

## *Don't Mess with God's Picture*

By Harold & Bette Gillogly

Our wedding picture sits on the bookshelf in our living room. A young, starry eyed couple smiles expectantly from inside an ornate silver frame, displayed for all to see. That's our picture, and it is very special to us. If you tore it or in any way damaged that picture, you would have to answer to us. You would be in big trouble! And you would expect to be, wouldn't you...ruining someone's picture like that?

God has pictures. Throughout the Old Testament He paints hundreds of pictures of the Messiah. For example, everything about the Tabernacle – every length of cloth, every plank of wood, every piece of furniture – is a picture...a type...of Christ, the Messiah.

Look with us in particular at another picture of Christ – the rock in the desert that supplied water for the Israelites to drink. The first time God brought water from the rock was near the beginning of their long trek through the desert to the promised land in Exodus 17 (vv. 1-7). God told Moses to strike the rock and when he did, enough water poured out to satisfy the thirst of all the people and their livestock.

The second time God brought water from the rock was near the end of their forty years of wandering in the desert (Numbers 20:2-13). By this time Moses had lost most of his patience with this mob called the Israelites. When they rioted in the desert of Zin because they had no water to drink, Moses fled to the Tent of Meeting and fell face down before the

Lord. This time God instructed Moses to SPEAK to the rock, not strike it, and He would provide all the water the people and their livestock needed. But things went horribly wrong.

“[Moses] and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, ‘Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?’” Then Moses, in his exasperation, wielded his staff and struck the rock, not once, but twice. God still kept His word – water gushed from the rock. But then Moses faced God's wrath: “Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.”

### **He messed with God's Picture!**

Moses' sins of not trusting God and taking credit himself for making water flow from the rock are obvious – “...must we bring you water out of this rock?” But Moses committed another sin here you may not have caught. **He messed with God's picture.** His sin was so heinous in God's eyes that he was banned from entering the promised land. He had led this stubborn nation for forty years... put up with their criticism and complaining...and now he was not to be allowed to lead them to their promised destination. The consequences he suffered were devastating.

The ROCK and the WATER are both pictures of Christ. 1 Corinthians 10:3-4 states, “They [the Israelites] all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.” Many times during Jesus' public ministry, He implored the crowds, ‘I am the water of life. Drink of me and you'll never thirst again!’

But an extremely important part of this picture is that the Rock was stuck only once. Jesus died once for all mankind. Not twice or three times...once! Moses defiled God's picture. In his anger and unbelief, he trampled it underfoot. And suffered the awful consequences.

Ephesians 5 describes another picture of Christ you are probably familiar with...that of Christ and His Bride, the church. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church.” (vv. 31-32) Husbands and wives are to be a living picture of this “profound mystery.” This is such an important picture that God's word reminds us repeatedly that we are to honor marriage by our behavior. And He gives one of the strongest warnings found in Scripture to those who dishonor their marriage.

This warning is found in Malachi 2:13-16: “Another thing you do: you flood the Lord's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays

## God's Picture (cont')

attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask, 'Why?' It is because the Lord is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.

Has not the Lord made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. 'I hate divorce,' says the Lord God of Israel...."

And yet couples...even Christian couples...choose divorce over investing the time and effort to save their marriage. We've had Christian spouses look at us in amazement and ask, "But God wants me to be happy, doesn't He?" Ah, but the truth is we can **only** be happy when we're walking in obedience to His will; and Malachi makes it abundantly clear that divorce is NOT His will.

**Divorce tramples the picture of Christ and His church.** Yet many Christian spouses think they can go find greener pastures with someone else, and God is going to bless them anyway. And so the divorce rate inside the church is the same as out among those who

have never experienced the grace of God in salvation.

Make no mistake, if Moses did not escape the consequences of defiling God's picture, neither will we.

Divorce has devastating consequences...for the spouse who leaves as well as the spouse who is left. But what we have seen over and over again is that the spouse who is left receives the comfort and blessing of God and eventually heals. While the spouse who chooses to leave wanders through several relationships and/or marriages, **never** finding the happiness and blessing he thought he'd find.

The picture of Christ and His church can be marred in other, more subtle ways as well. Remember how Paul talked about the "profound mystery" of this picture in Ephesians 5:32? Verse 33 continues with, "However, each one of you also **must love** his wife as he loves himself, and the wife **must respect** her husband." So every time you, as a husband, do not love your wife as much as you love yourself – every time you neglect her needs for your own; every time you say something that belittles her – you trample God's picture. And wives, every time you disrespect your husband – every time you treat him like he's

not as smart or clever as you, every time you look at him in disgust – you defile God's picture. And reap the consequences.

## Don't marr the picture of Christ & the church!

On the other hand, husbands, every time you show your wife how important she is to you by treating her with kindness and speaking to her with gentleness and love – you show the world what Jesus is like and how He loves His bride the church. And every time, wives, you show your husband how important he is to you by carefully listening to his opinions and valuing his judgments – you show the world how the church honors Jesus, Who bought her with His own precious blood.

Don't mess with God's picture of Christ and His church. Every day, invest the time and energy it takes to keep the picture looking new – the way God meant it to look, so He can show the world His Son and His church through you. Be a picture the Father can be proud to show the world.

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