

MARRIAGE IN THE TEACHING OF JESUS¹

An illustration of Christ's return for His Bride, The Church. Submitted by the Israeli Embassy New Zealand...

THE JEWISH MARRIAGE:

People didn't "fall in love". Marriages were more normally set up and executed according to a plan that fitted the needs of the whole society of the Jews. When a young man saw the girl he wanted he consulted with his father about the idea of marrying her. Sometimes his father picked the girl and no consultations were necessary. When the bridegroom's father approved the choice the young man would go to the bride's house and speak with her father. Fathers really counted for something in Israel.

At the bride's house the young man would do three very important things:-

- * (a) He would make a covenant with the bride - an actual contract.
- * (b) He would drink a cup of wine with her which sealed the contract.
- * (c) He would pay a price for her. Her father would be entitled to money for his daughter. A young man had to be very serious about getting married because he had to make a sacrifice. In olden times a man with a daughter had suffered financially bringing her up since she was not the field worker that a son would have been.

After the groom had made the covenant, drank the cup, and paid the price, he would make a little speech to the bride. He was going to leave her for a long time and go back to his father's house. He was going to build a bridal chamber for her, a place where they would have their first coming together in marriage (modern honeymoon). Before he left her he would tell her: "*I go to prepare a place for you*". The contract, cup, and money were her security that he would return no matter how long it took him to build the bridal chamber.

The groom would have to finish the chamber and have it approved by his father. It had to be stacked with provisions - the bride and groom were going to remain inside for seven days, the prescribed length of the "honeymoon". It took quite an amount of work on the part of the groom to build a first class bridal chamber. If anyone asked the bridegroom, during the building process when he would be getting married he would say, "*I don't know, only my father knows*." He could not go back and claim his bride until his father approved the chamber and said that the time was right. Because of this work and payment a bride knew she was loved and was prepared to wait a long time.

During this time the bride waited with dignity. She would wear her veil whenever she went out, in order that some other young man would not try to initiate a contract with her. Now she was called set apart, consecrated bought with a price. In effect she was no longer her own person, but an individual contracted to her bridegroom. She conducted herself with due respect and she used her time to think about married life and to prepare herself for it. As she gathered her trousseau, she always waited, being home every night, especially as time went on. She didn't want to be caught away from home when the bridegroom came. The tradition was that he would come at night, even at midnight, and try to take her by surprise.

It was an "abduction". The bride was "stolen" from her house. She would be waiting with her bridesmaids and her sisters and whoever she wanted to take in the wedding party with her, and they would all have oil in their lamps in case the groom did choose to come at night. As the time went on they were ready to go every night. And suddenly, one night the bridegroom would come. The bride's father and brothers would look the other way, as long as it was the young man with the contract, and the bride and her friends would be whisked off into the night. When the groom's party was close enough to the home of the bride to be heard, they would shout; and when the bride heard that shout, she would know she was as good as married.

The young man would head towards the groom's father's house with the bride and her friends. They would travel through the streets making quite a bit of noise with their laughing. If strangers looked out they would not know who the bride was, because the veil hid her. The bride and the groom would go into the chamber while the wedding party waited outside. There would also be a large crowd of wedding guests - friends of the groom's father - assembled at the house, awaiting the couple. Everyone would wait until the bridegroom would tell a trusted friend through the door that the marriage was consummated. Then the celebrating would start. There were never any annulments, and every marriage was started right, in its proper place at the proper time.

The next time the crowd would see the bride, at the end of the seven days, she would have her veil off and would be a wife, not a bride. They would spend the entire time celebrating the grand occasion, for seven days. Sometimes they would run out of wine and have to get more; it was difficult to plan for so many people for so long a time. At the end of seven days of celebration the bride and groom would come out now husband and wife. And then there would be a grand marriage supper, what we call a reception. Everyone would congratulate the new couple and there would be a scene of wonderful joy. And finally the new couple would leave to take up residence in the husband's house. He would have prepared a place for them to live, his own kingdom, as it were, and the couple would go there leaving his father's house. They would permanently reside there, with the husband hoping they wouldn't have too many daughters and have to go through all that with each one.

At the modern Jewish wedding:-

- * (1) "Chuppa", the canopy, symbolises the old bridal chamber
- * (2) the cup is drunk at the wedding

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- * (3) the honeymoon is at the home of the bridegroom's father

THE OLD AND NEW COVENANTS AND THE WEDDING CONTRACT:

Read Hebrews Chap 8, with special reference to verses 8 & 9: "*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah not according to the covenant that I made with the fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt.*"

God was actually replacing the old system of laws with a new system quoting Jeremiah 31:31-32. This new covenant has to do with the Messiah's Coming. The new covenant had to be signed in blood. Abraham had to divide animals when he received the covenant from God that made the Jews a chosen people. And Moses had to sacrifice too. It is the blood that makes the covenant have effect.

The Messiah came like a sacrificial animal and gave His blood to seal the new covenant. John the Baptist called Him; "*the lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world*" (John 1:29). Isaiah said the Messiah would come as a lamb to the slaughter.

The relationship of God and Israel has always been a marriage. The book of Hosea spells that out clearly. And Jeremiah's language in announcing the new covenant is very interesting, he says; "*My covenant they break, although I was a HUSBAND unto them*" (Jeremiah 31:32b). God was a disappointed Bridegroom when the Jews failed to keep the old laws. But Paul, another Jew, explained the marriage by saying, "*This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church*" (Ephesians 5:32).

The proper relationship between the believers and the Messiah would constitute a happy marriage for God. The Church is called the Bride of Christ. The Gentiles in the Church have not always cared for the Jews as they were supposed to but the Messiah said; "*I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*" (Matthew 14:24 NASB).

Paul says Gentiles became grafted into the Jewish tree when by faith they come to the Jewish Messiah (Romans 11:17-19). They become chosen like the Jews. They are called the spiritual seed of Abraham (Galatians 3:23-29)

THE NEW COVENANT IS A WEDDING CONTRACT:

(1) The Messiah drank the cup at the Passover table, and He said; "*This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*" (Matthew 26:28). In the new covenant, God promises, "*I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sins no more*" Jeremiah 31:34. Jesus put that into effect: when He drank that cup He redeemed us. That cup the Jews drink with the hidden piece of bread at the Passover meal: the Cup of Redemption.

(2) The Crucifixion was the price Jesus paid for His Bride. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed, "*Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done*" (Luke 22:42). And His sweat fell like great drops of blood while he was contemplating the Cross. The Crucifixion was the highest price any bridegroom ever paid. He was obedient to His Father's will. Some Jewish bridegrooms came back to their father after learning the bride price and asked their Father's advice about whether it was worth it: "*our will, not mine, be done.*"

(3) The Father sent an angel to strengthen His Son. That was His answer. Jesus paid the price for us. The He left His Bride, and went back to His Father in heaven after His resurrection. He had even made the typical bridegroom's speech: "*I go to prepare a place for you*" (John 14:2b). And He went like any Jewish bridegroom, back to His Father's house.

Jesus is still at His Father's house preparing our place. And we are waiting for Him to return. We are waiting in a consecrated way - set apart - bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:19-20). We are to act like the covenanted Bride and be waiting at all times for our Bridegroom to come. We are to have oil in our lamps to be ready to travel, even at night (Matthew 25:1-12) *OUR OIL IS THE HOLY SPIRIT!* who came to the Jews at Pentecost, after the Messiah ascended. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit and be ready to go at any moment.

(4) The Lord will return for His Bride. There will be a bridal chamber in heaven where Jesus and the Church will spend seven years - like the ancient seven days - and there will be a marriage supper like the Jews used to have. Every detail of Jesus' great wedding will be accomplished, and it will be carried out in the exact tradition of the Jewish people because Jesus is Jewish. Each person must respond to this proposal. The Messiah said His own sheep would hear His voice (John 10:14, 16).

(5) The Bride must be waiting for the Bridegroom. The Jews knew when the trumpet sounded the harvest was over. There has to be a cut-off point somewhere. The bride who is ready goes to the wedding when the bridegroom comes. *SHAVUOT*, or Pentecost, is the harvest holiday. All summer following Pentecost the people plant and till the ground. But when the trumpet sounds, on what Jews call *ROSH HASHANAH*, the old Feast of the Trumpets the crops are in and the harvest is finished. Jeremiah, just to mention one prophet, could see that the Jews would not be ready - not all of them. "*The summer is ended, and we are not saved*" (Jeremiah 8:21).

Paul says: "*Now is the accepted time*" (2 Cor. 6:2).

Paul gave us a wonderful picture of that moment when the Groom will return for His Bride. "*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord*" (1 Thess. 4:16-17)

That fulfills everything. You have the shout of the Bridegroom to notify the Bride of His coming; you have the trumpet to finish the harvest and to proclaim liberty for God's people. The Jews used to blow the trumpet on each Jubilee to proclaim liberty (Lev. 25:10).

The New Testament equivalent of that is found in John 3:29. The Pharisees has been asking John The Baptist if he were the Messiah. In a way, they would have preferred him to say he was. They could put up with a "Messiah" who stayed out in the desert and preached repentance to a few ascetics. The One they could not abide was the gentle Carpenter of Galilee, with whom none of them could argue. But John set them straight: "*He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice; this my joy therefore is fulfilled*" (John 3:29)

When the bridegroom's voice is heard, the marriage is accomplished . A Scripture like that one is much more clear to Jews who know their heritage than to Gentiles. Anyone who tells the truth about Judaism leads to Jesus Christ. When any man speak the truth, he is taking in some way about God. Jesus: "*Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice*" (John 18:37).

(6) The Judgement Seat of Christ. The "honeymoon" in heaven. The Scriptures call it the judgement seat of Christ. We will all go before the Messiah in heaven, and He will look at our works done for Him in the flesh. All of us on earth who believe in Him are His servants, and we do both good works and bad. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that men's works will be graded (1 Corinthians 3:11-15). Some works are as valuable as gold, silver and precious stones, and some only amount to wood, hay and stubble. The Lord will use fire on these works, and we will all see what burns up.

Note: The wood, hay and stubble may comprise acts that equal the overt acts of gold, silver and precious stones however, these are deeds that are done while the believer is out of fellowship. They are usually deeds that amount to 'human good' carried out for false motives... Ed.

The judgement of works is not to be confused with God's judgement of sin. All of men's sins were taken care of at the Cross. Jesus is not going to charge us for what is already paid for. Everyone's sins are forgiven if they accept the forgiveness. The Messiah has provided a "gift certificate". When someone gives you a gift certificate, you simply take it to the store and claim the gift. You do not have to pay anything, the giver has already paid. That is the message of the Gospel in simplest terms. This judgement seat is like the honeymoon. A honeymoon is where the groom removes the bride's veil and knows her secrets.

(7) The Great Marriage Supper. When the announcement is made that the marriage is consummated - the saints have their crowns, and the Lord has examined them all. And then the celebrating begins outside the chamber. The marriage is now official and the guests can rejoice. All of the celebrating will culminate in heaven in a marriage supper - what we would call the reception. The Bride will be greatly honoured. Revelation 19:7-8 states: "*Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arranged in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.*"

Notice how the Scripture says "*WIFE*" instead of "*BRIDE*". The honeymoon is now finished, and we are now married to the Lord. Then, after the supper we will leave to live in our Bridegroom's Kingdom. We will leave His Father's house and claim our sweetest time on earth, and we will rein with our Husband in the Kingdom of God for a thousand years. What a moment to look forward to! There we are, arrayed in white linen, the queen of the Kingdom. Perfected saints. All our sins paid for, all our works rewarded. The Scriptures say that we will give our crowns to the Lord as a wedding gift. Even John, as an old man, looked forward to being a bride. How he longed for the Lord's coming. The Romans left him on a barren island Patmos, a stone quarry where practically nothing grew. He was supposed to slowly starve to death, but he saw the revelation of Jesus instead. And he said at the end of the wonderful revelation; "*Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus*" (Revelation 22:20).

(8) The Father Appoints The Time. It was not the bride who appointed the wedding day. The bridegroom's father, the host of the whole wedding picked the day. Jesus said; "*No-one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father*" (Matthew 24:36) It was the bride's responsibility to be waiting. She waited every day no matter how long it took.

The Bible is a Jewish Book. The prophecies were Jewish. They saw the Messiah coming, and He came. "*Salvation is of the Jews*", the Messiah said (John 4:22). We all killed Him because of the extent of our crimes. He had to go to the Cross. It was the only way a just God could forgive us. Each one of us killed Him with our sin natures. Those who carried out the deed were unaware of what they were doing. Jesus said from the Cross; "*Father forgive them; for they know not what they do*" (Luke 23:34) But He chose to die for His friends, for all of His followers. That was the greatest single act of love which mankind has ever known.

The Example of Rebekah. The Bible says in Genesis 24 that when Isaac was to have a wife, a servant was sent to get her for him. The servant was like the Holy Spirit; he brought the things of the bridegroom to the bride, and he brought the bride back with him. The servant travelled to where Rebekah was and Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel (Genesis 24:15). And he brought her back, and Isaac went out to meet her, just as the Messiah will come on the clouds to meet all the believers, His Bride. Rebekah never even saw her bridegroom, and yet she came, believing what the servant told her.

Bible Believers' note. The servant in this day was a man called William Branham who was sent in the evening-time of the Gentile dispensation to find a Bride for Christ who would unite with Her unseen Bridegroom by faith in the Fullness of the Word. He has come on clouds to meet His Beloved. This was the sign of Christ's parousia (Matthew 24:3; Acts 1:9-11; Revelation 1:7). Individual pictures are available or the compiled slide show - [faithnow.arj](http://www.biblebelievers.org.au/) is available for download. marriage.htm

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