

James Rafferty Q2 L3 2025 *April 12, 13 One Flesh*

Allusions, Images, Symbols: How to Study Bible Prophecy

Next week - The Nations part 1

Images from Marriage

Sabbath Afternoon

Read for This Week's Study: *Gen. 2:23–25, Eph. 5:29–32, Ezek. 16:4–14, Rev. 18:1–4, Gen. 24:1–4, Rev. 19:1–9.*

Memory Text: “Then he said to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!” ’ And he said to me, ‘These are the true sayings of God’ ” (*Revelation 19:9, NKJV*).

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he Bible is replete with love stories that powerfully reveal aspects of salvation and of God's love for His people. The most intimate of relationships, marriage, proves to be a school

where, if we allow ourselves to experience it the way that God had intended, we can discover deep lessons about His love for us, about our relationship to Him, and about the lengths to which He has gone to redeem us.

Modern conceptions of love and marriage have skewed our ability to appreciate what God is trying to teach us through the marital covenant. Though human sinfulness has greatly perverted marriage (and just about everything else), marriage can still be a powerful way of revealing truth, even prophetic truth. More than just to make us happy, marriage should be a school in which we learn deep lessons about ourselves and our relationship to God.

This week we will explore different ways the Word of God talks about marriages, good and bad. We can then draw lessons from these examples to understand better how God relates to His people, even when they fall short, and we can learn some truths about His love that can help us better grasp last-day events.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 19.*

Sunday *April 13*

One Flesh

Few biblical metaphors underscore the intimacy that God desires with the human race more than that of marriage. This metaphor is used so frequently in the biblical narrative—and shows up so pointedly in Revelation—that it is imperative for Bible students to grasp what God is driving at when He uses it in the Word.

Read Genesis 2:23–25 and Ephesians 5:29–32. In what ways does a human marriage mirror Christ’s bond to humanity?

On an occasion when Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees, He quoted the Genesis account of Adam’s and Eve’s marriage, to which the Pharisees quickly raised the question, “ ‘Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?’ ” (*Matt. 19:7, NKJV*).

Moses, of course, was deemed a founding prophet for the nation. Imagine questioning the Author of the institution of marriage by pitting Him against His own prophet. Their tact was typical of their approach to Jesus: they often attempted to prove that His teachings contradicted the Scriptures.

Lifetime, faithful marriage was the ideal established by God at the foundation of the human race. Fallen humanity, unfortunately, damaged this foundational gift from God.

Perhaps, given the importance that Scripture assigns to marriage, it is not a coincidence that the institution has always been under relentless attack. Along with the Sabbath, it is one of the two gifts bestowed on us in Eden, and both were intended to demonstrate God’s desire for an intimate relationship with His creation.

Marriage, the intimate pairing of two imperfect people, will always give cause for tension. THE ILLUSTRATION OF A marriage between the church and Christ is the pairing of a perfect Savior with a very imperfect bride. Nevertheless, we can learn about God’s love from what a good marriage offers.

Here are three principles for marriage.

First, forgive your spouse, however underserving, just as Christ forgives us, however underserving.

Second, accept your spouse, faults and all, just as Christ accepts us, faults and all.

Third, just as Christ put us before Himself, put your spouse before yourself. How could all three of these gospel-based principles help us not only understand how God relates to us but also help any marriage?

Church Bride of Christ?

In a letter to the Voice of Truth for Feb. 19, 1845, William Miller says:

“I presume, Bro. Marsh, you have seen Brn. Hale and Turner’s Advent Mirror, printed in Boston, Jan., 1845, concerning the marriage, in the parable of the virgins. I do believe in the main they are right - that cannot be the personal coming of Christ. Why, say you? Read Luke 12:36: ‘And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he shall return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to

him immediately.’ You see his coming, for which we look, is after the wedding.

“Has Christ come in the sense spoken of, Matthew 25:10? I think he has.

“I know many of my brethren whom I highly esteem, will, and do, disagree with me on this matter. I would advise them not to have any hardness. Remember what James says, v. 9: ‘Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold the Judge standeth before the door.’ It would seem that in this very time when we have need of patience, the apostle, by the inspiration of the divine Spirit, foresaw that there would be danger of grudging, or grieving one another, and warns us not to do it, lest ye be condemned: for ‘the Judge standeth before the door!’

“Let the dear brethren see to it, that we give meat in due season. Let no one say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming, and begin to beat and bruise, and grudge against his fellow-servant. He that seeks to save his life now by conformity to the world, or worldly men, will lose it; and he that loses his life now for the truth’s sake, will find eternal life.”

6. That the established view, that in the marriage of the Lamb the church is the bride of Christ, was among the errors of past times. By investigation it was clearly seen that there were two things which the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments illustrate by marriage. First, the UNION of God’s people in all past ages, as well as at the present time, with their Lord. Second, Christ’s reception of the throne of David, which is in the New Jerusalem. But union of believers with their Lord has existed since the days of Adam, and cannot be regarded as the marriage of the Lamb. It is supposed that Isaiah 54:5, speaks of the church

when he says, “Thy Maker is thine husband;” but Paul, in Galatians 4, applies this prophecy to the New Jerusalem. Says John, speaking of Christ, “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom.” John 3:29. That Christ is here represented in his RELATION to his followers by a bridegroom, and his followers by a bride, is true; but that he and they are here called the bridegroom and bride, is not true. No one believes that the event called the marriage of the Lamb took place eighteen hundred years since.

Paul, in writing to the church, 2 Corinthians 11:2, says, “I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ.” But does this prove that the marriage of the Lamb took place in Corinth? Or, did Paul only wish to represent by marriage, the UNION which he had effected, through the gospel, between Christ and the church at Corinth?

He also says, Ephesians 5:23, “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.” But please turn and read from verse 22, and it will be seen that Paul’s subject is the relation and duty of man and wife to each other. This is illustrated and enforced by the RELATION of Christ and the church. Those who suppose that Paul is here DEFINING WHO THE LAMB’S WIFE IS, are greatly mistaken. That is not his subject. He commences, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands.” Verse 22. It is, “Husbands, love your wives.” Verse 25. It is, indeed, an excellent subject, but has nothing to do in determining WHAT THE BRIDE IS.

The marriage of the Lamb does not cover the entire period of probation, in which believers are UNITED to their Lord, from Adam to the close of probation. It is ONE event, to take place at

ONE point of time, and that is just prior to the resurrection of the just.

Then what is the bride in the marriage of the Lamb? Said the angel to John, “Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” Revelation 21:9. Did the angel show John the church? Let John testify. “And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of Heaven from God.” Verse 10. The New Jerusalem is also represented as the mother. “But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.” Galatians 4:26 Christ is represented (Isaiah 9:6,) as the “everlasting Father” of his people; the New Jerusalem, the mother, and the subjects of the first resurrection, the children. And, beyond all doubt, the resurrection of the just is represented by birth. How appropriate, then, is the view that the marriage of the Lamb takes place in Heaven before the Lord comes, and before the children of the great family of Heaven are brought forth at the resurrection of the just.

Let those who are disposed to cling to the old view that the church is the bride, and that the marriage is after Christ comes, and the saints are caught up to Heaven, answer the following questions:

1. Who are illustrated by the man found at the marriage, Matthew 22, not having on the wedding garment?
2. Will any be caught up by mistake, to be bound hand and foot, and be cast down to the earth again?
3. If the church is the wife, who are they that are called to the marriage as guests?
4. Jerusalem above is the mother of the children of promise; but if the church is the Lamb’s wife, who are the children?

5. That the door was shut. The clear light from the heavenly sanctuary that a door, or ministration, was opened at the close of the 2300 days, while another was closed at that time, had not yet been seen. And in the absence of light in reference to the shut and open door of the heavenly sanctuary, the reader can hardly see how those who held fast their Advent experience, as illustrated by the parable of the ten virgins, could fail to come to the conclusion that probation for sinners had closed.

But light on the subject soon came, and then it was seen that although Christ closed one ministration at the termination of the 2300 days, he had opened another in the most holy place, and still presented His blood before the Father for sinners. As the high priest, in the type, on the tenth day of the seventh month, entered the most holy place, and offered blood for the sins of the people, before the ark of the testament and the mercy-seat, so Christ, at the close of the 2300 days, came before the ark of God and the mercy-seat to plead his blood in behalf of sinners. Mark this: The great Redeemer then approached the mercy-seat in behalf of sinners. Was the door of mercy closed? This is an unscriptural expression, but, if I may be allowed to use it, may I not say that in the fullest sense of the expression the door of mercy was opened on the tenth day of the seventh month, 1844? (LIFE INCIDENTS, James White, pp. 201-204).