Images of Marriage

Lesson 3, 2nd Quarter April 12-18, 2025

Sabbath Afternoon, April 12

Memory Text:

"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." KJV — Revelation 19:9

"In both the Old and the New Testament, the marriage relation is employed to represent the tender and sacred union that exists between Christ and His people. To the mind of Jesus the gladness of the wedding festivities pointed forward to the rejoicing of that day when he shall bring home his bride to the Father's house, and the redeemed with the Bridegroom shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. In the Old Testament it is written concerning the Lord, "As a bridegroom shall rejoice over thee," "Thou shalt no more be termed forsaken; ... but thou shalt be called My Delight; ... for the Lord delighteth in thee." "He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in His love, he will joy over thee with singing." Isaiah 62:4, margin; Zephaniah 3:17. When the vision of heavenly things was granted to John the apostle, he wrote: "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." Revelation 19:6, 7. "In Christ Object Lessons," page 151, paragraph 1.

Sunday, April 13

One Flesh

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

"Marriage, a union for life, is a symbol of the union between Christ and His church. The spirit that Christ manifests toward His church is the spirit that husbands and wife are to manifest toward each other." Counsel to Newlyweds, page 127, paragraph 1.

"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." Ephesians 5:22, 23, 24.

Clearly, this divine injunction changes the wife to respect her husband as she would the Lord, the husband being the God-appointed saviour, as the Lord is the church's earthly representative. "...Christ...loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." Ephesians 5:25, 26. When she disregards this divine injunction, she insults God.

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church." Ephesians 5:25.

Thus, just as binding and sacred is the husband's responsibility to his wife. He is to regard her as Christ does His church. Whenever he does less than this, he violates the law of the Lord.

Thus, while the church is duty-bound to respect and obey her Lord, the wife is to respect and obey her husband, and the husband is duty-bound to love and care for his wife as the Lord loves and care for His church. From this it follows that the house of the Lord is likened to the house of the husband. Accordingly, in the same way as the Lord controls the affairs of His house, the church, so the husband is to control the affairs of his home, the family.

And since the church's own welfare depends upon its cooperation with the will of the Lord, likewise the family's welfare depends upon its cooperation with the will of the father. Doubly clear, therefore, is the fact that just as Christ holds the headship over the church, so the father holds the headship over the home. And just as the converted church rejoices in pleasing her Head, Christ, so converted husbands will rejoice in pleasing her head, her husband. In this happy state, both the man and the woman realize that they are, after all, each other's second self.

Monday, April 14

The Beautiful Bride

Read Ezekiel 16:8-14. What do the details about this bride's exaltation teach us about God's intentions toward us?

"In the Bible the sacred and enduring character of the relation that exists between Christ and His church is represented by the union that God has ordained should be formed between a man and a woman (Genesis 2:24). Pertaining to be their God, and they pledging themselves to be His and His alone. He declares: "I will betroth thee unto Me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies." Hosea 2:19. And, again: "I am married unto you." Jeremiah 3:14. And Paul employs the same figure in the New Testament when he says: "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." 2 Corinthians 11:2. The Great Controversy, page 381, paragraph 2.

"The unfaithfulness of the church to Christ in permitting her confidence and affection to be turned from Him, and placing the love of worldly things in supreme place, is likened by the violation of the marriage vow. The sin of Israel in departing from the Lord is presented under this figure; and the wonderful love of God toward His people is touchingly portrayed: "I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou became Mine." Ezekiel 16:8. Israel had become idolatrous, and had forsaken God. But the Lord declares that He will bring the heathen for thy beauty; for it was perfect through thy comeliness, which I had put upon thee.... But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and poured out thy fornications on every one that passed by, to have at your exactmeasure with Me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord." "As a wife hath committed adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband!" Ezekiel 16:8, 13-15, 32. Jeremiah 3:20. The Great Controversy, page 381, paragraph 3.

"In the New Testament, language similar is addressed to professed Christians who seek the friendship of the world, and the favor of God. Says the apostle James: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." The Great Controversy, page 382, paragraph 1.

Tuesday, April 15

Hosea's Harlot Wife

Compare Hosea1:2. Hosea 3:1. Revelation 17:1-2, and Revelation 18:1-4. What is the harlotry mentioned here? What lessons can the Christian church learn from the story of Hosea? In what ways has the church repeated the sins of the Old Testament?

"Babylon is said to be "the mother of harlots." By her daughters must be symbolized churches that cling to her doctrines and practices, and follow her example of yielding up the truth and the approval of God, in order to learn an unlawful alliance with the world. The message of Revelation 14 is preceded by the warning of Revelation 13 against the worship of the beast and his image, and become corrupt. Since this message follows the warning of the judgment, it must be given in the last days, therefore it cannot refer to the Romish Church, for that church has been in a fallen condition for many centuries. Furthermore, in the eighteenth chapter of the Revelation, it is message which is yet future, the people of God are called upon to come out of Babylon. According to this scripture, many of the children of God are still in Babylon. And in what religious bodies are the greater part of the followers of Christ now to be found? Without doubt, in the churches which are the daughters of the Babylon. Babylon is fallen, but her daughters still hold with her the worship of God's law, and his blessing rest upon them. Even the unbelieving world was constrained to acknowledge the beneficent results that followed an acceptance of the principles of the gospel. In the words of the prophet to Israel, "Thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty; for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God." But they fell by the same sins which was the curse and ruin of Israel,—the desire of imitating the practices and courting the friendship of the singularly. Thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown." The Great Controversy 1888 Edition, page 382, paragraph 3.

And the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord." Hosea 1:2

The prophet Hosea was commanded to take a wife of whoredoms for no other reason than to portray the sad and sacred relation which that relation at Israel.

This marriage is, of course, only visionary just as is the prophet Ezekiel's lying 40 days on one side, and 390 days on the other side (Ezekiel 4:4-6).

Hosea 2:1-16. "Let command, Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi and to your sisters, Ruhamah." In itself explains that God is speaking to Jezreel, (Ammi's and Ruhamah's brother), and that Jezreel in turn is to speak to Ammi and to Ruhamah. And the fact that God calls Hosea's visionary wife His Own wife, the subject becomes still clearer. Hosea, you see, represents God, and Hosea's wife represents God's people. Hosea, the one God appoints, represents His moral place, a prophet and Jezreel's brethren, Ammi and Ruhamah, represent the members of the church, both male and female. Now as these two represent the church, it is obvious that the mother represents the mistress, those who bring forth converts into the church. Here we have a complete representation of the household of God.

These verses (Hosea 2:4-5) set forth God's meaning of grace that if the "mother" fails to reform, fails to cease from her whoredoms with the world and its practices, then not only the mother but also her sympathizing children will forever fall from grace.

The mother, here we are told, imagines that her unlawful lovers are the ones who supply her with the temporal things of life, and it is her excuse for having anything to do with them.

Moreover, we are again told that while she is thus playing the harlot, she is bringing forth illegitimate children, unless converts. Here is a warning which in no uncertain terms demands a reformation or else the whole church family, except for those who reform, will be destroyed as completely as ancient Jerusalem was destroyed some years after the crucifixion of Christ.

Wednesday, April 16

Isaac and Rebekah

Read Genesis 24:1-4. Why was it so important to Abraham that his son not marry " from the daughters of the Canaanites" (Genesis 24:3, NKJV)?

"Abraham's habitual faith in God and submission to His will were reflected in the character of Isaac, but the young man's affections were strong, and he was gentle and yielding in disposition. Abraham was anxious that his son should not be tempted to form an unhappy alliance with the idolatrous inhabitants of the land. Accordingly, he had his servant bind himself with one who was his own kin, the kindred of his father, the home of his nativity. Abraham's faith in his son was so strong and of great importance; he was anxious to have him marry one who would not lead him from God. ... Choosing a Wife, page 33, paragraph 1.

"Abraham had marked the result of the intermarriage of those who feared God and those who feared Him not, from the days of Cain to his own time. The consequences of his own marriage with Hagar, and the unhappy connections of Ishmael and Lot, were before him. The lack of faith on the part of Abraham and Sarah had resulted in the birth of Ishmael, the mingling of the seed of Shem with that of the Canaanites, and the sin of Lot in his marriage with the daughters of the mother Canaanite, and by Sodom's connection with Nineveh were.... Choosing a Wife, page 57, paragraph 3

"The wife of Lot was a selfish, irreligious woman, and her influence was exerted to separate her husband from Abraham, the friend of God. Lot would not have remained in Sodom, despite the counsel of the wise, God-fearing patriarch.... Choosing a Wife, page 57, paragraph 4

"No one who has chosen and pledged her hand and heart to God, should have been met, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). The happiness and prosperity of the marriage union depend upon the unity of the parties. Such between the believer and the unbeliever there is a radical difference of tastes, inclinations, and purposes. They are serving two masters, between whom there can be no concord. However pure and correct one's principles may be, the influence of an unbelieving companion will have a tendency to lead away from God.... The Lord's direction is, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:14, 17, 18). Choosing a Wife, page 61, paragraph 5

Read Genesis 24:57-67. What lessons can we glean about Christ and His church from some details we find in this story? What is there to learn, for instance, about our Saior state from the fact that Rebekah was a distant, separated relative to Isaac?

"The patriarch's thoughts turned to his father's kindred in the land of Mesopotamia. Though not free from idolatry, they cherished the knowledge and the worship of the true God. Isaac must not leave Canaan to go to them, but it might be that among them could be found one who would become the wife of Isaac, and who would accompany him to Canaan. Abraham, the father of the faithful, committed the important matter to "his eldest servant," a man of piety, experience, and sound judgment, who had rendered him long and faithful service. He required this servant to make a solemn oath before the Lord, that he would not take a wife for Isaac of the Canaanites, but would choose a maiden from the family of Nahor in Mesopotamia. He charged him not to take Isaac thither. If a damsel could be found who would leave her kindred, then the messenger would be released from his oath. The patriarch encouraged him in his difficult and delicate undertaking with the assurance that God would crown his mission with success. "The Lord God of heaven, ... he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife for my kindred, ... He shall send His angel before thee." Patriarchs and Prophets, page 171, paragraph 3

Thursday, April 17

The Harlot is Judged

Read Revelation 19:1-9. Two things are celebrated simultaneously: the end of the harlot and the marriage of Christ with His bride. How is it possible that both events are actually demonstrations of God's righteous and loving character at the same time?

After the "smoke of the woman rose up for ever and ever," the heavenly host shouted, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Therefore, all the saints were judged prior to the destruction of the "woman," and after she is burned with fire, Christ is crowned King of kings and Lord of lords, then the temple will be vacated and the seven last plagues poured out.

The following scriptures bear further evidence. Said the heavenly host: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." Continued the Angel, "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.... and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." (Revelation 19:7-9; 21:9-10.) Therefore, the Lamb's wife is the Holy City and not the church, which is called the marriage supper of the Lamb, the same as the guests. Dare "the Great Controversy," page 427.) They who were before the throne, said of the marriage of the Lamb, "His wife hath made herself ready." Her preparation is not what she should be accomplished in the future and white, "for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Revelation 19:7-8.) Therefore, the Lamb's wife will be ready at the close of probation when the saints are numbered, for they are her "linen." As at the time the woman (Babylon) was burned, the saints (linen) were ready. Her destruction shall be a signal that probation has closed. Then some shall be numbered of their dream and shall say, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." (Jeremiah 8:20.) Others shall "wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it." (Amos 8:12.) When God's people shall have ceased from their God given work, their answer will be: "We have nothing for you, the harvest is past, laborers have ceased, you are too late."

Read Revelation 21:1-8. What does the marriage imagery here mean, and why is it full of hope and promise? What is our assurance of the hope presented in these verses?

In the Revelation the people of God are said to be the guests at the marriage supper. If guests, they cannot be represented also as the bride. Christ, as stated by the prophet Daniel, will receive from the Ancient of days in heaven; "dominion, and glory and a kingdom," He will receive the new Jerusalem, the bride, the Lamb's wife, descending out of heaven from God. Christ, having received the kingdom, He will come in His glory, as King of kings and Lord of lords, for the redemption of His people, who are to "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob," at His table in His kingdom, to partake of the marriage supper of the Lamb." — The Great Controversy, pp. 426, 427.

Friday, April 18

Further Thought

The lesson is introduced with marriage images, "In both the Old and the New Testament, the marriage relation is employed to represent the tender and sacred union that exists between Christ and His people." The Desire of Ages, page 151, paragraph 1

Sunday's lesson uses the stories Hosea and Rebekah and wife in the marriage to illustrate Christ's relationship with His church. "Marriage, a union for life, is a symbol of the union between Christ and His church. The spirit that Christ manifests toward His church is the spirit that husbands and wife are to manifest toward each other." Counsels to Newlyweds, page 127, paragraph 1

The beautiful bride mentioned in Ezekiel's vision under Monday's lesson is "addressed to professed Christians who seek the friendship of the world above the favor of God." The Great Controversy, page 382, paragraph 1

Tuesday's lesson points to Hosea's allegorical prophecy and the destruction of Babylon. In Hosea chapter 2 a complete representation of the household of God is brought to light in that God calls Hosea's wife His wife and the children his children.

Wednesday's lesson deals with Isaac and Rebekah and shows the carefulness Abraham exercised in finding his son a wife. He was not willing that his son should marry one who was not his kin. How much more God can without danger connect himself with one who fears him not. Can two walk together, except they be agreed (Amos 3:3). Choosing a Wife, page 57, paragraph 5

Thursday's lesson concludes the week's study with the judgment upon Babylon and contrast it with the Lord's bride, the New Jerusalem.