The Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage of Israel

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Bob Warren often simplified the theme of God's word down to two marriages—God the Father's marriage to Israel and Jesus' marriage to His bride, the church. The first one has already happened; the second is yet to come.

For God to legitimately send His Son into the world in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3, Phil. 2:7), there had to be a wife. There can't be a Son if there isn't first a marriage. God established this pattern at creation–*"For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh"* (Gen. 2:24-25). They were then commanded to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth (Gen. 1:28).

God chose the smallest nation of people (Deut. 7:7) to be His bride knowing they would rebel against Him (read the book of Hosea). However, He foresaw it as the best opportunity in the end to demonstrate His grace, mercy, and faithfulness to the world (Ezek. 36).

God married her at the base of Mount Sinai in the third month after delivering them from Egypt. Leading up to that event, God showered His love upon her. His courtship included ten plagues upon the Egyptians, delivering her from imminent attack by parting the Red Sea for her escape, and protecting her during the day with the cloud of His glory and with the fire of His glory by night.

The elements of a wedding proposal, ceremony, and celebration are cleverly disguised among what we normally think of as God giving them the Ten Commandments (Exodus 19-24).

- The proposal—Exodus 19:3-6, God asks them to be His own possession.
- The response—Exodus 19:7-8, The people said, "Yes."
- Wedding preparations—Exodus 19:10-14, The people were instructed to consecrate themselves and wash their garments and be ready for the third day.
- Wedding day—Exodus 19:16-25, The people approached the mountain, but were instructed to not touch it. Loud trumpet sounds were punctuated by thunder and lightning, and dark clouds were over the mountain. The people trembled in fear.
- Wedding vows—Exodus 20:1-23:19, We know them as the Ten Commandments, but they were wedding vows that Israel committed to keep.
- The Groom's "I do's"—Exodus 23:20-33, God begins nearly every verse with "I will," the equivalent of "I do."
- The Bride's "I do's"—Exodus 24:3, The people respond, "I will."
- Consummation of the wedding—Exodus 24:6-8, Moses took the blood of their peace offerings and sprinkled it on the people.
- The wedding feast—Exodus 24:9-11, Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel ate and drank before the Lord to celebrate the wedding.

When put together, the following passages tell the story of Israel's rejection of God as her husband, adulterous affairs with other gods, divorce, and failed pursuit of those other gods as a husband.

Exodus 32:1-35, Israel broke her wedding vows soon after making them by worshiping a golden calf.

When the children of Israel worshiped another god besides Jehovah, it was idolatry. However, since they were the wife of Jehovah God, idolatry was akin to committing adultery. (See Ezek. 16:1-59, 23:1-49)

Jeremiah 31:31-32 confirms that God was a husband to her, but she broke her marriage covenant.

Ezekiel 16:8, Israel became God's bride, but was unfaithful.

Jeremiah 3:1 & 8, The Lord divorced her because of her pursuit of many lovers, though she turned back to God.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4, The Law made it an abomination for a divorced woman to go back to her first husband if she remarried and then divorced again.

Hosea 2:7, Israel was unfaithful to God and pursued her lovers, but she never reached them. Consequently, she never remarried.

Ezekiel 23:22, She turned away from her lovers in disgust and did not marry them.

Even though Israel has served an important purpose in giving birth to Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Gal. 4:4-5), it doesn't mean He is through with Israel as some speculate. He will never leave or forsake her (Jer. 31:35-37, 33:20-22). If God forsakes Israel, how can He be trusted to fulfill any of His promises?

If the purpose of choosing Israel was because she provided the best avenue to demonstrate His grace, mercy, and faithfulness to the nations, why would He abandon her in exchange for another? To do so would be counter to His character and would wreck His purpose. Not to mention how He would appear to the nations after reneging on all the unconditional covenants He made to her.

Ezekiel 36:22-38, God will receive her back and bless her in every way in a marvelous outpouring of love and mercy. When this occurs, all nations will see it and be amazed at the Lord for His incredible grace, mercy, and faithfulness toward Israel.

God and His bride, Israel, will be reunited at the end of the Tribulation when Jesus rescues her from the antichrist and his forces (Zech. 13:8-14:5, Hos. 5:15-6:3, Rev. 19:11-21, Isa. 34:6, 63:1-6, Jer. 49:13-22, Zech. 12:9-11). They will spend the next one thousand years in the marriage bliss God intended all along (Isa. 2:1-4, 35:1-10, Rev. 19:11-21, Jer. 33:14, Zech. 14:8-11).