



FEED MY SHEEP

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Marriage Partners and High Places

Last month we concluded our long series on the lives and the character traits of King Saul and King David. What now? Well, why not simply continue where we left off with the death of David and the accession of Solomon to the throne of Israel? Studying the life and character of King Solomon will also afford us many valuable insights into how we should walk as Christian believers today. As we begin, notice the words which I emphasize for they will figure more prominently in our discussion in this and subsequent lessons.

1 Kings 3:1 And Solomon made affinity [a marriage alliance] with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the LORD, and the wall of Jerusalem round about.

2 Only ["except that"] the people sacrificed in high places, because there was no house built unto the name of the LORD, until those days.

3 And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father: only [except that] he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places.

4 And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that *was* the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar.

5 In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.

In verse one, Solomon is marrying the daughter of the pharaoh of Egypt. Pharaoh is a title, like king, sultan or president. It is not a proper name. There is some debate about which particular pharaoh this was, but that

is not germane to our discussion. What is important is that King Solomon married this *foreigner*, this Egyptian princess. Was that wrong? Was that a sin? I don't think so. Exodus 34 is one of several passages we will read which combines regulations regarding marriage *partners* along with the mention of "high places," so these passages are pertinent to the verses in 1 Kings which we have read so far.

Exodus 34:12 Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee:

13 But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves:

14 For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD [YHWH], whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God:

15 Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and *one* call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice;

16 And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods.

Here God through Moses instructs Israel to stamp out idolatry when they enter into the Promised Land. God warns against covenants with Canaanites—and that would include marriage covenants—as we will see more clearly in the next passage.

Deuteronomy 7:1 When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to

possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou;

2 And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them:

3 Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.

Elsewhere, God had also forbidden marriages with Ammonites and Moabites. Solomon's first wife was an Ammonitess (I Kings 14:21), so Solomon was clearly disobedient in that marriage. Here, God commands no marriages with Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, and Hivites. Collectively, all seven tribes are elsewhere referred to as Canaanites. Aside from the fact that God said to kill them (and in another place, He said to drive them out of the land), why did God command Israel not to intermarry with them? God gives us the answer...

Deuteronomy 7: 4 For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.

5 But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire.

Since we are examining God's rules on permissible marriage *partners*, it might be appropriate to make some comments regarding events of the past several years. On August 6, 2003, the governing body of the Episcopal church in America approved, by a vote of 62-45, the ordination of an openly homosexual bishop. During the days of conference the homosexual priest's "partner" stood with him. The conservative faction of the Episcopal body predicted that if the homosexual priest were confirmed as a bishop that it would split the Episcopal church. One of their spokesmen declared that there was no need to even debate the issue, that the Bible clearly condemned homosexuality, and that by approving the homosexual priest as a bishop, the Episcopal church was declaring itself heretic to the Christian faith. So immediately after the vote, the conservative theologian led a walk-out. Frankly, I wonder why the split didn't occur years

before when the Episcopalians allowed an openly homosexual *priest* in the first place. What's the big deal now? Priest, bishop; they're both clergy. The predicted split has been happening in the years since and in other denominations as well. The liberal wing of the Lutheran church is following the same path.

What we are witnessing is God's judgment on the entire Saul church system. Prophetically speaking, the seven sons of Saul are being hung. We've covered this before. This indicates that the barley harvest is very near. If you are new to all this, we suggest you go back to FMS #38 and begin reading about the wheat, the asses and the barley—which symbolize groups of people. All but the most recent issues of FMS can be found on our website for free reading or downloading. But very briefly—the barley harvest is the prophetic symbol of the first resurrection. That is the resurrection of the Christians who were chosen to attain to the high calling of overcomers. That event will usher in a whole new age—and with pointed sarcasm, Lord Maitreya has absolutely nothing to do with it.

The past few years have also seen a two or three states actually legalizing "gay marriages." We have recited a couple of God's rules on suitable *marriage* partners in terms of tribal background. We will cite more shortly. One can peruse the Scriptures from beginning to end, but one will search in vain for even the flimsiest hint that a *marriage* is anything but the union between a man and a woman. That has always been understood as the meaning of the word "marriage." It has been so for millennia. Of course, there have always been homosexuals. I think in ages past, they were far fewer in number, percentage-wise, than they are today. But society has usually not been so tolerant of them as it is today and so those who were, remained "in the closet."

But since there are now virtually no societal sanctions upon them, they have come out of the closet in droves and they are demanding recognition of so called "gay marriages." In the New Testament, the apostle Paul records God's word on the subject in his epistle to the Christians at Rome. I am even going to quote from the New International Version, which I seldom do, because it is so far off in so many passages, but in this case, they offer a very good translation and I have a purpose for quoting it.

NIV Romans 1:27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and

were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

The use of the word *perversion* there is appropriate because when men abandon *natural* relations with women and commit unnatural and indecent acts with other men, they have in fact *perverted* the God-created means for procreation and sexual pleasure. I make a point of that word *perversion* to say this? Have you ever noticed how the perversion of sexuality has been accompanied by the perversion of the *language*? Of course, much has been said by many about the perversion of the word *gay*, but now the institution of marriage is being mocked by those trying to pervert its meaning to include homosexual partners. What an abomination in the eyes of God!

Using the term “homosexual marriage” is like using the term “dry water” or “plastic stone.” It is an oxymoron. Have we reached the bottom of sin and debauchery in society yet? I wish it were so, but I fear that it will go even further. Once so-called gay marriages have become commonplace, what will be next? Already, a group called NAMBLA (North American Man-Boy Love Association) is calling for equal rights for their perversion. I need not spell out what perversion they practice since it is implied in the title of their organization. All of these dreadful events, which demonstrate a downward-plunging spiral of morality in society are also indicators that the second appearing of our Lord is at the door.

As Christians, how are we to treat homosexuals? Shall we hate them? Absolutely not. We abhor the sin, but we must realize that we can never even *begin* to win them to Christ if they perceive hatred in us toward them. Let us remember what Paul said elsewhere.

1 Corinthians 6:9b Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

That last phrase is clearly referring to homosexuals, but many perhaps do not know that the word translated *effeminate* actually means a male prostitute or homosexual—and since we just referred to the North American Man-Boy Love Association, it is telling that the definition of the Greek word translated “effeminate” also means “a boy kept for homosexual relations with a man.” Paul continues...

10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

And now listen very carefully. Paul says...

11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

In other words, some homosexuals had become converts to Christ. That would not have happened if the Corinthian believers had been snarling at them and telling them they were going to burn in hell for all eternity. Thus we have the pattern for our attitude towards homosexuals given for us in the New Testament.

Now, concerning high places, 1 Kings 3:2–4 shows how Israel and Solomon himself worshiped at “high” places. Some believe that worshiping in high places is thus forbidden by God, because of the use of the word “only” there. I take the view that worshiping in high places per se is not forbidden. Here’s why.

Numbers 33: 51 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye are passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan;

52 Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down [destroy] all their high places:

I do not believe high places *themselves* are forbidden. It is *idolatry* that is forbidden, whether it takes place in the valley, in the forests or on top of the high places. It so happens that the pagan Canaanites worshiped predominantly in the high places. But they also performed their pagan rites “under every green tree,” which implies the forests. There’s more.

Deuteronomy 12:1 These *are* the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth.

2 Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree:

3 And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire;

and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place.

4 Ye shall not do so unto the LORD your God.

So to summarize this, God said to go in and destroy every place where the pagans had established their worship centers, whether it was on the top of a mountain or a hill or in the shady forests. Verse 4 simply means that YHWH will not tolerate being worshiped like a heathen god.

5 But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, *even* unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come:

6 And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks:

7 And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee.

Can you see that this is foretelling of the great feast day celebrations which would occur in Jerusalem? ...Because it talks about bringing the tithes and they were to eat and rejoice before Yahweh?

9 For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth you. 10 But *when* ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land ... 11 Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD: 13 Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: 14 But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee.

In verse 9, God said that they had not yet come to their inheritance. In verse 11, He said that when they *do* come in to the Promised Land, that He, God, will choose a place where they were to worship Him.

It would be one location for all the tribes. And where was that one place? By the time of Solomon's reign, it is now almost 440 years since the entrance into the Promised Land and God is only *now* getting ready to build the place for national worship. And where is it? ... **On a high place**! ...called Mt. Zion. Incidentally, recall that God had instructed Abraham to worship Him by offering Isaac as a sacrifice on that very spot, which was then known as Mt. Moriah. So high places, in and of themselves are not evil, nor are they forbidden as places of worship.

Speaking of Abraham, in connection with this idea of marrying foreign women, recall that Abraham had Hagar as a surrogate mother and she was an Egyptian princess. Joseph in his many years of exile in Egypt had married Asenath, the daughter of a pagan priest of Egypt. So in general, marrying non-Israelites is not forbidden. Moses himself had married a Midianite (a descendant of Abraham through Keturah). In fact, marrying a non-Israelite was specifically approved by God in the rules of warfare.

Deuteronomy 21:11 And seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife; 12 Then thou shalt bring her home to thine house;...

So Solomon was not breaking God's law in marrying a foreigner from Egypt. Nor was he breaking any law when he worshiped at the high place in Gibeon. It is very important that we recognize that these stories are all types and shadows as well. The Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple were symbolic representations of the human body. Paul confirms that these buildings pointed to our bodies as the ultimate temples of God and of His Holy Spirit. Now, if you are upright, where is the "high place" of your body? It is your head. God wants us to worship Him in our minds; i.e., in our thoughts, desires and will. Clearly, it is not forbidden, but in fact, we **should** worship in high places.

(More on the life and character of Solomon next month.)

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