

119

MINISTRIES

“The following is a direct script of a teaching that is intended to be presented via video, incorporating relevant text, slides, media, and graphics to assist in illustration, thus facilitating the presentation of the material. In some places, this may cause the written material to not flow or sound rather awkward in some places. In addition, there may be grammatical errors that are often not acceptable in literary work. We encourage the viewing of the video teachings to complement the written teaching you see below.”

One Flesh: Biblical Chastity, Marriage and Divorce

Part 2: Adultery

This teaching is the second in a four-part series that discusses the Scriptural instructions concerning sexual immorality, adultery, marriage, and divorce. This teaching addresses topics and uses terminology that parents may not want their children to be familiar with yet, so viewer discretion is advised. Also, you may have questions that this teaching leaves unresolved; if so, we encourage you to watch [part 4](#) of this series, where we will address some of the frequently asked questions on these topics.

In part 1 of this series, we learned that a Biblical marriage was established by a betrothal agreement between a man, a woman, and the woman’s family. We learned that God established marriage as a system in which sex is permitted and encouraged, and that sex outside of a marriage is considered sexual immorality. In this teaching, we’re going to examine what the Scriptures have to say about adultery. What exactly is adultery? What are the consequences of committing adultery? And, how do these concepts apply to our relationship with God? Let’s get started.

One of the Ten Commandments forbids adultery:

Exodus 20:14

[You shall not commit adultery.](#)

Of course, the Bible forbids sex outside of marriage generally, as we discovered in the last teaching. However, adultery is a very specific term with a specific meaning. So, what does it mean to “commit adultery?” And why is this form of sexual immorality the one that is included in the Ten Commandments?

Many people think that adultery means “cheating on your spouse,” but that is not entirely accurate. In the Scriptures, adultery *does* mean “cheating on your spouse” if you are a woman, but if you are a man, adultery refers specifically to sleeping with another man’s wife. Here are some Scriptures that illustrate this point:

Leviticus 20:10

If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

Ezekiel 16:32

Adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband!

Romans 7:2-3

For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

Jeremiah 5:7-8

...When I fed them to the full, they committed adultery and trooped to the houses of whores. They were well-fed, lusty stallions, each neighing for his neighbor's wife.

The Scriptures only refer to an action as *adultery* when it involves a married woman. However, we want to stress that this does not imply that a married man is free to cheat on his wife. As we learned in the last teaching, it is still sin, it is still sexual immorality, for a man to sleep with a woman whom he is not married to (Exodus 22:16-17; 1 Corinthians 7:4). Just because it is not technically called *adultery* does not make it permissible. However, in this teaching, we are examining the technical term *adultery*, and in the Bible, that term refers specifically to the act of sleeping with a woman that is married to a different man. So, what is so significant about this particular sin? What is it about adultery, among all of the forms of sexual immorality, that makes it deserving of its place among the Ten Commandments?

There are several things that make adultery stand out among the sexual sins. First, the relationship between man and woman in a Biblical marriage was not symmetrical. In ancient Mesopotamia, a man was expected to provide for the material needs of the woman: he was to provide her with food, clothing, shelter, and protection, as well as all of the more personal aspects of a marriage relationship. While women did provide materially for their husbands in many ways, for example, by cooking and weaving, the ultimate responsibility for obtaining the resources that the family needed fell upon the husband (Marten Stol, *Women in the Ancient Near East* [Boston/Berlin: Walter de Gruyter Inc. 2016], pp. 339). The wife was much more materially dependent on him than he was dependent on her. Consequently, for the wife to cheat on her husband was not only a sexually immoral action, but it was also betraying the very person that she depended upon most. By committing adultery, she was discarding her main source of provision and protection.

The second thing that stands out about adultery is the behavior of the adulterous man. When a man got married, his entire life revolved around his wife. The bride price he had to pay represented months, possibly years of wages (Genesis 29:18), and once he finally got married, his wife became the center of his attention. She was the one he was providing for, she was the one who would bear his children and keep his family name alive, and she was the one he would love and try to make happy. For another man to enter the picture and cause her to betray her husband was nothing less than the total destruction of the husband's life. Consequently, to violate another man's wife was incredibly foolish; it was just asking for the husband to take murderous revenge. As it says in Proverbs:

Proverbs 6:27-29

Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned? Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; none who touches her will go unpunished.

Proverbs 6:32-34

He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself. He will get wounds and dishonor, and his disgrace will not be wiped away. For jealousy makes a man furious, and he will not spare when he takes revenge.

It seems fitting that the Bible gives the death penalty to both the adulterous man and the adulterous woman, because they were both gambling with their lives by committing this particular sin.

The third and perhaps most significant reason that adultery stands out among the sexual sins is that it clearly and directly destroys a marriage. All of the sexual sins are an affront to the marriage system, since marriage provides the structure inside of which sex is Biblically permissible. But adultery is not just a perversion of the Biblical marriage ideal; adultery is the active destruction of a particular marriage. Adultery makes a point of taking a particular Biblical marriage covenant and breaking it. So adultery, among all the sexual sins, demonstrates the most brazen rebellion against the authority of God. As the most rebellious example of sexual immorality, it is fitting that adultery should be the representative of the sexual sins among the Ten Commandments.

Consequences of Adultery

As we mentioned earlier, the Scriptures prescribe a simple and straightforward punishment for anyone who commits adultery. That punishment is death.

Leviticus 20:10

If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

Since a betrothal is a marriage covenant also, just one that has not yet been consummated, sleeping with a betrothed woman is considered adultery also, and it carries the same punishment.

Deuteronomy 22:23-24

If there is a betrothed virgin, and a man meets her in the city and lies with her, then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry for help though she was in the city, and the man because he violated his neighbor's wife. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

Although death was the prescribed punishment for adultery, there was an alternative to the death penalty. A husband may not wish to prosecute his cheating wife and have her put to death. Instead, since she has violated the marriage covenant, he could issue her a divorce, which spares her life, but frees him of the responsibility of being her husband. This is what Joseph, who was betrothed to Mary, considered doing when he found out that Mary was pregnant:

Matthew 1:18-19

Now the birth of Jesus Christ [Yeshua the Messiah] took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

Later, God revealed to Joseph that Mary had not cheated on him after all, so the divorce did not occur. But divorce was the more merciful option that was available to a man who had been betrayed by his wife. In either case, whether the woman was convicted of adultery or divorced by her husband, the marriage was over.

Obviously, we should not commit adultery. Even our secular culture still recognizes that cheating on your spouse is bad behavior. As believers, we recognize that it is more than just bad behavior; committing adultery is not only betraying the confidence and ruining the life of another person, but it is offending God himself. As the Scriptures say:

Hebrew 13:4

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

If you are considering committing adultery, understand that you are contemplating doing something that will effectively destroy your life, and you need to reevaluate your life, and get right with God immediately. If you don't, you are about to endure a great deal of distress and misery that are entirely avoidable.

If you have committed adultery and are wondering if it is possible to reconcile your situation, you are facing an uphill battle. Of course, God can forgive you for this sin, just like he can forgive any other sin, but your relationship with your spouse will not be easy to restore. Trust is easy to lose and difficult to gain, and it is made all the more difficult when a vow as sacred as a marriage vow has been violated. Many people in this situation do not find reconciliation. Still, if both you and your spouse are committed to making things work, there is hope, and some people do manage to restore their marriages afterward. But, it is obviously far better to never be in this situation to begin with.

Spiritual Application

Now that we've defined what adultery is and what its consequences are and discussed its significance among all the forms of sexual immorality, let's look at how the term is used in reference to our relationship with God. The Scriptures actually refer to adultery as a metaphor for our faithlessness toward God more often than they refer to it as the literal act of sleeping with another man's wife. But, before we can understand this metaphor, we must first understand how our relationship with God resembles a Biblical marriage.

Jeremiah says that the relationship between the nation of Israel and YHWH was like a marriage:

Jeremiah 31:31-32

Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD [YHWH], when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD [YHWH].

YHWH states here that he had a “covenant” with Israel, and that he was Israel’s “husband.” This covenant can be compared in many ways to a marriage contract.

When God called Abraham, he made him a promise—like wedding vows—that he would take Abraham’s descendants to be his own people. He would provide for them like a husband provides for a wife.

Genesis 17:6-8

I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.

He reiterated these promises later, when he saved the Israelites out of the hand of the Egyptians during the Exodus:

Exodus 6:6-8

...I am the LORD [YHWH], and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD [YHWH] your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD [YHWH].

When he brought the people to Sinai, and presented them with the Torah, his covenant (Deuteronomy 5:2), Israel recited their “wedding vows” to God in return:

Exodus 24:3

Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD [YHWH] and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words that the LORD [YHWH] has spoken we will do.”

Exodus 24:7

Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the LORD [YHWH] has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.”

After the covenant was ratified, the people ate and drank in the presence of God—kind of like what would be done at a wedding ceremony (e.g., John 2:1-11; Matthew 22:1-3; Luke 5:34; 12:36; 14:8):

Exodus 24:9-11

Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank.

So, as Jeremiah wrote, the Torah, God's covenant with Israel, can be conceived of as a marriage contract. YHWH was the "husband" in this arrangement, and he was obligated to provide for and protect his people, Israel. Israel was the "wife," and she was obligated to be faithful to YHWH alone, which meant to not worship any other gods, and to obey the Torah, the terms of the marriage contract. To violate this metaphorical marriage by serving other gods would be like committing adultery. As it turns out, Israel was *not* faithful to this covenant, and her unfaithfulness was called adultery.

Jeremiah 3:20

Surely, as a treacherous wife leaves her husband, so have you been treacherous to me, O house of Israel, declares the LORD [YHWH].

Ezekiel 16:17

You also took your beautiful jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself images of men, and with them played the whore.

Ezekiel 16:32

Adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband!

Because Israel had committed "adultery" by their worship of foreign gods and rejection of the covenant, YHWH was within his rights to issue her a divorce—and, in fact, he did just that.

Jeremiah 3:6-9

The LORD [YHWH] said to me in the days of King Josiah: "Have you seen what she did, that faithless one, Israel, how she went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and there played the whore? And I thought, 'After she has done all this she will return to me,' but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore. Because she took her whoredom lightly, she polluted the land, committing adultery with stone and tree.

The result of this "divorce" was that YHWH no longer had to fulfill his obligations as a husband; he removed his provision and protection from Israel, and the nation of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians and ceased to exist. However, YHWH promised that things would not remain this way forever; eventually, he would take Israel back as his wife.

Hosea 2:16-20

And in that day, declares the LORD [YHWH], you will call me 'My Husband,' and no longer will you call me 'My Baal.' For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more. And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will

abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety. And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD [YHWH].

In fact, when we are saved, when we turn away from false gods, and turn toward YHWH, receive forgiveness for our sins, and commit to walking in his ways, we are agreeing to this marriage contract. We become “betrothed” to God.

2 Corinthians 11:2

For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

One day, this marriage contract will be “consummated,” and we will live in God’s house forever as his people.

Revelation 19:7-8

Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

Revelation 21:2-3

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

Until that day, we who are betrothed to God must remain faithful to him by keeping the terms of our marriage contract with him. If we violate those terms and turn to the worship and serving of other gods, this is the equivalent of cheating on God—committing adultery against him, like Israel did in the days of Jeremiah.

James 4:4

You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

How can we avoid this spiritual adultery? How can we remain faithful to our savior, our spiritual husband? Simply put, we need to put God first in our lives—to love him with all of our heart and soul. This means that we should strive to do things that he finds acceptable, and to avoid things that he finds unacceptable (see Deuteronomy 6:5-9; 10:12-13; 11:13; 13:1-4).

He has explained what he finds acceptable and unacceptable in the Scriptures—specifically, in the Torah, his written “marriage contract” with Israel. However, we must go further than acknowledging a list of rules; if we wish to remain spiritually pure, we need to align our hearts with God’s own desires and look to him as the primary source of all of our needs. As Paul said in Philippians:

Philippians 4:19

And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus [Messiah Yeshua].

One trap that is easy to fall into is for us to turn our eyes away from God and toward worldly sources of “salvation.” This is especially prevalent among political movements. Many political groups promise that they will make the world into a sort of paradise; that they will either institute a new order that will make everyone safe and happy, or that they will eliminate evil and restore the world to the ideal place that it once was. But, like so much of what the world offers, these claims are ultimately hollow; no politician can provide anything comparable to what God can provide us.

Acts 4:11-12

This Jesus [Yeshua] is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

As we walk in faithfulness toward our God, let’s remember to keep our eyes on him, and to rely on him alone for our salvation. This doesn’t mean that we can’t engage in righteous political causes, but we need to keep things in perspective. Our help does not come from anything on the earth, but it comes from YHWH, the maker of heaven and earth (Psalm 121). Let us not rely on other spiritual “husbands” for our provision and protection. Let’s stay faithful to the one who truly loves us.

Psalms 118:8-9

It is better to take refuge in the LORD [YHWH] than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the LORD [YHWH] than to trust in princes.

Conclusion

Here’s a summary of what we discussed in this teaching:

- Adultery is when a married woman sleeps with a man that is not her husband.
- The punishment for adultery is that the adulterer and adulteress were put to death.
- A husband whose wife had committed adultery could get a divorce rather than prosecute her.
- The relationship between YHWH and Israel is similar to a marriage covenant.
- Disobeying the Torah, the marriage covenant, by worshiping foreign gods, is considered spiritual adultery, and can lead to spiritual divorce.
- We should remain faithful to God by obeying his marriage covenant, and by relying on him alone for our salvation.

In part three of this teaching series, we will be looking at Biblical divorces, discovering why and when they happened, and whether people who got divorced could get married again. We hope to see you there.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

EMAIL: Info@119ministries.com

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/119Ministries

WEBSITE: www.TestEverything.net & www.ExaminaloTodo.net

TWITTER: www.twitter.com/119Ministries#