

The Beautiful Bride

By Doug Hamilton

1) The Planning:

The entire plan began months and even years prior in the betrothal process.

- ❑ Matthew 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.

In the betrothal process, a woman was considered legally bound to her future husband ending the agreement would take an act of divorce.

- ❑ Matthew 1:19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly.
- ❑ Hosea 2:20 And I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. Then you will know the LORD.

The two families would meet together at a neutral site, perhaps a large, furnished upper room used for receptions and ceremonies {Mark 14:15}. The parents of the groom and bride met in the corner of the room to work out the details of the dowry while the other members of the families. They anxiously awaited the resolution of the issues to press on in the arrangement. Once both of the parents were satisfied with the arrangement, they returned back to their respective corners of the room and moved onto the actual betrothal.

The groom would walk out to the center of the room, holding up a cup of wine in his right hand. Facing his fiancé and taking a drink from it, he said something like, "This is symbolic of the blood that I would be willing to shed for you, my bride, if you will marry me." To accept the proposal, she would simply walk out to the center of the room, take the cup of wine from his hand and partake.

- ❑ Matthew 26:27-29 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave {it} to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; ²⁸ for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

Jesus and his closest disciples in a large upper room. It was likely one which was used many times for weddings and other ceremonies. Combining that with the marital language for the Lord's Supper, the disciples should have been perplexed. It would make sense later after the establishment of the church, the Bride of Christ and the Lord's Supper.

Why would Jesus use wedding language during the inauguration of the Lord's Supper? It is because Jesus is the Groom and the church is His Bride. When we partake of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week, we are recognizing our covenant with the best Groom ever brought forth. He deeply loves His Bride. Ephesians 5:25-27 confirms He loves the church and gave His life for her, sanctified her, cleansed her, gloriously

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presented her without spot or wrinkle, holy and blameless. There is going to be a great wedding ceremony for the future, but as of today, we are the engaged to the Groom Jesus. It is a reminder that we are taken and should not be going on dates with the devil through sin and rebellion.

2) The Preparation:

Immediately following the ceremony of acceptance of betrothal, the groom and his family headed out for home with the full intention with the full intention of coming back for his bride. Before he could do so, it would be necessary to prepare a home for his new bride. Over the next few months and even years, he would build an attached room to the father's home. Laboring many hours a day, attempting to complete the addition, the bride would have her bags packed in waiting. There would be no wedding until the room was complete.

Jesus said something of interest to the disciples on the night before the Passover. Once again using matrimonial language, He said the following

- John 14:2-3 "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³ "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, {there} you may be also.

As the young man approaches the final stages of the addition, the father would begin to make the necessary inspections. It was not up to the son to determine if the room was finished, but only the father. Wednesdays were the day of the week people were wedded. Therefore every Wednesday the son would ask the father "Is it ready yet?" The father would come into the room, make his assessment and respond, "No, not yet. Keep working on it." Jesus made reference to this theme in the Gospel of Mark.

- Mark 13:32 "But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father {alone.}"

Finally, the Wednesday arrived as the finishing touches were being completed. The son anxiously asked the father, "Is it ready?" He will slowly walked around the room, inspecting for flaws and admiring the workmanship of the son. Stroking his chin, he, "Yes, my beloved son, it is now ready."

3) The Procession:

It is time to move into the procession phase of the wedding. The women from the groom's family are advised of the wedding ceremony and told to prepare the house for a wedding feast, for tonight there is going to be a wedding! They begin the decoration and food preparation. The groom contacts the groomsmen and put them on notice of the evening's events.

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As the evening approaches, the wedding procession begins. The groom gathers his attendants / moving helpers to make the trip across town to fetch the bride. She has known this moment was at hand and has been waiting with packed bags. The groomsmen lead the groom in single file line. The sun has sunk into the horizon as the groomsmen illumine the street with olive oil filled lamps and torches held in their hands. The townspeople can hear the singing of the approaching groomsmen and begin to rejoice for what is about to happen. The procession builds as they are within earshot of the bride's home. There is a call from the neighbors and friends notifying the family. Jesus mentioned this in the Gospel of Matthew.

- Matthew 25:5-7, "Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and {began} to sleep. 6 "But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet {him.}' 7 "Then all those virgins rose, and trimmed their lamps.

The bride and her family leap to their feet, go outside and see the approaching party of the groom. This is a moment they were prepared for. The friends and family of the bride would not be sleeping tonight, for a great celebration will occur.

The groomsmen and procession arrives and the men load up the belongings of the bride on their backs and the backs of mules. The bridesmaids escorting the bride, with their lamps trimmed, walk with their friend. There are great tears of joy as the friends and relatives of the bride see the fiancée heading out for her wedding ceremony. They are happy because she will soon have her new family, new home and new future.

With the groom at the front of the line and the bride at the back, the growing procession of attendants and guests slowly work their way back to his home. Watching the procession, admiring the slow movement of the gentle light of the lamps on the backdrop of a starry night, being deeply moved with the elation of the entourage, they are so happy for the bride and the groom.

4) The Presentation:

Finally arriving at the home of the groom, the bride enters inside to undergo the ceremonial makeover. The groom gathers his attendants in a nearby house. He reads to them sweet words of poetry, written by his own hand and expressed from his own heart. His groomsmen are so happy for their bachelor friend. Jesus mentioned this in the Gospels of Matthew and John.

- Matthew 9:15 "The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast."
- John 3:29 "He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. And so this joy of mine has been made full."

The groom is garlanded with flowers around his neck and meanwhile, the bride's family has been preparing her for the presentation. Her face is without flaw, her dress is

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beautiful, her perfume is sweet and her headdress is stunning. Her family has adorned her with only the finest.

- Isa 61:10 "...a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."
- Jeremiah 2:32 "Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet My people have forgotten me Days without number.

A message is sent to the groom from the main house announcing the bride was ready for presentation. He follows the groomsmen as they lead the way. Their wonderful friend is about to make the transition to the married life.

- Joel 2:16 "...Let the bridegroom come out of his room and the bride out of her {bridal} chamber."

His groomsmen enter the home one by one and move aside. When the last one leaves the field of vision, the groom sees his beautiful bride in all her glory, awaiting her marriage. There would not be a single guest with a dry eye as they observe the groom's expression of joy. With a smile from ear to ear, he knows she is the most beautiful creature he has ever laid eyes on.

- Isa 62:5 "...{as} the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, {so} your God will rejoice over you."
- Rev 21:2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

5) The Promise

Gently taking her by the hand, a blessing is offered for their new covenant. They are pronounced man and wife. It is now time for the celebration of wedding feast. There is great happiness, great food and great fellowship, causing many to rejoice for the moment. There is consummation in the attached room as they become one flesh. They are officially promised to each other before the eyes of their people and their God.

- Revelation 19:9 And he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God."

Summary:

A. We as a church are betrothed to Jesus as the pure virgin bride.

2 Corinthians 11:2, For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you {as} a pure virgin.

B. We as a church know Jesus has prepared a place for us in heaven.

Revelation 22:17, And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.

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C. We as a church know Jesus is coming for His bride.

Luke 12:35-36 "Be dressed in readiness, and {keep} your lamps alight. 36 "And be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open {the door} to him when he comes and knocks.

D. We as a church had better be ready for that day.

Matthew 25:12-13, "But he answered and said, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.' 13 "Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.

E. We as a church know there will be a great day of rejoicing.

Revelation 19:7, "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready."

F. We as a church must guard the image of the Bride.

Ephesians 5:27, "that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless."