



Date: October 15, 2017 *“Marriage – The Nature of the Covenant”*

Scripture: Genesis 15; Exodus 34; Ephesians 5

Last week we looked at the nature of the union between male and female within marriage. We saw how the *unity* and *diversity* found within the godhead (Father/Son/Spirit) gives us a model for the unity and diversity within the marriage relationship. The nature of the trinity gives us the model for the nature of marriage.

Additionally, the nature of the Trinity, specifically the character of God, provides us with the nature of the covenant of marriage itself. So, we don't look at earthly marriage as it is and work back to God in order to understand God's intent for marriage or His character. Rather, we work from God's revelation of Himself and apply it to the marriage relationship.

God's Character in Covenants

- Abram and Sarah struggled with infertility. They could not have children. Yet God came to them and promised that He himself would overcome their struggles and bless them beyond their wildest dreams. What is Abraham's ultimate blessing (15:1)?
- How God worked, acted, and committed himself to Abram is a model or paradigm for how He works, acts, and commits Himself to us (Covenants). What implications does this have for our "Soteriology" (What we believe about how God saves (sōtér) people)?
- Why was Abram counted righteous (Gen 15:6)? What implications does this have for how we understand God's covenant in the Old Testament (Galatians 3)?
- In Gen 15:17 only God (symbolized) passes through the sacrifice.¹ Why is it that only God passes through the two pieces? What does this mean for the covenant?¹
- What does God reveal about Himself in His covenant with Abram in Gen. 15?
- What does God's covenant relationship with Israel (which He describes as a marriage) tell us about God's character and view of marriage? (Remember, Israel wasn't exactly the most faithful covenant partner)
- Life Group Leader: What observations or thoughts did you have from the sermon that revealed something new to you?

¹ **All-Consuming Holiness**

Then after sunset God revealed Himself in connection with the image of an oven (smoking fire pot) and a torch, two elements that were connected with sacrificial ritual in the ancient world. These images are part of the "burning" motif that describes God's zeal and judgment in the world. Fire represents the consuming, cleansing zeal of Yahweh as well as His unapproachable holiness, which are interrelated (cf. Isa. 6:3-7).

Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (1:55-56). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.



The Character of Marriage

- Do you remember your wedding vows? Reflect on them and discuss the character qualities needed to keep them?
- Expectations for marriage: What expectations did you have for your marriage? How quickly did you come to realize some of them were wrong and what did you have to do to readjust?
- Views of marriage: Looking back, did you have a biblical view of marriage when you got married? How has your view of marriage changed throughout your marriage?
- Influences on marriage: Looking back, what/who was the biggest positive and negative influence in your life that shaped your marriage going into it? How about at this point in your marriage? How did your parents' marriage or lack thereof influence how you view and behave in your marriage?
- Advice for marriage: What was the worst (most unbiblical) marriage advice you were given that negatively impacted your marriage? What was the best?
- The Gospel & marriage: How does the gospel shape our understanding of marriage and how we view ourselves and our spouses within it?

For this week: What is one thing you have been challenged about in your view of marriage that needs to change and what will you change in your habits in order to grow in this area?

Unilateral Covenant

The two other primary divine covenants, those with Abraham (Gen. 15) and David (2 Sam. 7; Ps. 89:1-38), were originally perceived as unconditional. These two covenants are patterned after the promissory royal grant of the ancient Near East as, also, attested in Hittite and Assyrian documents. Under this kind of covenant, fiefs are granted to loyal servants by the king and require no further action on behalf of the grantee. Gen. 17:1-14 does demand circumcision of Abraham and his descendants, but this is only a sign of the covenant, and therefore of a loyalty that is to be expected.

Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row, P., & Society of Biblical Literature. (1985). *Harper's Bible dictionary*. Includes index. (1st ed.) (191). San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Since God could "swear" (confirm the covenant) by none greater, "He swore by Himself" (Heb. 6:13). In other words this was a unilateral covenant. So its promises are absolutely sure.

Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (1:56). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

For Abram God's message was clear: in spite of the prospects of death and suffering (enslavement in bondage), his descendants would receive the promises, for God assured it. So Israel could be encouraged by this at the Exodus as well as in subsequent times of distress, even during the Babylonian Captivity. God's solemn covenant assures the Chosen People of the ultimate fulfillment of His promises in spite of their times of death and suffering.

This passage encourages New Testament believers as well. God affirms solemnly that He will fulfill His promises concerning salvation and all the blessings that pertain to that life (cf. 2 Peter 1:3-4); despite opposition, suffering, and even death, He keeps His promises.

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