

BETWEEN THE LINES

A Deeper Look...

#844- BEGINNING AGAIN: When The Exiles Came Home

Unequal Yoking: Those who returned to the land faced unique challenges. Some of them, as you can see in the episodes of Ezra and Nehemiah, decided to resolve their own personal issues by aligning themselves with non-believers and they all paid the price for that decision.

So, what's the harm of being "unequally yoked"? I suppose you might wish to scan some of the biographies of the Scripture and see if you can have the Holy Spirit clarify for you why we are counseled to avoid these alliances...

- Genesis 6: We don't know for sure what it means to have the "sons of God" joining with the "daughters of men" but we do see that it certainly doesn't work.
- Genesis 16: We still pay the price for Abraham's enjoining with Hagar the Egyptian.
- Genesis 30: Jacob's household became muddier and muddier with multiples.
- Genesis 38: Judah's dalliance with a "stranger" causes great pain in the family.
- Genesis 39: Joseph's correct choice in this issue begins a course of action that actually saves his nation in the end. (But, there seems to be criticism of his Egyptian wife later on and we certainly see that in the story of Moses.)
- Numbers 25: Intermarriage with Moabites destroys some of Israel.
- Deuteronomy 7: Marriage to the alien is forbidden.
- Judges 14: Samson's lack of self-discipline in Timnath is a long term shame.
- Judges 16: Delilah is not a really healthy choice for him either.
- Judges 18: A Levite's concubine is the first stage of great pain in Israel.
- I Samuel 25: Did she have a choice in marrying Nabal? If so, she really messed up.
- II Samuel 11: Bathsheba is the most shameful of David's many lousy marriages.
- I Kings 11: Isn't Solomon's example the prime exhibit in seeing the end result?
- I Kings 16: I don't know that Ahab was so clearly in God's will to start out with but marrying a Zidonian princess certainly didn't help anything, did it?
- Esther 2: What's a Jewish girl doing in the harem of a pagan king?
- Hosea 1-3: I don't understand God's "command", but I see the end results of the mating.
- Acts 16: Timothy's mother raised him without the support of a believing husband.
- Acts 24: Drusilla is a Jewess who aligned herself with a pagan to her destruction.
- Revelation 2: The name *Pergamos* means "thoroughly married" to the world. *Thyatira* is challenged for its ease with the entities that oppose God.
- Revelation 17: Another condemnation for being "tied to the fallen".
- Revelation 18: Fornicating with the enemy of God is described again.

In Conclusion: Is marriage the only destructive "unequal yoking"? Of course not. It might be a worthy effort on your part to contemplate other possibilities such as business transactions, partnerships, co-ownerships, entertainments and or activities... How many of mine are really inappropriate for a Christian who claims to be Kingdom bound? One of the saddest verses of the Bible is where Paul shares in his dying days' testimony of II Timothy 4- forsaken by Demas, "for love of this present world". A sober warning, isn't it?

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**The Scribal Arts:** The work of a certified scribe is incredibly detailed and much too complicated for us to tackle here but you may be interested in just one facet of the work of that artisan: The heart, elements, and tools of his trade...

- The Talmud claims that ten things were created on the eve of the Sabbath- two of them were "writing" and "instruments of writing".
- The *Sofer* (scribe) was known in the 2nd temple era by the pen carried behind his ear.
- Before he began his daily work he had to enact the ablution of a mikveh washing.
- Every day the pen and ink were first tested by writing the word "Amalek" and then crossing it out (to fulfill Deuteronomy 25:19).

- If at any time the scribe was going to write the four-letter name of God he first had to pronounce the sentence, "I am writing the name of God for the holiness of His name." If he ever fouled up in the shaping of those letters the entire sheet had to be replaced. Other words could be erased, scratched out, etc.
- A certified scribe is required for the writing of both ritual object texts (Torah, tefillin, mezuzah) and legal documents (*ketubah*/marriage and *gettin*/divorce).
- There is no absolute definition of the writing instrument. Neophytes often use a fine brush where but the advanced scribe might use any number of pens in their calligraphy. The full complement of his tools are quill, ink, stylus, ruler, and the *Tikkun* (guide for the text).
- The work might be done on any material (fine paper, cloth, etc.) but if the desire is to work with parchment there are very clear rules about what is and what is not parchment... specific sections of the hide of a kosher animal, preferably slaughtered in the ritual manner by a certified *shohellet* (slaughterer) and prepared by the certified tanner who can create the parchment appropriately.
- For the sacred texts ink must be black, durable, but not indelible. Soot, olive oil, and various resins were used in ancient times. For the common texts there were many dyestuffs - including congealed blood! All of these are kept in a little box called the *bet deyo* (house of ink).

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The Apocrypha: Most Protestants only know the term and not much more. Here's an overview of those books that were determined, fairly early, to not be inspired nor fit for the canon of Scripture, but still share some interesting insights and history of the Bible era.

- *Apocrypha* is Greek for "hidden" or "secret".
- They were written between the exile and the birth of Christ, circa 300-30 bce.
- The texts are made up of devotion, didactic (teaching), and historical documents.
- The Catholic Council of Trent declared all but two of them (*Esdras* and *The Prayer of Manasses*) authoritative (1546) proclaimed them to be "authoritative Scripture" but this was, of course, rejected by the Protestants who had already moved out from the authority of the Vatican.
- Some of the documents, like the Old Testament, were first written in Hebrew while others were originally in Greek like the New Testament.
- The texts that were written in Greek seem to have originated in Alexandria, Egypt and were probably the work of the same Jewish scholars who translated the *Septuagint* and that gave a certain degree of credibility to the works. Some even added them to the *Septuagint* as though they were equal to the *TaNaKh*.
- Martin Luther saw the Apocrypha as "profitable", but not inspired.

Here's a one-line synopsis of each of the books...

- I Esdras: A historic account of the exile's return and the rebuilding of temple.
- II Esdras: Various apocalyptic visions and revelations of early 2nd temple rabbis.
- Tobit: A parody that issues moral proposals regarding good and evil.
- Judith: A claimed biography of a woman who murders the pagan general Holofernes.
- The Conclusion of Esther: Supposed additional chapters to fill in the blanks of Esther.
- The Wisdom of Solomon: Parallels on morality and life in the style of Proverbs.
- Ecclesiasticus: A higher literature than "The Wisdom", but still in the same genre'.
- Baruch: Supposed encouragement from Jeremiah's scribe to Jews in exile.
- The Song of the Three Children: Collections of stories attributed to Daniel's life.
- The History of Susanna: More of the same type of stories about Daniel and friends.
- Bel and the Dragon: More stories of virtuous living about Daniel's contemporaries.
- The Prayer of Manasses: Claims of morality written from a spurious foundation.
- I and II Maccabees: Historical episodes with regard to the Maccabee rebellion.

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