

A The symbolism of marriage.

- ❖ When God created humanity, he gave us two gifts: The Sabbath (Gen. 2:2-3) and marriage (Gen. 2:24.) Both have to do with relationship: relationship with God, and between a man and a woman.
- ❖ In its perfection, marriage reflected the perfect relationship between the members of the Godhead. After sin, it symbolizes the union between a perfect Husband—Jesus—and his imperfect Wife—the Church (Eph. 5:31-32.)
- ❖ Throughout the Bible, we see how husbands strive to perfect their wives and earn their love. From this example of marriage, we can also learn how to act in our own marriages (between two imperfect people):
 - Forgive your spouse, however undeserving, as Christ forgives us, however undeserving
 - Accept your spouse, faults and all, as Christ accepts us, faults and all
 - Put your spouse before yourself, as Christ put us before Himself

B Unfaithful wives:

❖ **The abandoned young woman.**

- In a vision, Ezekiel was shown how God found an abandoned baby girl (Israel); gave her life; helped her grow; made a marriage covenant with her; and she became a queen admired by all. (Ezek. 16:1-14.)
- This sums up the love story between God and the people of Israel from their departure from Egypt to the prosperous reign of David and Solomon, when Israel was admired by all nations (1 Kings 10:1.)
- But Israel forgot that her beauty was a gift from God, a reflection of divine beauty (Ezek. 16:14,) and she turned away from her Husband, prostituting herself after other gods (Ezek. 16:15-17.)
- We were created to reflect God's goodness and glory. When we assume our goodness is a product of ourselves, problems begin.

❖ **Hosea's wife.**

- From the outset, God makes it clear that the command given to Hosea to marry Gomer (who had prostituted herself and abandoned her husband) was a symbol of the relationship between God and Israel (Hos. 1:2.)
- Hosea used various methods to win back his wife's love (Hos. 2:6-7, 14-15.) Since none of these methods succeeded, he had to pay her ransom (Hos. 3:2-3.)
- Of course, our rescue cost God much more than “fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley.”
- Unfortunately, the Church followed the same misguided path as Israel. But God's love remains unchanged (Hos. 11:4.) He continues to implore us to abandon "prostitution" and return to Him (Hos. 14:1-2; Rev. 18:2-4.)

❖ **Babylon the Great.**

- A pure woman represents God's faithful people (Rev. 12:1; Eph. 5:25-27.) Babylon, the mother of harlots, represents God's people who turn away from Him and rely on the kings of the earth (Rev. 17:1-5.)
- This unfaithfulness on the part of His people causes God deep sorrow. For centuries, He has tried to restore His Church to purity, but few have responded. Finally, He will make one last appeal (Rev. 18:4.)
- After an infidelity, reconciliation can occur. However, unfortunately, sometimes a point of no return is reached, when reconciliation is impossible.
- The time will come for Babylon and those who remain in her to be judged and punished (Rev. 19:1-5.) But the faithful, the Lamb's bride, will live forever with Jesus (Rev. 19:6-8.)

C Faithful wives:

❖ **Rebekah.**

- According to the custom of his time, Abraham set out to find a wife for his son, Isaac. But he did not want to marry his son to any of the women of Canaan, but rather to one of his relatives, thousands of miles away (Gen. 24:2-3.)
- The reason for this? Although imperfectly, his relatives worshipped the true God, while the Canaanites rejected him. If Isaac married a Canaanite woman, his religious life would decline due to his wife's negative influence.
- Such has been the history of the Church when she has contracted "marriages" with the nations of this world. Gradually, she has distanced herself from the true faith.
- Another special aspect of this story is the fact that Rebekah is asked if she wants to get married, since, according to custom, she had no other choice (Gen. 24:50-51, 57-59.)
- Being part of God's faithful bride is a voluntary act. Let us accept Jesus' love with a clear "I will go."

❖ **The Bride of the Lamb.**

- Jesus performed his first miracle at a wedding (John 2:1-11.) From our perspective, this act has a certain symbolism that helps us understand the Plan of Salvation.
- Perhaps the most important is that, for the bride (us) to be ready, she needs the wine that Jesus provides, that is, his purifying blood (Jn. 2:6; Rev. 7:14.)
- Jesus also used parables related to the wedding to illustrate certain aspects of the preparation we must make for His imminent coming. In all of them, the bride is never mentioned, but rather the guests. Could the guests be the bride herself?
- What can we learn from these parables?
 - (1) The 10 virgins (Mt. 25:1-13)
 - (a) Have the Holy Spirit
 - (b) Accept your calling
 - (2) The Unworthy Guests (Mt. 22:1-14)
 - (a) Everyone is called to the wedding
 - (b) We must clothe ourselves in Christ