

## What Does God's Word Say About... Spiritual Adultery

It is alarming that some Christians do not seem to understand what spiritual adultery is, or how one might be involved in it. These are the same people who would not think of "cheating" on one's spouse because according to God's word that is sin (Matt. 5:32, 19:9). A good definition of adultery is to have voluntary sexual relations with a married person other than their spouse.

How does one commit spiritual adultery? Spiritual adultery was defined initially in the Old Testament when both Israel and Judah departed from God to serve idols. "And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a write of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also. It came about because of the lightness of her harlotry, that she polluted the land and committed adultery with stones and trees" (Jeremiah 3:8-9). "Why should I pardon you? Your sons have forsaken Me and sworn by those who are not gods. When I had fed them to the full, they committed adultery and trooped to the harlot's house" (Jeremiah: 5:7). Similar scriptures are also in Jeremiah 7:9; Ezek. 23:37; Hosea 4:13. These scriptures tell us when Israel turned from God to idolatry, they were committing what God called adultery. The nation of Israel, God's chosen people, were to be "married" to God and they had no right to align themselves with any other "god". In Jeremiah 3:14 we find that Israel was indeed married to God. "Return, O back sliding children", says the Lord; "for I am married to you". Then we find in Malachi 2:11 that after the kingdom of Israel was divided, Judah committed spiritual adultery. "Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the Lord which He loves and has married the daughter of a strange god." They were not walking honestly before God and were unfaithful.

This same principle is true today when anyone turns from the pure doctrine of Christ to that which is opposed to Christ and His gospel. For instance, Christ is married to His church (Eph. 5:22-33). To turn away from that true church to a counterfeit church would be "spiritual adultery." Paul wrote, "For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man" (Rom. 7:2-3). Paul goes on to explain in Romans 7:4 how we are released from the commandments of Old Testament by saying, "Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God." When Paul said, "so that you might be joined to another" he is explaining our "spiritual marriage" to Christ the husband and to the bride, the church. Jesus is also called the bridegroom who is married to the bride, the church. The apostle John wrote to faithful Christians explaining our marriage to Christ by saying, "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb [Jesus] has come and His bride [the church] has made herself ready" (Rev. 19:7). "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2). John completed his message concerning the marriage of

the church to Christ when he said, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Rev. 21:9). The church who is the bride is married to Christ who is the husband!

Jesus Christ [the husband] is jealous toward His bride [the church]. Paul wrote, "For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin" (2 Cor. 11:2). Therefore, if we as Christians, are members of the "one body" (Eph. 4:4), the church (Col. 1:24), we should not attend or extend the right hand of fellowship to other religious organizations that are not the body of Christ. If we do, this would indeed be committing "spiritual adultery." According to scripture, if we participate with them we are agreeing with their false teaching. "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds" (2 John 9-11). If we extend the right hand of fellowship to other churches who do not "abide in the doctrine of Christ," we are committing "spiritual adultery."

Jesus Christ is "married" to "one bride, the church, which is His body. How can we know for sure that we are not committing "spiritual adultery"? The apostle Paul wrote, "Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; however, let us keep living by that same standard [rule] to which we have attained. Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us" (Phil. 3:15-17). Paul also said, "Retain the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 1:13). If anyone or any church teaches outside of the pattern that was given by Jesus Christ and the apostles (Eph. 2:20) they are committing "spiritual adultery," and are not married to the "husband" Jesus Christ.