

The Jewish Wedding

This is based on a study by Ray Stedman. These are the notes I used for my Sunday School class.

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2 Cor 11:2

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. (KJV)

Paul refers to the church as the Bride of Christ.

Paul also refers to this espoused relationship with God as a "mystery."

Turn to Eph 5:22-32

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church--for we are members of his body. "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. (NIV)

The mystery Paul is speaking of is the spiritual relationship between Jesus and the church. This isn't so mysterious if we keep in mind that Jesus was Jewish and Jesus followed Jewish customs and traditions. The

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Jewish wedding ceremony was a whole matrimony business at the time Jesus came. In Israel, at the time of Jesus, the way people got married was as follows:

Quite often the selection of who married who was decided by the families long before the bride and groom were of age to even consider marriage. Sometimes the price of the bride was also determined at this arrangement. When the bride and groom became of age to marry, the groom would leave his house and go to the bride's house. He would go there to make up a covenant with her, or a bridal contract. He would then drink a cup of wine with her to seal the contract. By law, at this point they were legally married. Today, we would refer to this as the engagement period. He would then have to pay a price for his bride. This could be cash or work for the brides father for a set period of time or trade something for her. An example of this would be Jacob and Leah and Rachel. He would then make a speech to her as a proposal. In this proposal he would say something like, "I will go to prepare a place for you." Then he would leave her and go back to his father's house and he would build a little mansion there, which was the bridal chamber. He would build it himself or he would decorate a room in his father's house. Then he would stock it with provisions and this would be the "honeymoon" suite. Until it was finished, there was no consummation of the relationship. It took some time to build and it had to be serviceable because the honeymoon would last for seven days. The bride and groom did not come out of this chamber for seven days after the honeymoon started. The guests would wait outside of the bridal chamber and would celebrate the whole week. The guests wouldn't even see the couple until the end of the seven days.

While the groom was away building the bridal chamber, the bride would just wait until the groom would come and get her. Sometimes it would take a year or more. Even during this time she was called "consecrated, set apart, bought with a price." She was not her own. She

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could not leave the house without wearing a veil. This was a sign to all that she had been purchased for a price and belonged to someone. She was just to be waiting for her groom to come for her every night. If he came for her and she wasn't there, that would violate the contract. As the time went on she would wait in great hope because she didn't know what night he was coming. He didn't know either because it was the groom's father's choice to send him for his bride. The father made all the wedding arrangements and invited all the guests. After the groom finished the bridal chamber, he would get his father to inspect it. If it was done and the father accepted it, he would tell his son to go get his bride.

The groom would then go with the groomsman and try and surprise the bride. Jewish brides were "stolen." Usually about midnight they would go through the streets and when they got within earshot of the bride's house, one of the wedding party would give a shout. This was to let her know the groom was coming and it would give her a moment to get herself together. The groom would then run in and steal his bride. As he did this, the rest of the bride's family would look the other way.

All the bridesmaids and wedding party would be waiting and would have oil in their lamps in case the groom came at night, which tradition said he would. There would be a procession, similar to today, but the bride is veiled so no one will recognize her. That's important because we're the bride here on earth and those out there don't know who we are. They don't know we're waiting or who we're waiting for, but they will know after the wedding because then the bride removes the veil and never wears it again. They will know after the wedding who the wife is. Here we see the wife of the Lamb.

Tradition also was to have a Jewish wedding on Tuesday. This was because in the Torah when God pronounced blessings at the end of each day, we find that on the second day, which to us is Monday, God didn't

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pronounce a blessing and on the third day, Tuesday, He pronounced a double blessing. Apparently God didn't like Monday's either. Anyway, weddings were traditionally on Tuesday because it was the day of the double blessing.

Turn now to Rev 19:7-9

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God."
(NIV)

When the bride and groom arrived at the wedding chamber they would go in and close the door. The guests would be outside. There was a custom that after the wedding was consummated the groom would tell the best man, or groomsman, through the door. This custom is also in the Old Testament with Isaac and Rebecca and so on. They would spend seven days in the bridal chamber. There is a parallel in scripture where a group of God's people spend time locked in rooms in heaven. Turn to Is 26:20

Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut the doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until his wrath has passed by.
(NIV)

Could this be the tribulation period and the bride is locked in the bridal chamber seven years with her husband? After the seven days, they would come out for a dinner. After the supper, they would leave his father's house and live together in the husband's kingdom.

Let's compare all of this with scripture and the relationship between Jesus and the church. As we mentioned before, one of the reasons we fail to understand this "mystery" is because we don't look at what is

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going on from a Jewish perspective. There is a “marriage contract” in scripture, but it isn’t in the New Testament. We find it in Jeremiah.

Turn to Jer 31:31

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: (KJV)

What is this “new covenant?” It is Christianity and God makes it with Israel and the house of Judah. God only makes covenants with the Jews.

Jer 31:32

Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: (KJV)

God tells us He was a husband to Israel and Israel broke the relationship. This would be like the groom making the bridal contract and while he is building the bridal mansion, she doesn’t wait for him but even goes out with someone else. Hosea puts Israel as the adulterous bride which violates the covenant. God does what man won’t do. He brings a new contract back to the same girl. This time, He brings a contract that is unbreakable by the bride.

Jer 31:33

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. (KJV)

God describes this covenant. The old law was written in stone and it was inflexible. The new covenant will be in our hearts. It will be flexible and a covenant of love.

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Jer 31:34

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (KJV)

Here God says this covenant will work. The last phrase of verse 34 is Christianity in a nutshell. This had never been true before the time of Jesus. This doesn't mean that we are not guilty, but we are exonerated, the penalty had been paid. This covenant works because God doesn't have to remember our sins because He put them on Jesus.

Jer 31:35

Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: (KJV)

God puts His signature on this marriage contract.

Jer 31:36-37

If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD. (KJV)

God dates the contract. This covenant is still in force. Proof of this is that Israel is still here. Where are the Babylonians and the Philistines? These were some of the strongest peoples in the universe, but they are gone today. Nations have tried over the years to destroy Israel, but they are God's people and they are still here.

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Turn now to Matt 26:27-28

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (KJV)

God the Father made the covenant or contract and now the groom comes to His bride's home. Verses 27-28 would be the toast to the bride. When Jesus took the cup and gave thanks, what did He say? The supper was in the middle of the Passover Seder and He would have said, "Blessed art thou, O Lord Our God, King of the Universe, the creator of the fruit of the vine." Jesus said He was the true vine (John 15:1). Now He is blessing the fruit of the vine, which is the church; you and I. This is hidden in the message of the blessing. The Gentile doesn't read this because Matthew didn't write it out. Why? The Gospel of Matthew is a Jewish book. Matthew wrote it to the Jews and the Jewish people said these blessings every night and they knew them. It would be like you or I writing to a friend and stating that we had a meeting and started the meeting by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. It wouldn't be necessary to write it out because we all know it.

In Matt 26:26 there is another promise. Matt 26:26

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. (KJV)

The blessing here is, "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe who brings forth bread from the earth." Jesus said that this bread was His body. The church doesn't need to worry that Jesus was crucified because the church would see Him come forth from the earth. The Jews had been saying this blessing for 2,000 years and now they would understand the wording. This is obviously the resurrection.

Jesus had to pay the price for His bride that the Father had established. The value placed on the bride, the price He had to pay, is shown to us in Luke 22:39-42

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And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. (KJV)

Jesus, as a man, was saying that the price was too high, yet, He was willing to pay the price that His Father had arranged in the covenant for the church. The Father answered Jesus' prayer by sending an angel to minister to Him. Look at Luke 22:43

And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. (KJV)

The angel would not have been sent if The Father was going to let Jesus out of this. Jesus sweat blood contemplating the price. We are bought with a price.

Look at John 19:30

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. (KJV)

The phrase, "it is finished" is: tetelasti: to end, ie. complete, execute, conclude, discharge (a debt): To give us an idea of the significance of this word, look at how it was used by the Romans. If a person committed a crime and was sentenced to prison, he was issued a "certificate of debt." This certificate stated the debt he owed society. Once he completed his debt, across the front of the certificate was written tetelasti (paid in full). The last thing Jesus said on the cross was "paid in full." Jesus paid the price that was established by the Father for the Bride.

He then left and told us where He was going. Turn to John 14:1-4

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I

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would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. (KJV)

Today, we, as the purchased Bride of Christ, we are waiting for Him to come and get us. We know where He went and what He is doing. We are no longer our own; we are bought with a price; we are waiting, sanctified, set apart. But there is more than this.

Look at Matt 25:1-13

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. (KJV)

Here is one bridegroom and ten brides. This would certainly suggest the church. The foolish ones took their lamps, but took no oil. The oil represents the Holy Spirit.

Notice verse 6.

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And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. (KJV)

As we saw, the custom was to sneak up on the bride. About midnight we have the shout.

Notice now verses 8-9

And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. (KJV)

The foolish ones aren't ready. The wise tell them to get to where they sell the oil (the church). They go but the bridegroom comes while they are gone.

The bride and groom enter the chamber and the door is shut. The door will not be opened for any reason. At the sound of the rapture, it will be too late. The whole thing is summarized in verse 13.

Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. (KJV)

Turn now to 1 Thes 4:16

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: (KJV)

This tells us we are leaving here. We are going to be with Jesus and we have here a shout. Could this shout be Jesus calling each of us by name? We also have the "trump" of God. Why do we need the trumpet? Lets look at the Jewish feasts in the order they are celebrated.

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| 1. Passover | Jesus crucified |
| 2. Unleaven Bread | Jesus buried |
| 3. First Fruits | Jesus resurrected |
| 4. Pentecost | The Holy Spirit sent |
| 5. Trumpets | The rapture (next event to come) |

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| 6. Yom Kipper | Day of atonement for Israel |
| 7. Tabernacles | Living with God for eternity |

Nothing has happened to the church since Pentecost. At the feast of trumpets, we will be taken up (raptured). Next to come after the rapture is Yom Kipper, the day of atonement for Israel. Israel has been set aside only for a period of time, but they will be reinstated. Turn to Rom 11:25

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. (KJV)

As we study the Book of Revelation, we find that at what we recognize as the Second Coming will occur at the end of the tribulation. What brings about the Second Coming? Look at Hosea 5:15

I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early. (KJV)

“They” is the nation of Israel and their offence is the rejection of the Messiah when He came the first time. This Second Coming ushers in the millennium when we will begin to dwell with God for all eternity (Tabernacles – The Feast of Sukkot).

When will all of this begin? Look at Matt 24:36

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. (KJV)

Only the Father knows and when He examines and approves of the Bridal Chamber, He will tell the Groom (Jesus) to go get His bride.

As an aside, we know that God created the heavens and the earth in seven days. He has been working on the bridal chamber for almost 2,000 years. This is going to be some place!