

Scriptural Comparisons Of A Jewish Wedding To Jesus And His Bride: The Church.

(All scripture quotations are from the ESV)

Have you ever noticed the parallels in scripture of a wedding to the relationship of Jesus and His church? Listen to Ephesians 5:23: *“For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.”* Now hear Ephesians 5:31-32: *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’ This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.”* Here we understand the relationship between Christ and His church. Now hear what is said at the end of this age in Revelation 19-6-8: *“Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.”* It is clear, that the bride of Jesus is the Church! The first disciples would have understood that He was alluding to what the Jewish disciples knew of their own weddings. Here what follows is a description of Jewish weddings. The analogies from a Jewish wedding to Christ and His church are abundant and amazing! All believers, as the church, have been invited to be and ARE the bride of Christ!

The Marriage Arranged

In ancient Jewish times marriages were often arranged as in the case of Abraham for his son Isaac Gen. 24:1-4. Jesus said that his disciples did not choose Him but that rather He chose them in John 15:16. This choosing is a reference not only to God’s sovereignty but also to the Jewish wedding where the wedding was initiated and arranged. ¹ Marriage was looked upon as a covenant (agreement) and the bride had the option to accept or reject at the betrothal ceremony.

The Price For The Bride

Marriages in ancient Jewish times were in 4 stages. There was the arrangement and commitment to marry (Shiddukhin), betrothal ceremony (Kiddushin), the betrothal time period (Eyrusin), and the wedding (Nissuin). ² To be betrothed was more than being engaged as in today’s culture. The betrothal could only be broken by death or divorce. ³ At the betrothal

¹ God’s Appointed Customs by Barney Kasdan 1996, Pgs. 48-49

² Ibid, Pgs. 48-51

³ Ibid, Pg. 50

ceremony, the groom would give the price for the bride. ⁴ 1 Corinthians 6:20 says we are bought with a price. Christ gave His life to buy us as His bride! And Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11:2: *For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.*

The Marriage Proposal

But at the betrothal ceremony the marriage contract was called a *ketubah*. ⁵ The acceptance of this covenant (or contract) was symbolized by the groom giving a cup of wine to the bride and if she accepted it, she would drink from it. ⁶ Jesus told his disciples on the night he was betrayed in Matthew 26:27-28: *“And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”* Jesus invited his disciples to accept his marriage covenant proposal at His last meal with them! Every Christ follower is also invited today to drink from His cup!

The Marriage Covenant Accepted

The groom at the Jewish betrothal ceremony would have said: “I will not drink from this cup again until we drink it new in my father’s house.” ⁷ Jesus said on the night he was betrayed these words in Matthew 26:29: *“I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”* Jesus is inviting people to be in His church who are themselves the bride of Christ! The bride of Christ will live with Him in the glory of Eternity!

The Betrothal Period of Preparation (Eyrusin)

Normally the betrothal period would last about a year during which time the groom would be preparing a place to live for his bride at his father’s house. ⁸ The bride would be preparing her garments and lamps for the day of her wedding. ⁹ Remember that Jesus said in John 14:2-3: *In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.* This passage would have been understood in the context of a Jewish wedding when Jesus talked about His Father’s house

⁴ The New Manners And Customs of Bible Times by Ralph Gower, 1987, Pg. 64

⁵ Jewish Marriage – Rabbinic Law, Legend, And Custom by Mendell Lewittes, 1994 Pg. 72 - also see God’s Appointed Customs by Barney Kasdan 1996, Pg. 49

⁶ God’s Appointed Customs by Barney Kasdan 1996, Pg. 50 - also see Jewish Marriage – Rabbinic Law, Legend, And Custom by Mendell Lewittes, 1994 Pgs. 70-71

⁷ Ibid, Pgs. 50, 60 – Also see Jewish Marriage – Rabbinic Law, Legend, And Custom by Mendell Lewittes, 1994 Pgs. 70-71

⁸ The New Manners And Customs of Bible Times by Ralph Gower, 1987, Pg. 65 – also see God’s Appointed Customs by Barney Kasdan 1996, Pgs. 50-51

⁹ Ibid, Pg. 65 – also see God’s Appointed Customs by Barney Kasdan 1996, Pg. 51

having many rooms! After the resurrection and Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came to dwell with believers, Jesus' words came true: He brought us to Himself! But when Jesus comes, we will be brought to His side to be with Him forever in His glory! Of course, in death we are brought to Him but the church as a whole is what he is speaking of in John 14:2-3.

In this time of betrothal, the agreement could only be broken by the husband through a divorce called a "get".¹⁰ We are eternally secure in Jesus because he will never break his agreement to his bride! He says in John 10:28: *"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."*

Only The Father Knows

The interesting thing about a Jewish wedding is that the father of the groom was the one who made the decision when the wedding would be.¹¹ Only he knew the exact time when his son's wedding would be. He would choose the time when the place of his son and daughter-in-law's dwelling was ready, and the time would frequently be at night.¹² Jesus said in Matt. 24:36: *"But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only."* Also see Matt. 25:13. This statement that only the Father knows the time of His Son's coming, is a reference to a Jewish wedding! We are now still in the time of the betrothal!

Be Ready

When the time was close the bride and her bridesmaids would sleep in their clothes in order to be ready at a moment's notice for the coming of the bridegroom.¹³ We are told to be ready for Christ's coming! Matt. 24:42 says: *Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.* In Matthew 25:1-13 only 5 of the 10 virgins were ready with enough oil for the coming of the bridegroom. This is strong scriptural evidence of the Jewish weddings being at night and of the importance of being ready!¹⁴

The Bridegroom Comes

When the time was right, the father would wake the son and say go get your bride! He would go and blow the shofar (trumpet) to announce his coming to wake the bride and her party. He would come to her house and she would be carried back to his father's house for the ceremony and feast.¹⁵ 1 Thess. 4:16-17 says: *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of*

¹⁰ The Complete Jewish Study Bible, 2016 Pg. 1807 *"The Jewish Wedding"* also see God's Appointed Customs by Barney Kasdan 1996, Pg. 60

¹¹ God's Appointed Customs by Barney Kasdan 1996, Pg. 51, 62

¹² Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary: Volume 1, Matthew, Mark, Luke, 2002 Pg. 155

¹³ God's Appointed Customs by Barney Kasdan 1996, Pg. 51

¹⁴ *Jesus is using an example everybody understood in a Jewish wedding to show the importance of being ready!*

¹⁵ God's Appointed Customs by Barney Kasdan 1996, Pgs. 51-52

God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

Don't Wait Too Late

It was the Jewish mindset that punctuality was very important and if anyone came too late to the Jewish wedding feast, the door could already be shut and they could not get in! ¹⁶ Nobody should wait too late to get ready since death and Jesus' coming both are inevitable! The door is open, and the invitation stands now, but the door will shut one day. Listen to Matt. 25:10: *And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut.* Also read Luke 13:25-29.

** All scripture underlines are mine*

For further reading:

- *Ancient Jewish Wedding Customs And Yeshua's Second Coming* By The Messianic Prophecy Bible Project (<https://free.messianicbible.com/feature/ancient-jewish-wedding-customs-and-yeshuas-second-coming/>)
- *Sketches of Jewish Social Life* by Alfred Edersheim, 1994, chapter 9 "Mothers, Daughters, and Wives in Israel"

¹⁶ The Complete Biblical Library: New Testament Study Bible – Luke, Springfield, Missouri, U.S.A. 1988, Pg 433 says this: "When people were invited to the home of an important host and the appointment was for a specified hour, they had better make sure they arrived on time. A Near Eastern host had the right to bolt his gate at the given hour. No one was permitted to enter after that." - Also see The IVP Bible Background Commentary, New Testament, Second Edition by Craig S. Keener 2014, Pg. 111 which says: "Although people would often come and go during wedding feasts, the bolt used to shut doors was noisy and cumbersome; perhaps it represents an effort to be repeated only if necessary, making new visitors unwelcome (cf. Lk 11:7)."