. Elsewhere Paul wrote:

**Who being the brightness of his glory,
and the express image of his person.**
(Hebrews 1:3)

Christ is the exact reflection of the Father. That is why He said:

He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. (John 14:9)

On the other hand Adam, the first man, was made in “the image of God” (Genesis 1:27).

As Christ has rule over all principalities and powers and dominion so also Adam was given dominion of this planet earth.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. (Genesis 1:26)

The difference in the extent of their dominion was as high as heaven is to earth.

Their Marriage:

In the beginning of the book of Genesis we see the marriage of Adam.

And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. (Genesis 2:23, 24)

And in the end of the book of Revelation we see the marriage of the last Adam.

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. (Revelation 19:7)

Adam, the first man, had to be put to sleep and his side had to be opened up for him to get a beautiful wife. The record declares:

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. (Genesis 2:21, 22)

So also, the last Adam had to be put to sleep—the sleep of death—on the cross and then His side was opened up. It was also pierced and His flesh was torn, and because of that act, He could have a beautiful wife, His bride, the church. John recorded the scene:

They came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already... one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. (John 19:33, 34)

The first man, Adam, had a painless experience to get his wife. God put him to sleep and then took one of his ribs out and closed the flesh. But as for Christ, the pain began at Gethsemane, and it got intense all the way till He died at Calvary! His flesh was opened up while He was fully conscious. In great anguish, He cried out:

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Matthew 27:46)

It was an agonizing pain and experience for the second Adam to get his wife!

When the first Adam saw his beautiful wife, Eve, he said:

This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man.
(Genesis 2:23)

Paul, describing Jesus and His union with His bride, uses the same language that Adam used:

For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. (Ephesians 5:30)

After talking about the union of Adam and Eve, the record says:

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.
(Genesis 2:24)

Paul repeats the same words of Genesis and links it with Christ and His church. He wrote:

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.
(Ephesians 5:29-32)

Jesus too said that our earthly father and mother should not be loved more than Him:

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. (Matthew 10:37)

The Bible says of Adam and his wife when they become one:

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:25)

The last Adam too was nearly naked except for a piece of cloth round His waist.

And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. (Matthew 27:28)

And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. (Mark 15:24)

Christ was not ashamed either. He did not mind going through this shame and suffering because He valued His union with His bride more than anything else. Paul wrote:

To make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. (Hebrews 2:10-12)

Their Destiny:

Eve was the one who invited sin. Paul writes to us in his epistle to Timothy:

And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. (1Timothy 2:14)

And on the other hand Satan could not deceive Jesus, the last Adam. Jesus said:

The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. (John 14:30)

Adam, for the love of his beautiful wife, ate the fruit and shared her fate.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also

unto her husband with her; and he did eat. (Genesis 3:6)

Christ on the other hand, did no sin, but because of the love for His wife, He drank of that bitter cup and paid the price for her. The Scripture records:

He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. (Matthew 26:42)

When Adam partook of the sin of his wife, the curse was pronounced:

Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. (Genesis 3:18)

God cursed the ground because of sin and now thorns and thistles would be symbols of the curse, and Adam had to battle with it all. So also Christ was cursed for our sins. Paul wrote:

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: (Galatians 3:13)

Even the symbol of curse—the thorns—was seen when the Jesus bore the curse. We see a crown of thorns being placed upon His head.

And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! (Matthew 27:29)

He bore the curse on Himself because He loved His wife—the church!

Adam was driven out of the Garden of God when he sinned:

Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden. (Genesis 3:23)

When Jesus bore the sin of the human race on Himself, He too was driven out; He was driven out of the gate of the holy city of God, the Jerusalem city. Paul wrote:

Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. (Hebrews 13:12)

It was in the Garden of Eden that sin overcame the first man, Adam; and in another garden, the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus overcame the scourge of sin and took the penalty of sin upon Him.

It was on a tree—the tree of knowledge of good and evil—Satan overcame Adam; and on another tree—the Cross of Calvary—the second Adam overcame sin and paid the penalty for it.

Their Achievements:

Paul brings out a series of comparisons between Adam and Christ. He wrote:

Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. (Romans 5:18, 19)

Adam gave us the legacy of death, but Christ gives us the gift of eternal life.

Man lost the right to the tree of life in the Garden because of his disobedience. God drove

him out of the Garden and away from the tree of life:

So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. (Genesis 3:24)

Christ will lead us back to the tree of life, not just to the Garden of Eden, but also to the Paradise of God. Jesus promised it. He said:

And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. (Revelation 22:12-14)

Their Battles:

When sin invaded the Garden of Eden, the long battle began on planet earth. God told Satan:

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. (Genesis 3:15)

Satan deceived the woman in the Garden of Eden. The battle in the Garden of Eden was lost and over. But another battle began. Another Adam and His wife will battle it out and gain the victory!

Adam and Eve, who were conquered, are not excluded in this second battle. They will now be a part of the symbolic woman that will fight the dragon. Jesus, the last Adam, said of His bride, the church:

I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18)

The devil tries his best to destroy the second bride.

In the book of Revelation we see this battle in full flow between the dragon and Christ's woman. And the woman continues to prevail. She is gloriously attired:

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun. (Revelation 12:1)

She is clothed with the sun; she is clothed with light. What does that symbolize?

Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (Psalm 119:105)

When Eve met the tempter in the Garden of Eden, she disobeyed the Word of God. But this woman is clothed with the light of the Word of God. Her defense is the two-edged sword.

The battle goes on in chapter 12 till the end of time—an intense battle between the devil and the church:

And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. (Revelation 17:12)

In the Garden of Eden, Eve wandered away from Adam's side, was alone when the tempter met her and she succumbed. The woman of Christ in Revelation is not committing that mistake. She has "the testimony of Jesus Christ" with her; she is also keeping the "commandments of God", unlike Eve who forgot the commandments of God. And Jesus

said to His bride, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matthew 28:20)

The members of the church overcome sin by the grace and power of Christ. They overcome the devil too in the process. It says:

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. (Revelation 12:11)

The battle continues till the Second Coming of Jesus. In fact when His bride is cornered by the powers of darkness and threatened with extinction by physical force for no fault of hers, Christ takes up the challenge imposed, and comes to rescue His lovely bride. John the revelator was shown that scene:

These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful. (Revelation 17:14)

He returns as King of kings and Lord of lords. He is coming to take His lovely bride home that is in the midst of a fierce battle. He is coming to take her to the palace of the great King! He said:

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. 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. (John 14:2, 3)

We are going to meet the Father of our Bridegroom. We address Him the same way His Son addresses—“Father”! Jesus said, God is:

My Father, and your Father. (John 20:17)

The bride of His Son will be as a daughter to Him, and not daughter-in-law! We are all sons and daughters of the King because of Jesus His Son.

John the Revelator was invited to see the bride of the lamb. He wrote:

And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, (Revelation 21:9, 10)

Here it says the Lamb's wife is the heavenly Jerusalem! We have seen that the church is called the Lamb's wife all throughout the Bible, but how come the great city too, is called the bride of Christ? Well, for sure Jesus is not marrying a building or a city.

The fact is, you cannot separate the home from marriage! When Jesus goes to fetch His bride from planet earth, He is going to take her home. That home where Jesus is going to live with His bride for all eternity is so beautifully decorated for the Lamb's wife—the church—that she looks as beautiful as the Lamb's wife itself! John wrote:

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (Revelation 21:2)

It looks "as a bride". That city which is so beautifully decorated is going to be the house the bride and the Groom! Read the promise again:

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. 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. (John 14:1-3)

The joy of Marriage is all about living together, living in a home.

In the beginning when Adam and Eve ate of that forbidden fruit, one of the first things that God did was to drive them out of the Garden, to drive them out of their home. When someone is driven out of his or her home, it shows that something went wrong in the family life. Here we see Christ bringing His wife home, which is the anticlimax to the tragedy that struck at the beginning.

The most beautiful woman will go home when her Man comes back to fetch her. You and I can be a part of her! Paul wrote of her loveliness:

A glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. (Ephesians 5:27)

She is the most beautiful indeed!

Understanding Difficult Texts

We have seen from scripture that God's plan for marriage has always been one-man-one-wife in the Old and the New Testament. But unfortunately, polygamy crept in and has brought disaster to many families and individuals down the ages. Even some towering personalities of the Bible fell to this cultural practice and brought in woes and sorrows to their family circles!

In this chapter, we will look at some great men of the Bible who were polygamous and try to find out whether God directed them to do it or whether they fell to cultural pressures. You will also see that they added many sorrows by going by the way of the world.

Abraham's Wives:

The father of the Jewish race had a beautiful God-given wife, Sarai or Sarah, as she was later called. From the beginning, Abraham had a little problem regarding his wife. When he went to Egypt during the time of the famine, he lied to the Egyptians. This is what he told his wife:

Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee. (Genesis 12:13)

For a moment, he forgot by whose power he was preserved. It was God who led him thus far; but he lost focus and decided to use his “wisdom” to save himself and his wife. In the process, they landed in the very trouble that they wished to escape from.

Abraham was one of the richest men of his time. But God closed the womb of his beautiful princess. But what would his riches matter to him if he went childless! When Abraham was thinking to adopt Eliezer of Damascus, the steward of his house, the God of heaven promised a child to Abraham and a great posterity:

He that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness. (Genesis 15:4-6)

Abraham waits for ten years, but nothing happens. He is now 85 years old and his wife is 75. Did God forget His promise? Or did God try His best but Sarah's womb was beyond function? They both reasoned out things day-after-day. Finally they thought that God needed some help. Their minds would have gone back and forth trying to recollect and analyze the exact words of God to Abraham. And they felt like they finally solved the puzzle! God said Abraham would have a child. But by whom he

would have it was not mentioned! There they go with their logic that was birthed out of faithlessness and impatience!

Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her.
(Genesis 16:1, 2)

Polygamy was anyway a common practice of that time, they reasoned out; so the society will have no problem in this union. But were they doing the will of God? Abraham, instead of listening to God:

Hearkened to the voice of Sarai. (Genesis 16:2)

Isn't that the same way in which Adam, the first man, fell? Listening to the voice of his wife, instead of God's! What a great consequence the sin of Adam had, on the whole human race! And what a great consequence the sin of Abraham had, on the whole chosen race! Many of his descendents followed his example and their hearts were pierced with sorrow and their family lives, thrown into disaster.

The next time God appeared to Abraham, was when he was ninety-nine years old—that was after fourteen years, after the initial promise. The first thing God uttered was a word of rebuke and an admonition to him:

And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. (Genesis 17:1)

Because he faltered, the word came unto him as, “Be thou perfect”. The contents of this chapter are the repetition of the earlier chapter—the birth of the promised child. God makes it very clear to him that, it is through his wife Sarah, that the promised seed would come.

And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

(Genesis 17:19)

Look at the troubles this holy pair invited. An Egyptian handmaid is now Mrs. Abraham! She is all excited about her future and starts to snub Sarah, the real wife of Abraham. There is confusion and heated exchanges every day. Sarah finally begets a child and the trouble doubles. Both the women are to be blamed—Sarah for suggesting this earthly idea of second marriage to her husband, and Hagar for taunting her mistress. The record declares:

And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. (Genesis 16:4)

Sarah realizes her mistake, but blames Abraham for it. She becomes desperate.

And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee.

(Genesis 16:5)

The threefold family breaks. Hagar is forced to leave home with Ishmael her son. Abraham is

heartbroken thinking of the future of his little boy. What heartache, what sorrow, what pain grips him!

The great rule is clearly recorded by the apostle Paul:

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. (Galatians 6: 7, 8)

They sowed of the flesh and were reaping of the flesh. Therefore Abraham had to cut off the foreskin of his flesh, and of every male thereafter was told to do so, as a constant reminder of this faithlessness shown.

Look at how the angel of the Lord addresses Hagar—not as Abraham's wife, but Sarah's servant:

And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. (Genesis 16:8, 9)

The above verse clearly indicates that God did not join Abraham and Hagar in marriage. It was Sarah who joined them. She was not called Abraham's wife, by the angel.

The hatred and the jealousy between the two sons of Abraham that started 4000 years ago are still continuing with greater intensity among their descendents. The Jews who are the descendents of Isaac have been at endless war with the Arabs who are the descendents of Ishmael. What terrible

consequences one mistake can make for generations to come!

Abraham Marries Keturah:

Let us read the passage of Abraham's third marriage:

Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah. (Genesis 25:1)

Is Abraham again deviating from the divine plan of marriage? Not really. Sarah, his wife, is now dead. The death of Sarah is recorded two chapters earlier. It says:

And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah. And Sarah died in Kirjatharba. (Genesis 23:1, 2)

Abraham did not sin in marrying Keturah. The Word of the Lord is clear regarding the freedom the widows and widowers have:

For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. (Romans 7: 2, 3)

We have no trace regarding the whereabouts of Hagar. From Genesis chapter 21 we come to know that she has gone back to Egypt with Ishmael soon after Isaac was born.

One might say, doesn't the Bible talk about the concubines of Abraham? So did Abraham have

concubines as well, apart from Hagar and Keturah? Let's read that passage:

And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country. And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years.
(Genesis 25:5 – 7)

The Scripture record of 1 Chronicles 1: 28–33 is clear that Abraham married just three women—Sarah, Hagar and Keturah. Then who are these concubines that Genesis mentions? Let us compare two Scripture texts about Keturah and then it will be clear.

Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah. (Genesis 25:1)

Now the sons of Keturah, Abraham's concubine. (1 Chronicles 1:32)

In one place, Keturah is called the “wife” of Abraham and in another place she is called the “concubine” of Abraham. Concubines were also called “wives”, but wives were never called “concubines”. Sarah was the first and real wife of Abraham; she is never called his concubine. So the concubines of Abraham were two—Hagar and Keturah.

Jacobs's Wives:

Jacob had 4 wives—Leah, Rachel, Zilpah and Bilhah. Leah and Rachel were sisters, also were first cousins to Jacob. Zilpah was the handmaid of

Leah, and Bilhah was the handmaid of Rachel. The entire story of Jacob getting his four wives, is recorded in Genesis chapters 29 and 30.

Jacob “buys” Leah and Rachel. He worked to get them. He tells his father-in-law:

Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle. (Genesis 31:41)

On the other hand when you look at the marriage of his father, Isaac, you see it was a “door delivery” that he received. Abraham sought the Lord in prayer, and getting a wife for Isaac was so easy. Only if Jacob had prayed, God would have worked things out for him.

The first seven years he worked to get Rachel, whom he loved, but his father-in-law cheated him and gave him Leah. Jacob was very upset, but he actually shouldn't have been. What can he expect? He cheated his blind father with lies and deception to get the covenant blessing; and he gets back the taste of his own medicine! Again he works for another seven years and finally gets Rachel.

There is rivalry and strife and jealousy between the sisters. Jacob too is drawn into the mess of things. With all the confusion another wife is added:

And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die. And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb? And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her. And

she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in unto her. And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son.

(Genesis 30:1-5)

Was God leading the affairs? Not at all! God just allowed them to have their own way. Sorrow and heartache followed. When God blesses, leads and directs the affairs there is always peace within. It is written:

The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.

(Proverbs 10:22)

There was a spirit of competition between the two sisters. They insisted on Jacob's third and fourth marriage as they were driven by a spirit of rivalry.

When Leah saw that she had left bearing, she took Zilpah her maid, and gave her Jacob to wife. And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a son. (Genesis 30:9, 10)

There were constant arguments between the two sisters over Jacob. Rachel kept Jacob away from Leah. Listen to Leah on one occasion:

And she said unto her, Is it a small matter that thou hast taken my husband?

(Genesis 30:15)

When Rachel finally bore a child, Jacob decides to leave his father-in-law's house and return to his own country. And there is great confusion and dissension with his father-in-law over the cattle that Jacob worked for. Finally Jacob runs away from his in-law's place without informing them. He is chased. God intervenes. Otherwise there would have been bloodshed and chaos. Laban, the father-in-law, asks Jacob to make a covenant with him. Listen to what he says:

And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and thee this day...The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another. If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives beside my daughters, no man is with us; see, God is witness betwixt thee and me. (Genesis 31:49, 50)

He was concerned about his two daughters. He knew the mess they were in because of the plural union. He said: "If thou shalt afflict my daughters". Why did he say that? Because afflicting someone is wrong. And then he proceeded to say, "Or if thou shalt take other wives beside my daughters". Why did he say that? If polygamy was correct he wouldn't say that. Adding other wives was wrong and Laban knew that. In fact, he was responsible for Jacob's multiple marriages, and now he admonishes his son-in-law about it!

The mess has gone on for too long, for 20 years! Jacob realizes the goodness of God and prays a prayer that he never prayed before. He cried and said:

O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the

mother with the children. (Genesis 32:9-11)

The goodness of God led him to repentance. But the confusion and scars in his family life he has to witness and bear. There is a price to pay when one runs ahead of God.

Gideon's Wives:

This is what the Bible records of Gideon, the famous man of battle:

And Gideon had threescore and ten sons of his body begotten: for he had many wives. And his concubine that was in Shechem, she also bare him a son, whose name he called Abimelech. (Judges 8:30, 31)

We know that Gideon was a man of God. He did great exploits by the power of God. Paul also mentions his name in the 11th chapter of Hebrews as one of the great men of faith (Hebrews 11:32). Now, that does not mean that he did not commit errors in his life. The Scripture declares:

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

Consider, for a moment, the story of king David and Bathsheba. When that happened the Scripture says:

But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD. (2 Samuel 11:27)

Now look at another passage of Scripture that was recorded later about David. God compares King Hezekiah to David:

And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done. (2 Chronicles 29:2)

The text of Chronicles says David did all things “right in the sight of the LORD”. Does it also include his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah? Obviously not! We saw that God was displeased with him. The word “all”, has to be taken in its context. It certainly doesn’t cover his sins with Bathsheba and Uriah, which the Bible clearly condemned, but in general it covers King David’s faithfulness to God, “a man after his own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14).

The same way Gideon was a man of God. But he too had ups and downs in his life. As many of God’s children today falter along the way, Gideon faltered too. He led Israel to sin at one point in time:

And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house. (Judges 8:27)

Just as Aaron made a golden calf out of all the ornaments that he collected (Exodus 32:1-7), Gideon too did something similar (Judges 8:22-27). Immediately following the narration of Judge 8:27 the Bible talks about the multiple wives of Gideon in verse 30. The context is clear—when he was spiritually low he followed the earthly custom of the times in marrying many wives.

Immediately after his death we see there was confusion as to which of his seventy sons should reign. Abimelech, the son of Gideon’s concubine, killed all the seventy sons except Jotham, the youngest son of Gideon.

And he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren the sons of Jerubbaal, being threescore and ten persons, upon one stone:

notwithstanding yet Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself. (Judges 9:5)

(Gideon is also called Jerubbaal, Judges 8:35.)

What a high price Gideon had to pay ultimately. Only if he would have adhered to the commandments of God always, what a beautiful family tree he might have had!

When God's methods are not followed, man reaps the consequences. God always speaks out and disapproves all wrong acts that are done, either immediately or a little later, either through the Word of His mouth, or through the judgments that speak louder than words!

God, in His mercy, forgives the wrongdoer when he repents. But He, most of the time, allows them to face the natural consequence of their deeds so that others would see the evil fruit of a wrong action and shy away from repeating it. Gideon obviously would have repented, for we see his name in the list of the champions of faith in Hebrews chapter eleven.

Elkanah's Wives:

Elkanah was the father of the great prophet, Samuel. Elkanah had two wives. The Scripture records:

And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. (1 Samuel 1:2)

The context reveals that Hannah was the first wife, and Peninnah was the second. It is most likely the Elkanah took his second wife, as Hannah was

barren, something like Abraham taking Hagar when Sarah was fruitless.

There is always a sure price to pay when an extra member is added in the holy ordinance of marriage. Elkanah loves Hannah more, and gives her more portion of wealth. It reads:

And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions: But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the LORD had shut up her womb. (1 Samuel 1:4, 5)

Strife, jealousy, hatred is the result. What happened between the two wives?

And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb. (1 Samuel 1:6)

It was not a one-day issue. It looked like a perennial problem:

Year by year...she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat. (1 Samuel 1:7)

God finally blesses the first wife of Elkanah—and Samuel is born. The family peace and love took a beating because of the two wives!

David's Wives:

Through Moses, God gave a specific command to the kings of Israel, seeing the danger of them following the customs of the neighboring nations. He said:

But he shall not multiply horses to himself...Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to

himself silver and gold. And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel. (Deuteronomy 17:16-20)

Now let us look at what King David did:

And David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron: and there were yet sons and daughters born to David. (2 Samuel 5:13)

Was David following the command of God as given through Moses? Does God have to repeatedly remind him that it was wrong to multiply wives?

But one might say: Why did not God punish David if it was wrong? But we need to remember that, not just David, but each one of us are guilty of not following God's Word in so many areas of our lives even though we know it is wrong. And because God does not punish us immediately does that mean God is pleased with our actions? Let us remember that "God is love", and the first virtue

that Paul mentions about love is, longsuffering or patience.

Charity suffereth long. (1 Corinthians 13:4)

God waits long. None can be patient like our God is! He still showers His blessings hoping that we see His goodness and repent of our wrong deeds. Paul wrote exactly that:

Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? (Romans 2:4)

Solomon, who experienced the patience of God in his own life, wrote later:

Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him: But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God. (Ecclesiastes 8:11-13)

The amazing character of God is seen in His dealings with sinful men. When Adam and Eve sinned He drove them out of the Garden, but made coats of skin to shield them from the fluctuating climate outside. (Of course it was a symbol of how He is going to save too, the coat being the symbol of His righteousness that covers us. See Genesis 3:21).

When the children of Israel asked for a king to rule over them, they hurt the feelings of God

terribly. (See 1 Samuel 8:7-9). God was rejected as King. Yet God, in His tender love, still works to bless them and provide them their needs! Who can be like this, but God alone!

In a similar way, when David and many other men of God directly disregarded the command of multiplying wives unto themselves, God did not cut them off. He hoped that they would realize their sins and repent, and finally be saved in His eternal kingdom.

David had to face the sure consequence of expanding his family in this earthly manner. He saw the hatred, jealousy and bloodshed in his house. In 2 Samuel Chapter 13 you can see how Amnon shamed his half sister Tamar and raped her and Absalom the brother of Tamar takes revenge and murders Ammon for what he did to Tamar!

Even King David committed adultery and murder in his lust for women! This tragic story is recorded in 2 Samuel Chapter 11.

But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD. (2 Samuel 11:27)

When things go beyond the limit and patience of divine forbearance, God immediately acts. He gives all a long rope, hoping that we make a comeback. When we continue going away, he strikes, not willing that we perish forever. That is exactly what God did to David.

Some take the text recorded in the book of Kings and reason out that David sinned only when he took Bathsheba, and not when he multiplied wives. Let us examine the passage:

David did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him

all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. (1 Kings 15:5)

The adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah was the most evil thing David did. The message of the above text does not mean that David did no other sin or wrong. Didn't David commit another big blunder that invited the instant wrath of God, by numbering Israel? The writer of Chronicles records it:

And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel. And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan; and bring the number of them to me, that I may know it...And God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel. And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly. (1 Chronicles 21:1, 2, 7, 8)

The punishment for this faithlessness of David was the slaughter of seventy thousand of his countrymen by pestilence! So the text of 1 Kings 15:5 does not mean that David did no other wrong. The context of it has to be noted. It was talking about king Abijam, who did evil after evil all the days of his life. He was always at the height of evil doing. But David, in contrast, was not so. The high point of his sin was that one act. And David repented.

One might say: Doesn't the Bible say that God gave David many wives according to 2 Samuel 12:8? Let us read the passage:

And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. (2 Samuel 12:8)

Yes, God gave David his master's wives (King Saul's wives). But what does it mean? Does that mean God gave David the wives of Saul to be his wives now? No, it doesn't say that.

Let us get the background of the text. David committed adultery with Bathsheba, and murdered Uriah, her husband. He tries to hide from the people, but the all-seeing God catches up with him at last. God sends Nathan the prophet with a parable. David does not realize that it is about him. He pronounces his own curse. The parable is about a poor man and a rich man.

And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And

David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul. (2 Samuel 12:1-7)

The ewe lamb “lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter”. To lay in his bosom means it was precious to him. In another parable, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, (again we have a rich man and a poor man here), Lazarus was “carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:22). That means Lazarus was cared for and loved by Abraham. Isn’t Jesus too pictured as being in the “bosom” of the heavenly Father? John records:

The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father. (John 1:18)

The Father loved and cared for His Son, and vice versa.

What did God tell David?

And I gave thee...thy master's wives into thy bosom. (2 Samuel 12:8)

It doesn’t say I gave thy master’s wives to be thy wives, but instead says, I gave them into “thy bosom”. David was to take care of them and love them and provide for them.

“Into thy bosom” does not mean he had a husband-wife relationship with them. The ewe lamb, Lazarus and Jesus too were in the bosom of someone. King Saul being dead, David his

successor, had the moral responsibility to take care of the welfare of Saul's wives. This was a God-given responsibility.

But one might say: The context and the verse clearly suggest that God was telling David – “Why did you take Uriah's wife when you could have satisfied yourself with Saul's wives which I gave you?” Well, that is surely not what God was saying in the text.

We need to know that David had many of his own wives already—Michal, Abigail, Ahinoam, Maacah, Haggith, Abital, Eglah, etc. (2 Samuel 3:1-6, 1 Samuel 18:27). So why should God talk only about Saul's wives at this time? Why didn't God remind him of his own wives that he had?

By the way, apart from God being upset with David for the adultery with Uriah's wife and the murder of Uriah, God was upset with him even for taking her as his wife. The prophet said:

Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife. (2 Samuel 12:9)

If God gave Saul's wives, after the death of Saul, to be David's wives, why was God upset with David taking Uriah's wife to be his wife, after Uriah's death?

Well, let us analyze the text again to see the context and the verse in its true setting. In the parable king David was the “rich man”. And what were his “riches”? Nathan the prophet reveals it. He said:

Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel. (2 Samuel 12:7)

He was the “rich man”. He was the Lord’s “anointed”; he was the “king over Israel”. And who made him king? It was God who picked him from the shepherd’s tent! And when his life was in danger in the presence of Saul, God said:

I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul.

(2 Samuel 12:7)

God also declared the entire kingdom of Saul to be his kingdom. He was the custodian of everything—the riches, the people, the place, etc. God said:

And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah. (2 Samuel 12:8)

God gave this ordinary shepherd boy all things freely. God even wanted to exalt him more by extending his boundaries and the domain of his rule. God said:

And gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. (2 Samuel 12:8)

God dethroned Saul because of the grave sins he had committed and then David departed from the path of righteousness and God punished him too.

God was upset with him and his crime. He, being the Lord’s anointed king, was not expected to step so low!

Consider this *illustration*: A man has a mother and many sisters. And he takes care of them in place of the father who is dead. One day, he commits adultery with a stranger. And everyone in town now comes to know about it. What will society say about this man who was taking care of the

female members of his family? “Look at this man! He has a mother and many sisters and he had no shame to spoil another woman’s life!” What were the people of the society actually saying? Were they suggesting that he should have committed that crime with one of the members of his family? Not at all! They were simply saying—how could a man, who is the custodian of female members in the family, commit this act?

That is exactly what God told David. He being the successor of King Saul, who was dead, was given the responsibility to take care of them, his predecessor’s wives. What trust would God have on him and what trust would Saul’s wives have on him after this heinous crime of committing adultery, murder and adding another wife? That was what prophet Nathan said.

Solomon’s Wives:

The Bible records about Solomon:

And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. (1 kings 11:3)

We don’t need to go any further to know whether Solomon was right; the same text gives us the answer—“His wives turned away his heart”.

The wisest man becomes the most foolish one! In his early days he was true to God, and God used him mightily. In one of the proverbs he wrote regarding strange women:

Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her

house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death. (Proverbs 7:25-27)

Solomon slowly and steadily departed from the paths of righteousness. The sad record of his polygamous life is also recorded:

And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father...And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father...And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods...And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice. (1 kings 11:3, 4, 6, 8, and 9).

Much of his kingdom was taken away for all the evil he did and God passed it on to Solomon's servant and kept just 2 tribes of 12 for his son.

Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. (1 kings 11:11)

At the end of his life, he came to his senses and turned back to God. He wrote Ecclesiastes as

a repented man. The manner in which he starts Ecclesiastes shows that he learnt his lesson:

The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. (Ecclesiastes 1:1, 2)

In Chapter 2 he gives a gist of his life of vanity. Now he is a preacher—Ecclesiastes means, preacher! He preaches to the young and admonishes them not to follow the path of vanity. Sarcastically, he says:

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity. (Ecclesiastes 11:9, 10)

God permits man to do what he wants to a great extent but, says Solomon, “Know thou, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment”.

Yes, all these great men of faith faltered seriously, even in their married life, and God had to discipline them and let them reap the harvest of their evil sowings. God did not eternally cast them out in His mercy. They bounced back, by His grace, but the scars remained to taunt them.

This is how Solomon, the most experienced polygamist, when he repented, concluded his book and so in like manner we too shall conclude this book on *Polygamy*:

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. (Ecclesiastes 12: 13, 14)

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