
The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON CXXIII : THE WISE AND SPIRIT FILLED LIFE OF SUBMISSION / THE HAUSTAFEL (5:15-6:9)

Ephesians 5:25-33 — Paul to the CHURCHES —

In our last lessons we looked at how the Lord has used the metaphor of marriage throughout the Scriptures. Before leaving this topic, I thought it would be beneficial to have a basic understanding of the Jewish wedding traditions.

JEWISH MARRIAGE TRADITIONS

Until the late middle ages, Jewish marriages consisted of ceremonies on two separate occasions, the first being the betrothal (*erusin*) and later the wedding (*nissuin*; some would add a third component, the pledge or mutual commitment prior to the betrothal, probably dependent upon the ages of the prospective bride and groom). Each of these have many subcomponents. “One would be hard pressed to find an occasion more joyous than that of a Jewish wedding. In Hebrew, it’s called a ‘*simcha*’ (a joyous occasion). ‘*Yet in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are deserted, inhabited by neither people nor animals, there will be heard once more the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of the bride and bridegroom.*’ (Jeremiah 33:10-11)” [‘*Ancient Jewish Wedding Customs and Yeshua’s Second Coming*’, MessianicBible.com]

As we look at these marriage traditions, our focus will be upon how they relate to the believer and our Savior. ***“Of all possible scenarios or spiritual metaphors that could have been used to portray the relationship between the Lamb, Jesus Christ, and his people, why was that of marriage and a wedding feast (cf. Isa. 25:6) chosen? What is it in this imagery that John finds particularly appropriate when describing the nature of how we feel about and relate to Jesus? Joy? Celebration? The beginning of a new life together? Intimacy? Trust? Oneness? Commitment? Delight in one another? Yes!”*** [Storm, Sam; ‘*You’re Invited to the Marriage Supper of Lamb*’]

A quick overview as we begin: the Jewish marriage is about the groom (unlike our Western culture where the bride is the focus). The bride was carried, not under her own power, to a celebration she didn’t plan nor did she work to provide; it was already ready and waiting for her to enjoy. The wedding is also not the end but the beginning of their life together. And while the bride did not prepare the wedding feast, she did prepare herself. What a wonderful picture of salvation!

THE BETROTHAL

HEBREW: אֵירוּסִין *erusin* = betrothal

The betrothal was also called ‘*kiddushim*,’ a Rabbinic term meaning ‘*sanctification, set apart.*’ This term defines the purpose of the betrothal period as it was a time when the couple were to prepare themselves to enter into the covenant of marriage. Once the price had been paid, the marriage covenant was established and the bride was considered sanctified, consecrated, or set apart for her bridegroom. The bride was committed to her future husband, although she remained in her father’s house (they were legally married in all aspects except for the physical consummation of the marriage; if joint checking accounts had existed in ancient times, the couple could have had one). A betrothal benediction would be pronounced over a cup of wine and they would both drink from a cup of wine. The betrothal period is much stronger than our modern

engagement and required a divorce to annul the contract. Only the husband could divorce; the wife had no say in any divorce proceeding. We see an example of a betrothal in the New Testament when Joseph discovered Mary to be pregnant before they had come together (Matt 1:18-21).

Throughout history the betrothal occurred in one of three ways: (1) **money**: the bridegroom (or bridegroom's family) would give a woman money or equivalent. Today this is done often using a ring before two witnesses; if the woman accepts, they are betrothed (see below, 'the bridal gift' for more information). (2) **contract**: man gives the woman a deed before two witnesses, with wife and groom's name included; this contract is called '*she'tar*' and is not the same as the '*ketubah*' which is given in protection of the woman after the *kiddushim*. (3) **intercourse**: after the man addresses the marriage formula to the woman before two witnesses, the couple would retire to a private place. Most Jewish traditions held this to be gross, virtually an act of prostitution, but if a marriage was performed this way it was legally valid. Today only the first is considered valid, the other two forms are obsolete.

APPLICATION — As the wife was thus set apart for the groom, so are believers set apart exclusively for Christ (Eph 5:25-27; 1 Cor 1:2; 6:11; Heb 10:10; 13:12).

ETERNAL SECURITY – Since divorce is only available to the husband, this ensures the salvation for those who belong to Him.

SELECTION OF THE BRIDE

HEBREW: *shiddukhin* = mutual agreement; not just the matchmaking but all the arrangements preliminary to the legal betrothal; *shadkhan* = matchmaker

In the simple conditions of early biblical days, all sons and daughters married young; usually no one would remain single (this remained true for the most part until the pre-Maccabean days). The marriage was usually contracted within the narrow circle of the clan and the family; it was undesirable to marry a woman from a foreign clan lest she introduce foreign beliefs and practices. This could begin when the children were infants but more often they would be six or seven years old. Many times the bride had not seen her husband-to-be. In those days the fathers were more concerned about the marriage for his sons than for his daughters; this was because it would cost the family when a son married, while the family had no expense when a daughter married and would even receive money for the loss of her services.

Since whole families would often live together under the same roof, a marriage affected the whole family. Society and government in ancient Israel were also tribal, and marriages were often arranged to form strategic alliances between the clans, often years in advance. Marriages were looked upon as more of an alliance for reasons of survival or practicality with the concept of romantic love being secondary, if considered at all. Romantic love grew over time (while it is common today to ridicule arrange marriages, it had its advantages; rather than families being formed or destroyed on the basis of feelings or whims, it was understood that family relationships revolved around duty, honor, and responsibilities).

Brides were chosen by the father of the bridegroom, either directly or through an intermediary. The bridegroom's father would, of course, act in his son's best interest in choosing the bride. If the son were old enough, perhaps they would confer together (note Sampson did not simply take his bride but asked his parents to take her for him; Judges 14:1-4). The father and bride's father would negotiate a marriage contract, discussing such things as the price to be paid for the bride (the *mohar*; see below). If done through an intermediary, he would send his most trusted servant to

search for a bride for his son (an example of this is Abraham sending his servant to find a bride for Isaac; Gen 24:1-9). But in either case, it was the father that selected the bride for the son, not the bride that chose the husband.

Although my sources differed, several commented the proposal could be rejected by the bride-to-be, while others commented the girl was consulted but this was a mere formality. We do see in Gen 24:57,58 that after the servant Eliezer (whose name means ‘God’s Helper’) had discussed the terms of the marriage with Laban and Bethuel, Rebekah was asked the following morning if she was willing to go with the servant, to which Rebekah responded she would.



APPLICATION — THE FATHER CHOSE THE BRIDE – *“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain”* (John 15:16) *“Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love”* (Eph 1:4) *‘as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.’* (John 17:2)

THE BRIDEGROOM WAS OFTEN NOT SEEN BY THE BRIDE – *“Whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory”* (1 Pet 1:8)

THE BRIDE’S CONSENT – Some suggest the consent of the bride is an example of the Holy Spirit wooing the sinner but the sinner must consent.

MARRIAGE CONTRACT

HEBREW: *ketubah* = written



The negotiations between the families were written in a covenant (contract) called the ‘ketubah’ (‘written’) and is still very much a part of Jewish weddings today. Although not mentioned in the Bible, in all probability there was a written marriage contract; the reasons for believing this are several: (1) the *ketubah* is still in vogue in modern Jewish life; (2) an actual marriage contract was discovered in southern Egypt that dates back to the return from the Babylonian exile – the oldest marriage record in Jewish history; and (3) there was a written ‘bill of divorce’ (Deut 24:3); if a written document was employed in dissolving a marriage, it is natural to assume it was also employed in contracting a marriage.

These marriage contracts began with a declaration of the bridegroom’s promise to honor, support and maintain his bride in truth, provide her food, clothing and necessities, and live together with her as husband and wife. Other items included would be the price of the bride and any other thing negotiated, written in detail.

The marriage contract protected the rights of the wife by specifying the groom’s responsibilities in caring for her and the amount of support that would be due her in the event of a divorce. Before the ketubah was introduced, women had no rights, no security, no guarantee of protection and provision. The ketubah as a covenantal document elevated women to a new status in society.

APPLICATION — While not found directly in the Bible, a few of my sources makes a point that we could consider the New Testament as our ‘ketubah’ (the word ‘testament’ is ‘covenant’; i.e., we could call our Scriptures the ‘New Covenant’). “Just as the ketubah was the inalienable right of the bride, the New Testament, our ketubah, contains promises for us from our soon coming Bridegroom. So many times people look at the Bible as a big book of ‘don’ts.’ It is not that at all. The New Covenant is a marriage contract that shows us all we are entitled to as part of Yeshua’s bride. All the promises in this Book, (which is actually a love letter to the bride), are for us to receive by faith.... Our Bridegroom promises to clothe us, feed us, provide shelter for us, and live with us as husband and wife. He is in covenant with us. Our ketubah testifies to this.” [Lash, Jamie; *‘The Ancient Jewish Wedding and the Return of Messiah for His Bride’*]

THE BRIDE PRICE

HEBREW: *mohar* = the purchase price for wife; wedding money; bridal payment; *matan* = bridal gift



Antique Jewish wedding ring

Unless the family had great wealth, everyone in the family worked. Thus for a family to lose a daughter would affect the family financially so the bridegroom would pay the family a ‘bride price’ (*mohar*). The price was paid to the father of the bride, both to compensate him for the loss of a worker in his household and to show how much the bridegroom loved and valued the bride, and that one day he would return for her. If the bridegroom’s family had wealth, it was also customary to give gifts to the bride to win her favor; such bridal gifts were called ‘*mattan*,’ meaning ‘gifts.’ Virgins brought double the price of widows or divorced women.

The bride price was in keeping with the father’s stature and was not always paid in cash; it could be paid in kind or in service (cp. Jacob’s service for Rachel, Gen 29).

‘Then the servant [of Abraham as he negotiated with Laban and Bethuel] brought out jewelry of silver, jewelry of gold, and clothing, and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother.’ (Gen 24:51 NKJV; thus the servant gave mattan to Rebekah and mohar to her brother and mother)

Besides compensating the bride’s family for their loss of income, this giving of the bride price and gifts was also to win favor with the bride and her family. The deal involved respect; contrast that with the rape of Dinah in Genesis 34:

‘Then Shechem said to her father and her brothers, “Let me find favor in your eyes, and whatever you say to me I will give. Ask me ever so much dowry [mohar] and gift [mattan], and I will give according to what you say to me; but give me the young woman as a wife.” But the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father, and spoke deceitfully, because he had defiled Dinah their sister.’ (Gen 34:11-13 NKJV)

Eventually the customary gift became our modern engagement ring, and the giving of the ring to the bride constituted the main feature of *erusin* (betrothal). As the bridegroom placed the ring on the bride’s index finger he recited the traditional Jewish espousal formula:

The most ancient wedding ceremonies contained only the phrase: “*Ha-rey at m’kudeshet li*” (Be thou consecrated unto me.)

The phrase, “*K’dat Moshe v’Yisrael*” (according to the law of Moses and Israel) was added later.

Added still later was “*b’taba’ at zu*” (by means of this ring).

The real focus of the gift giving was not the gift, but the giver.

APPLICATION — THE PRICE OF REDEMPTION – The obvious application cited by all of my sources was the price paid by our Lord Jesus for His people:

‘knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.’ (1 Pet 1:18-19)

‘In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.’ (Eph 1:7)

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE PLEDGE OF HIS RETURN – In much the same way, the Lord gave us a pledge until His return, the Holy Spirit. He is our spiritual ‘engagement ring’ who leads us to focus on our Heavenly Bridegroom. He doesn’t call attention to Himself, but rather to the One who purchased us.

“IT IS COMPLETE, PERFECT” – We are familiar with the Greek word cried out by our Lord on the cross: *‘tetelastai’* meaning *‘it is finished, it is paid’* (John 19:30). One Jewish source states the following: “The word that He spoke as His final thought is from the Hebrew root *ka’lal* which means to complete, make perfect or finish. It is the same root of the word for bride: *kallah*. Could Yeshua’s last words on the cross have had bridal overtones? Was His bride His last thought as He paid the bride price for her? We were on His heart, why not on His lips?” [Lash, Jamie; *The Ancient Jewish Wedding and the Return of Messiah for His Bride*] Note: to verify this author’s statement, I looked up the Hebrew word *‘to make perfect, to complete’* and discovered two word groups are so translated, one is *‘tamam’* and the other was indeed *‘kalal.’* The *‘tamam’* word group suggests *‘wholeness, soundness, integrity,’* and often has an ethical significance; while the *‘kalal’* word group connotes *‘completeness, perfection,’* and can carry the aesthetic sense of *‘comeliness or beauty.’* In the New Wilson’s OT Word Studies, the only word he lists for ‘bride’ is *‘kālāh’* which he explains as *‘a bride, supposed to imply beauty of dress and appearance.’*

WHERE THE METAPHOR BREAKS DOWN – It is important to note that this is an example where any metaphor is not perfect and can break-down or be misapplied. In ancient Israel the bridal price was paid to the bride’s family but the price of our atonement was a payment for our sin, an offering to the Father and not to Satan nor any created thing.

THE BRIDES WERE POSSESSIONS

HEBREW: *be’ulah* = married, owned one; *ba’al* = to be master, to become a husband

As we consider this point, a few definitions will help to guide our thoughts. While the typical Hebrew word for *‘wife, female, spouse’* is *‘ishāh’*, there are a couple other Hebrew words used which provides interesting insight into how marriage was viewed in the Old Testament. According to the New Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies (William Wilson; Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids MI; 1987; originally published 1850; page 269), the Hebrew word *bā’āl* means *‘to be master, to have dominion, to become a husband, to marry’* (Strong’s # 1166), while a very close form of the same Hebrew word *bā’āl* means *‘lord, master, possessor, owner’* (Strong’s # 1167). Another related word is the Hebrew word *‘be’ūlāh’* meaning *‘bride, married woman.’* Although the word is only used once in Isa 62:4, we are familiar with this word from John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim Progress* as the idyllic land near the end of life’s journey.

'You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married.' (Isa 62:4; 'Hephzibah' means 'my delight is in her')

So going along with the previous point, brides were considered possessions in ancient Israel. Since a wife was purchased, she belonged to her husband. Whether we note this today or not, the tenth commandment lists the wife along with the other possessions a man may own:

'You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.' (Ex 20:17).

Although this may seem cruel and unjust in today's way of thinking, it was actually a step above what was happening in the pagan world at that time. There was no value placed on wives. If a man wanted a wife, he simply took her to his house, had intercourse with her privately (thus without the testimony of witnesses) and she became his wife. In the Torah God introduced sanctity and permanence into the marriage relationship, everything being done in the presence of witnesses. The mohar or bride price was part of raising a standard of righteousness. Women had value. They were to be cherished. As soon as she is acquired and becomes betrothed, even though the husband and wife had not cohabited nor had she gone to the groom's house, it required a divorce in order to break the union.

APPLICATION — As previously stated about the price paid for our salvation, we belong to our Lord, redeemed by His blood.

'Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.' (1 Cor 6:19,20 KJV)

CEREMONIAL WASHING

HEBREW: *mikvah* = ritual washing



While there was some variance on this point in my sources, most mentioned a ceremonial washing which occurred as a symbolic of spiritual cleansing and the covenant between the two participants.

A few said only the bride was immersed while most said both the bride and bridegroom was immersed separately. One of the sources who said it was only the wife added that this ancient Jewish custom represents a separation from an old life to a new life – from life as a single woman to life as a married woman. It also symbolizes a change in status and authority; a woman comes out from under the authority of her father to the authority of her husband.

Most said the immersion occurred at the betrothal ceremony while some said it took place at the wedding ceremony, although one wonders if it is now before the wedding because there is no longer a year waiting period between the betrothal and the wedding.



APPLICATION — The obvious application is believer's baptism. In Matthew chapter 3, people from Jerusalem, all Judea, and the surrounding region came to John for immersion by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. They were coming under the authority of John's teaching as they did this; later, under the authority of Jesus Christ and the NT teachings.

HUPPAH – FIRST CUP OF WINE

HEBREW: *huppah* = canopy

After the bride and groom were immersed the couple would appear together under the canopy in public to express their intention of becoming betrothed. The canopy was symbolic a new household being planned (Ps 19:5; Joel 2:16). The ceremony involved the exchanging of gifts with a cup of wine shared between the two to seal the betrothal vows. After the ceremony the couple was officially betrothed and considered married, although without sexual relations. They continued to live separately until the official marriage.

If the marriage arrangement was made while the couple were still small children, when the young girl 'came of age' (menstruation had begun) there was a little more public ceremony involving a larger family gathering. The young man would offer a cup of wine to his intended; if she accepted and drank the wine then the official year of betrothal started. The bride and groom shared the same cup, symbolizing the shared life that would be theirs.

APPLICATION — THE LAST SUPPER – At the betrothal, the bridegroom came to obtain his bride by the establishing of a covenant; likewise Jesus established His new covenant with the Last Supper, at which time the Lord blessed and drank the wine with all the disciples. He stated He would not drink again until they drank in the new kingdom and thus the Lord's Table serves as the continuing symbol of that covenant. (Matt 26:27,28; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25)

THE GROOM PREPARES

Having become betrothed, the bridegroom would leave and return to his father's house, remaining separate from his future bride for approximately a year. The groom during this time would prepare a place for them, either within the father's household or under his father's supervision. This did not need to be a new home, it may just involve adding rooms to the groom's family's existing home. But the home must meet the approval of the father, being up to the standard of his name and honor.

APPLICATION — Everyone's thoughts immediately go to John 14:1-3 when Jesus said He was to depart and prepare a place for us. The Jews present would have understood the reference Jesus was making to Jewish wedding customs. As the bridegroom would leave his betrothed bride, so Jesus returned to heaven.

THE BRIDE PREPARES

After the bridegroom departed from the betrothal ceremony, the bride would spend the intervening year in preparation to become a part of her husband's family and household. This would involve such things as sewing, weaving, learning the duties of being a wife/mother, wedding garments, lamps, etc. She was not to spend the time living for herself but rather for her bridegroom (cf. 2 Cor 5:15). Several terms could be used to describe this time of her life. She was to be **FAITHFUL:** as his bride, she was to honor the covenant and the price he paid. She was to be **CONSECRATED:** as his bride, she was set-apart solely to her future husband. She could not belong to another man unless her bridegroom granted her a divorce. She was to be **WATCHFUL:** as we will see, while

the bride knew the general time of the bridegroom's arrival, she did not know the exact time and was thus to be faithful, keeping her betrothal vows, and alert for his return.

“The Jewish bride (*kallah* in Hebrew) was set apart, consecrated, separated unto her bridegroom while he was away preparing her wedding chamber. A verse in the Song of Songs (4:12) refers to the bride's state: *‘A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.’* *Kallah* literally means the secluded, or enclosed one. The bride belonged to her beloved, the one who had purchased her, and was to have eyes for none other. In fact, she was to have what the Bible calls ‘doves’ eyes’ (Song of Songs 1:15).” [Lash, Jamie; *The Ancient Jewish Wedding and the Return of Messiah for His Bride*] What do doves’ eyes symbolize? Doves mate for life, so to have ‘doves’ eyes’ is *‘to be faithful, to have singleness of vision, to have loving commitment.’* Doves are also a symbol of the Holy Spirit, He who enables the believer to live for the bridegroom.

“A type of the Holy Spirit is seen in the book of Esther, giving us a glimpse of how a bride is prepared. Haggai, the king's servant, prepared Esther for her union with the king by prescribing six months of oil of myrrh (for purification) and six months of sweet oils (for beautification) (Esther 2:12). Esther did not choose what she would wear, nor how she would prepare herself for the king. She left it up to Haggai and followed his advice. Esther, *hadassah* in Hebrew, means *‘I will be hidden.’* Messiah's bride, today, is hidden in Him, (Colossians 3:3) hidden in the cleft of the Rock, (Songs 2:14) and submitted to the working of the Holy Spirit in her life. He shows the bride how to live for the Bridegroom, not for herself (2 Cor. 5:15.” [Lash, Jamie; *The Ancient Jewish Wedding and the Return of Messiah for His Bride*]

APPLICATION — As the bride and groom would be separated for up to a year, believers are now living in the time when Christ is separated from His bride. As those who belong to Him, we too are to be faithful, set-apart solely unto Him, spiritually alert as we watch for His return. Although the Lord's Table is a reminder of what He did for us, it is also a reminder of His return (*‘For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.’* - 1 Cor 11:26). One parable given to describe the importance of this time is that of the ten wise and foolish virgins awaiting the bridegroom, Matt 25:1-13.

THE WEDDING

HEBREW: נִסּוּיִן *nissuin*

The second half of the ancient Jewish wedding ceremony is called either ‘nisuin’ or ‘huppah.’ Nissuin which comes from the verb ‘naso’ or ‘nasah’ meaning ‘to lift up, to bear or to carry.’ This refers to the bride being lifted up and carried away to her waiting bridegroom (see below). Betrothal and Nissuin (wedding ceremony) were separate by a year until about 12th century in Germany and France, when they became one ceremony. The ceremony begins with betrothal which consists of the blessings, the kinyan (formal acquisition by means of giving the ring), and the recitation of the marriage formula. This is followed by the reading of the ketubah (marriage contract). Marriage is finalized by chuppah ceremony, which consists of the seven blessings, and the yichud (the bride and groom are brought together in a private room to symbolize the consummation of the marriage). These ceremonies were combined for several reasons: (1) financial: two ceremonies involved two feasts and banquets



were expensive; (2) in medieval times Jews would often have to flee for their lives; a betrothed woman would therefore be bound to her fiancé who she may never see again; she was called an ‘*agunah*’ (literally, a chained woman), a woman bound and could not marry another; (3) sexual temptation for the year between ceremonies. [Lamm, Maurice, ‘The Jewish Marriage Ceremony’]

THE FATHER DECIDES THE TIME OF THE MARRIAGE

When all the criteria is met to his standards, the father of the groom decides when the wedding will be (one source states a Rabbi was consulted to determine that the place the bride was to live was better than where she was living, then the father would decide the time). This is one of the unique features of the Jewish wedding: the time of the groom’s arrival was to be a surprise. The groom himself did not know when he would go to claim his bride, only his father knew. Although the bride knew to expect her groom after about a year, she did not know exactly when (the day nor the hour). Thus the bridal party were to remain ready including the lamps in case the bridegroom came at night (Matt 25:1-13).

APPLICATION — This of course correlates to the statement by our Lord Jesus, “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.” (Matt 24:36) Jewish bridegrooms usually came for their brides late at night, near the midnight hour. Customarily one of the groom’s party would go ahead of the bridegroom, leading a torch-light procession consisting of the groom, best man and other male escorts. The procession would wind its way through town to the home of the bride with shouts of ‘Behold, the bridegroom comes.’ This was accompanied with the sounding of the shofar. This gave the bride a few extra moments to make final preparations. “And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’” (Matt 25:6) The bride and her attendants would trim their lamps and get ready to go. “Arise, my love, my fair one and come away” (Song of Songs 2:10).

THE GROOM PROCESSION



Upon the arrival of the procession, the bride would enter a bridal litter or palanquin called ‘*aperion*’ in Hebrew. This *aperion* is mentioned in the Song of Songs 3:9, 10: “Of the wood of Lebanon Solomon the King made himself a palanquin (*aperion*): He made its pillars of silver, its support of gold, its seat of purple, its interior paved with love, by the daughters of Jerusalem.”

The groom would receive his bride accompanied by musicians, singers, dancers, friends, family and bridal attendants carrying torches, and the enlarged wedding party would return to the father’s house. This was a joyous, festive occasion, characterized by mirth and gladness (Jer 7:34; 16:9; 25:10; 33:11).

APPLICATION — As the groom’s arrival was preceded by a shout, so will the return of our Master. “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God.... and thus we shall always be with the Lord.” (1 Thes 4:16,18; cp. also John 14:2,3) “When He comes in the clouds to take us away with Him, He will not come as a carpenter, nor as a rabbi, teacher, shepherd, nor even a high priest. He is coming again as a Bridegroom/King. At this very moment, His heart is longing for the day when He will gather His bride unto Himself. This union has been in the heart and plan of God from the beginning of time.” [Lash, Jamie; ‘The Ancient Jewish Wedding and the Return of Messiah for His Bride’]

THE FRIEND OF THE BRIDEGROOM

HEBREW: *shoshben, shoshbin* = friend of the bridegroom

An important person throughout the marriage proceedings was called ‘the friend of the bridegroom’ and he was in charge of everything: the preparations for the wedding ceremony, the ceremony itself, and the reception afterward. With the exception of the bride and groom, those involved in the wedding ceremony took orders from him. He sent out the wedding invitations or delivered them himself. He had the responsibility and privilege of insuring the wedding celebration was a memorable time of great joy and rejoicing for the bride and groom, their families, and all who were invited. During the time of the betrothal he acted as liaison between the bride and groom, delivering messages to them from each other. He was also responsible for the bride and groom to remain chaste and pure virgins prior to the actual wedding ceremony. During the wedding procession it was his duty to protect the bride from any dangers. On the night of the wedding, as the bride entered the wedding chamber to prepare herself for her husband, the friend of the bride would stand at the door to protect her privacy. He could have friends that helped him but he was responsible. After the arrival of the groom the friend of the bridegroom stood outside the wedding chambers and announced when the marriage was consummated to the awaiting crowd.

APPLICATION — Several sources I read made application of the work of the Holy Spirit as comparable to the ‘friend of the bridegroom’ since it is the Holy Spirit that prepares the believer for the future wedding with our Lord.

MARRIAGE: HUPPAH – SECOND CUP OF WINE



Another word to describe the marriage ceremony is ‘huppah’ which refers to both a part of the wedding ceremony and the actual bridal canopy that covers the bridal couple. The original meaning of huppah was ‘room’ or ‘covering.’ The huppah of ancient times was a special room built in the bridegroom’s father’s home. It is mentioned in the Bible in verses such as Psalm 19:5 and Joel 2:15. The huppah as a room in the bridegroom’s father’s house was eventually replaced by a bridal canopy. This canopy was usually a square cloth of silk or velvet, supported by four poles, and held up by four men. It symbolized the new home to which the

bridegroom would take his bride. As a symbolic house, open on four sides, the huppah represented the Jewish home filled with ‘hesed’ (acts of love) including hospitality to strangers, hence its “openness. The groom (chatan) would traditionally wear the kittel (white linen garment) on the day of his wedding. This would signify purity, holiness and new beginnings. Thereafter he would only wear this on special occasions: Rosh Hassanah (New Year’s), Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), and Pesach (Passover). The bride would be attired in her finest clothing, decked with jewels, glowing and beautiful. In ancient Israel the bride would also be veiled so no one could see her face as she entered the bridal chamber. The bridegroom would peek in the aperion and check under the veil in a ceremony called ‘bedeken’ to make sure he had the right bride. (cp. Jacob and Rachel, Gen 29)



Upon arrival at the groom's home, the bride and groom would once again enter the huppah, recite a blessing over the wine (a symbol of joy) and finalize their vows. The second cup of wine together (the first being at the betrothal) is called the 'simcha.' After the ceremony with the promises and wine, the bride and groom would enter the bridal chamber alone and consummate the marriage physically. When the marriage was consummated, the groom would shout in joy and the friend of the groom (what we would refer to as the best man) would pass the good news along to the wedding party (Ps 19:5; John 3:39), which began a week long celebration with food, music, wine and dance.



APPLICATION — The spiritual parallel to the huppah for the bride of Messiah begins as we are lifted up off the earth to be taken to our heavenly wedding chamber. As there was a physical consummation of the Jewish wedding, so there will be a spiritual union between the bride and the Bridegroom, thus consummating the relationship which had been covenanted earlier.

THE MARRIAGE SUPPER



After the marriage ceremony and the consummation, the seven-day marriage supper or feast would begin (Gen 29:21-23, 27,28; Judges 14:1,2, 10-12, 17). This involved a much wider circle of guests which had already been called and assembled: distant relatives, a wider circle of friends, possibly those involved in the wedding ceremony in some way. These guests were called 'children of the bridechamber' or b'nai huppah. This first meal that the bride and bridegroom shared with their guests was called a seudat mitzvah, a festive meal, and had religious

significance. The purpose of the meal was to instill joy in the hearts of the bride and bridegroom. The roots of this meal go back to Jacob's father-in-law Laban who invited all the local people to a party after Jacob and Leah's wedding (Genesis 29:22). The playing of music at the wedding feast was considered a religious duty. Flutes were traditionally played before the bridal pair, and dancing before the bride was a regular part of the celebration. After the week-long feast, the husband would take the bride home to begin their life together.

APPLICATION — In general there is no question there will be a celebration portrayed in Scripture as a feast upon the return of Christ (the marriage supper of the Lamb, Rev 19:9). However there are many differences when it comes to the specifics of this celebratory meal. What one believes about this feast is heavily dependent upon one's eschatological views.

When will this meal take place? Some who hold to a pre-trib rapture believes the meal takes place in heaven during the tribulation period on earth (thus the 'week of celebration' equates to the seven years). Many others, even those who hold to a pre-trib rapture, believes the meal takes place



at the beginning of the millenium. The amillenialists would believe the feast is after the return of Christ and at the beginning of the eternal state.

Where will this meal take place? Some say in heaven, some say on earth.

Who is the bride and who are the guests? Some believe the bride to be the church (which they equate with those saved from Pentecost to

the Rapture), some even adding this must be true ‘since they will be the only ones in heaven at that time’ (???). Then at the second coming the OT saints and tribulation saints will be resurrected and they will be the guests at the marriage feast. There are many who believe some variation of that scheme (I would agree with those who teach the ‘bride’ are all of the elect of all ages).

There are some Baptists who hold to a “Baptist Bride” and thus the bride will be Baptists during this church-age while the guests are everyone else, OT saints, tribulation saints, and all non-Baptists during this present age.

One interpretation which deserves special attention is that some teach there will be a second marriage supper during the Millennium, this time between God the Father and the nation of Israel (Isa 26:6ff; the word for ‘feast’ is the same as used for the wedding feast in Judges 14:10, 12, 17). John A. Martin [Isaiah - The Bible Knowledge Commentary, OT; Wheaton, IL, Victor Books, 1985; 1073f] says the following: “Isaiah was speaking of a future time when (after God’s worldwide judgment) His people in Israel and the nations will feast together in peace and prosperity. This is the 1,000 year reign of Christ.” We will look at some of those thoughts in a future lesson when we discuss the marriage metaphor in the OT.

Regardless of the questions surrounding this feast, the important thing is that there will be a celebratory feast of the Lord with His redeemed. I am not sure how important the particulars are when we discuss this event (are there any who has all the answers when it comes to eschatology?). But as we consider the differing eschatological views, a good general sentiment may be gleaned from John Gill: “If we spent more time with the OT Hebrew prophets than our favorite eschatological writer, then our eschatological views might change.” Chip Thornton [John Gill and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb; G3 Ministries, written Sep 21, 2022; <https://g3min.org/john-gill-the-marriage-supper-of-the-lamb/>] says this concerning John Gill: ***“I appreciate how Gill reads the Bible forward, not backward. Again, he commented on every verse in the OT before he came to the NT. Few, if any, eschatological writers have done that. They jump into the book of Revelation with an uninformed understanding of the prophets. Often, we see later revelation imposed on and even altering earlier revelation without any NT writer’s authentication. I prefer John Gill’s style: Read the Bible forward, not backward. Revelation’s author, John, was Jewish. John’s heritage, too, was steeped in the OT prophets. What’s more, God revealed Scripture to mankind progressively. Before we spend years studying the book of Revelation, we should spend double that time studying the OT Hebrew prophets.”***

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