

# Bridegroom

John 3:29 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.

On our communion nights, we are taking a break from the thru-the-Bible studies, and discussing some of the names of Jesus. Last time we were together in this setting we looked at Jesus being called The Last Adam. Tonight we go from **A** to **B**!

John the Baptist could think of no greater way to express his **joy** over Jesus than to describe the Lord as the **Bridegroom**. Jesus is often compared to a Bridegroom. Believers are likened to His bride.

Think of it: John was the friend of the Bridegroom, and his joy was full. Believers – you and I – **are** the bride! How much greater must our joy be!

Weddings ought to be occasions of great joy and bliss – especially for the Bridegroom and His bride. It is their day; much has led to it, and their lives will change forever after it.

Bridegrooms are almost an afterthought in our culture. It wasn't that way among the Jews; a fuller understanding of their customs will enhance our joy at this name for Jesus.

Wedding customs vary, even within a culture. We need to be careful. I will emphasize the aspects most often cited by Bible scholars and others who have documented the various aspects of the Old and New Testament Jewish wedding.<sup>1</sup>

You can think of a Jewish wedding in four phases:

1. Matchmaking.
2. Betrothal.
3. The return of the Bridegroom; and,
4. A week of celebrating.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.vanguard.edu/uploadedFiles/Faculty/DRatcliff/wedding.pdf>

Matchmaking is still practiced by some Jews, even in the US. The biblical example is Abraham's servant, who is sent to be matchmaker for Isaac (Genesis 24:2-4).

The Matchmaker for us is the Holy Spirit draws us to God; but God uses people to bring us the Gospel. The Apostle Paul called himself a matchmaker:

[2 Corinthians 11:2](#) For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy; for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

A key issue was the "bride price" – the money paid by the prospective husband. It reflected value of the bride. It could be animals; or it could be an unusual accomplishment. In First Samuel 18:22-27, Saul asked for a bride price for his daughter of 100 Philistine foreskins; *David gave him 200!*

It could be contained in a formal, written contract. Such a contract included a statement of marriage vows and the bride price. It is alluded to in Exodus 21:10-11. It came to be called a *ketubah*.

In the Old Testament, Israel is viewed as the bride of *Yahweh*, and the *ketubah* is the Hebrew Scriptures (our Old Testament), specifically, the Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 19:5) as amplified throughout the Old Testament writings. In the New Testament, the church is identified as the bride of Christ, for which the *ketubah* is the New Covenant – the New Testament.

The bride price, for us, was the highest possible price, the life of the Bridegroom (First Corinthians 6:20). The vows Jesus give us were that He will never leave or forsake us; He will love us and care for us with an everlasting love.

(The bride did not make vows; she understood that she was giving herself totally).

Now the couple was **betrothed**. Betrothal lasted at least one year. During the year (or so) the Bridegroom built a bridal chamber onto his father's house. If you saw him working on the bridal chamber, he

couldn't tell you when the wedding would be – his father made the decision of when bridal chamber was finished.

Jesus is in heaven, in His Father's house, preparing a place for us (John 14:2-3).

God the Father decides when the chamber is finished (Matthew 24:36). The Bridegroom and bride, in a sense, don't know the day or hour – but there are signs of the Second Coming, just as they could tell when the year was about finished and the bridal chamber nearing completion.

When Bridegroom's father gave the nod, the Bridegroom and groomsmen went to bride's house, usually unexpectedly at night - like a thief in the night. They called out and blew a ram's horn before entering the bride's house to get her and her bridesmaids. They would be watching and waiting for him – probably for several days, or even weeks, as they saw bridal chamber completed and the year ended.

The Bridegroom took his bride to the chamber, with the wedding party accompanying them through the streets. The group waited as the bride and Bridegroom spent time alone together. The groom's friend and other witnesses waited for a signal from the Bridegroom giving evidence of the bride's virginity.<sup>2</sup>

A wedding feast then followed.

Jesus will return for His bride with a shout, and the blowing of a trumpet (First Thessalonians 4:16-18). The exact time is not known, but we can tell the general season.

As the bride, we need to be ready. When our Bridegroom returns, we're taken to the bridal chamber and examined. Don't worry: Jesus has Himself been working in us to present us pure and faultless:

[Ephesians 5:26-27](#): ...that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself a glorious

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<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 22

church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

After we're Raptured, He completes the work of purifying us at the *Bema*, as He burns away the last of the works of our flesh.

All of this takes place in heaven. On earth, the Great Tribulation is unfolding. The divine invitation to the wedding feast is sent out as the Tribulation comes to an end, just before the Second Coming:

Revelation 19:9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

The marriage supper of the Lamb is not served at this point, but the invitation is issued. Then, the Second Coming is described (v11-16), followed by a 75-day interval (Daniel 12:11-13) during which both the Old Testament and Tribulation saints will be resurrected to partake of the wedding feast.

A second group that will not be at the ceremony but *will* attend the marriage feast is the Tribulation saints, who will also be resurrected after the Second Coming (Revelation 20:4-6).

In addition to the resurrected saints, the wedding feast will include Gentiles who actually lived through the Tribulation. The Lord will gather all these Gentiles in the Valley of Jehoshaphat and judge them individually on the basis of their demonstration of faith in aiding and protecting the Lord's brethren (the Jews). He will then bid the sheep on His right, **Come, you who are blessed** . . . (Matthew 25:31-46).

And, of course, there is also the Remnant of Israel, of whom the Scriptures say, **All Israel shall be saved**. These are living Jews who survived the Tribulation to comprise the fourth group attending the wedding feast.

The fact that the Kingdom begins with the wedding feast is taught by Isaiah 25:6. In the context of the Kingdom, the prophet writes:

And in this mountain will Jehovah of hosts make unto all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

## Conclusion

I want to return to the betrothal customs for a moment. At some point in Jewish history, the tradition of the "cup of acceptance" was established. If man agreed to the match suggested by the matchmaker or the parents, a dinner was arranged at the prospective bride's house. They brought out the contract of marriage. Once the terms of the *ketubah* had been specified and the father of the bride had agreed to them, the prospective bridegroom would pour a cup of wine for the prospective bride. If she agreed to the match, she would drink from the cup, indicating her acceptance. In this manner, the covenant was sealed, and the couple was considered betrothed.

The New Covenant was initially sealed when the disciples shared a cup of wine with Jesus at Passover. This symbolism is perpetuated in the sacrament of communion. It fulfilled the Passover symbolism; but it can also be seen as a cup of acceptance.

As you drink from the cup, you are reminding yourself that Jesus is your Bridegroom, that you are His bride. We are betrothed; He is preparing our eternal home; we await His trumpet.