

## Sowing Oats and Sexual Purity – Deuteronomy 22:9-30

**Introduction** – “*Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge*” (Heb 13:4).

The marriage covenant, with the protection of public vows and the glory of sexual intimacy, is the backbone of familial and civil society, the foundation of legitimate authority, and the place for pleasure, companionship, and covenant succession to flourish. Sexual intimacy in marriage is a true and real physical gift in the here and now as well as a symbol of deeper spiritual realities. It is to be publicly upheld and guarded, for obedience among a people in this (seventh) commandment brings great blessing and disobedience brings a curse upon the land.

**Keeping Things Straight** (vv9-12) – These laws (among many others including the dietary laws) were part of what was known as the holiness code. Their central point was to teach the distinction between Jew and Gentile, and was crucified with Christ (Eph 2:14-16). But these laws also are proverbial, showing up at different times in the law, being used to teach various principles which still instruct us in the New Covenant (for a different example, consider “*do not muzzle an ox*” and Paul’s application in 1 Cor 9:8ff). Here, in this section on the seventh commandment, they should be understood as symbolic euphemisms about sexual purity. “Sowing seed” should not be mixed in your vineyard, lest the fruit of it be defiled. “Plowing” should take place with those who are equally yoked, both should be holy (2 Cor 6:14). “Garments” which cover you should not be mixed, and tassels should remind you of the law (Num 15:19), but in this case particularly, laws on sexual purity.

**Five Laws on Sexual Purity** (vv13-29) – Next we have five case laws to help us understand how to apply this commandment. They run chiastically, with the center one, vv22-24, being the treasonous act of adultery where both parties are guilty and sentenced to death.

**False Charge of Premarital Unchastity** (vv13-19) – Virginity is to be treasured and protected by fathers, not because sex is icky, but because sexual promiscuity outside of marriage always leads a society to violent emotional, social, and physical abuse of women. There are broader cultural implications than simply a woman’s reputation; fornication defiles a land. In this first case law, the charge of unfaithfulness is protected by evidence provided by the father because he has taken full responsibility for her purity. If the charge was proven false, such slander was to be strongly punished.

**If She Played the Harlot** (vv20-21) – But if the charge was proven to be true, her father was held responsible and the woman bore her own guilt. Hence, she was to be stoned to death in front of her father’s house. How seriously fathers need to take their responsibility for the purity of their daughters. This cannot be discharged by being heavy-handed or in some awkward, klutzy fashion. You have to be gracious, kind, loving and wise with your daughters; they need to grow up in homes trusting you because you are trustworthy. Tyrannical fathers and abdicating fathers will not succeed in this.

**The Account in John** (John 8:3-11) – Of course, this passage brings to mind the passage in John’s Gospel. There the law was misapplied and was done so by unqualified officers. Apparently, she was guilty (“*go and sin no more*”) but Jesus throws out the case and not the law, protecting her by means of the law.

**Adultery, Rape, and Incest** (vv22-30) – Continuing on, we have clear adultery charges with either a married or betrothed woman (vv22-24). In either case, the death penalty can apply, which seems harsh to us, but that is because we think of adultery as a private affair between two consenting adults instead of the act of treason that it is, destroying the legitimacy of a nation from within by destroying the legitimacy of households. This was the law that Joseph had in mind when he instead decided to divorce Mary quietly because he was a “*just man, and not wanting to make her a public example*” (Matt 1:19). Rape of a betrothed woman (who could not have cried out for help) was also a capital offense (vv25-27). And even if she was not betrothed, rape of a virgin was a serious offense. These laws were set up to protect women from abuse and to keep the marriage bed undefiled. Finally, a man could not have his father’s wife (most likely his stepmother), which Paul asserts as well (1 Cor 5:1).

**Public Covenant Keeping** – In order to keep the marriage bed undefiled, the door should be kept closed. But that does not mean that anyone has a right to sin in private. And when such sins occur, they are not simply private sins: rather they affect the legitimacy of all kinds of public rights (marital, legal, inheritance, etc). The world calls it sexual freedom but what is really happening? The reputations and rights, the emotional and financial crises of unprotected, exploited women are all around us.

**God is not Afraid of Your Reputation or Background** – Scripture is full of illustrations of God wooing back unfaithful Israel. Jesus hung out with prostitutes and sinners. While the law certainly reveals to us our sin, never forget: believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for those sins, who is not afraid to call you a brother or a sister, who’s heavenly Father has adopted us into His family and receives us where we are and not where we should have been. What must we do? Repent and believe. Come and welcome to Jesus Christ, the One who is remaking Humanity in His glorious likeness.