

Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love.

Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress? For a man's ways are before the eyes of the LORD, and he ponders all his paths. The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin. He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray.

(Proverbs 5:15–23)

Introduction

As observed briefly the last time we were in Proverbs 5, this is a chapter that both warns against sexual sin and celebrates marriage. Solomon contrasts Lady Folly with Lady Wisdom. Lady Folly seeks to seduce those who are in covenant relationship with God – not only morally and sexually, but in every way. Lady Folly encourages people to the more sensual, immediate and tangible self-gratifying experiences of life. Lady Wisdom is concerned that we do not get trapped by the temporal but focus on the eternal.

I recently heard Jonathan Gibson say that he loves Sunday because it is the one day of the week he gets to gather with his daughter. He explained that she had been stillborn at 39 weeks, but went on to quote Hebrews 12:22–24, which speaks of the gathered worship of the church as a time when living believers gather with “the spirits of the righteous made perfect.” He takes great comfort in knowing that he gathers for worship with the perfected spirit of his daughter. He focuses on the eternal, which is what Paul wants his readers to focus on in this text.

We observed several things about this text previously. Without rehashing what we spoke of then, let me briefly review.

We considered, first of all, that this text speaks to women as well as men. We considered that this text addresses the matter of same sex attraction. We saw that this text in no way objectifies women. Lastly, we looked briefly at how this text celebrates marriage, which is where we pick up now.

Celebrating Marriage

Marriage is God's gift to humanity. A part of this good gift is the expression of oneness through physical, sexual one-flesh unity (Genesis 2:24). Married couples should make the most of this. But, again, the *relationship* of marriage is to be celebrated, not merely the physical aspect of marriage.

In the context, of course, Solomon is referencing the physical. However, this is actually a small part of the marriage relationship. We do much potential damage, and create potential dangers, when we overemphasise the sexual aspect of the marriage relationship. Sex is not the only, nor the most important, aspect of marriage.

Hollywood tends to highlight the sexual aspect of romantic relationships, but as a church member recently said to me, Hollywood sets people up for disappointment. An overemphasis on sex may tempt people to expect more than what the Bible promises. It may, as we have already noted, tempt people with the here-and-now to the exclusion of the ultimate. That is, we may become obsessed with the fallen and fading to the neglect of that which will remain forever.

At the same time, we can discourage, and even tempt, those who are not married. We may cheapen the kind of love that a marriage is to foster and manifest. What happens when a spouse becomes physically incapacitated? If everything is built on sex, such marriages may well fall apart.

Marriage is not merely about physical, sexual satisfaction. If this is our obsession, we will mistreat our spouse. If this is our obsession, we will miss the point! Marriage is to mirror the relationship between Jesus Christ and his church (Ephesians 5:32), a marriage that is about far more than sex.

As a concluding word under this point, the words "be blessed," "rejoice with," "lovely," "graceful," "fill with delight," and "intoxicated ... in her love" all point to something beautiful, not beastly; something precious, not merely carnal; something that transcends the merely fleshly.

The Ultimate Marriage

Let us note, further, that the celebration of marriage points to the ultimate marriage. To appreciate the sanctity, the beauty, and the meaning of marriage, we need to go back to the beginning. We also need to go, as they say, back to the future.

Marriage was instituted by God on the sixth day of creation week. This, in essence, was a *penultimate* marriage. Another one was coming. History would have to wait until then. The

rest of history would march towards this ultimate marriage. In the meantime, having done the last thing in creation week, God rested.

Paul helps us to see that the first marriage was a picture of what would be the ultimate marriage, which itself serves as a template of our momentary marriages. In Ephesians 5:30–32 Paul writes, “We are members of his body. ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.”

In other words, God’s institution of marriage was prophetic of the marriage between Christ and the church. Interestingly, like the Father, once the Son instituted this marriage, he also then rested (Hebrew 4:9–11). This was a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17; etc.).

This marriage was instituted by the shedding of blood. Was blood shed when God took the rib from Adam?

Again, if we lose sight of the ultimate marriage, the penultimate can become idolatrous. In other words, though marriage is to be celebrated, and though the regular consummation of the marriage is to be enjoyed, there is so much more to life than marriage, and there is so much more to life than the conjugal benefits of marriage. There is Christ and eternity with him!

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

Finally, we need to observe that we celebrate this marriage at the Communion Table, which prefigures the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9). Every Christian participates in this marriage and in this feast. No Christian is excluded – whether unmarried or married; whether female or male; whether Jew or Gentile; whether rich or poor; whether – whatever! The costs have been paid for everyone and there is room for more.

The Groom paid the dowry price, which was his life’s blood. He did so out of an undying love. This meal celebrates his purchase and anticipates the eventual consummation. Let’s come and dine, reclining with the Lord at his Table. Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

AMEN