THE JEWISH WEDDING SYSTEM AND THE BRIDE OF THE MESSIAH



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. THE ARRANGEMENT 3

A. The Jewish Wedding System 3

B. The Application to the Bride of the Messiah 3

II. THE PREPARATION 4

A. The Jewish Wedding System 4

B. The Application to the Bride of the Messiah 4

III. THE FETCHING OF THE BRIDE 5

A. The Jewish Wedding System 5

B. The Application to the Bride of the Messiah 5

IV. THE CEREMONY 6

A. The Jewish Wedding System 6

B. The Application to the Bride of the Messiah 6

V. THE MARRIAGE FEAST 7

A. The Jewish Wedding Feast 7

B. The Application to the Bride of the Messiah 7

VI. THE HOME OF THE BRIDE 8

A. The Jewish Wedding System 8

B. The Application to the Bride of the Messiah 8

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Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it.

Ephesians 5:25b



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INTRODUCTION

This Messianic Bible Study will look into how the Jewish wedding system corresponds to the program that God has for the Messiah as the Groom and the Church as the Bride of the Messiah. This subject will be covered in six parts.

I. THE ARRANGEMENT

A. The Jewish Wedding System

The first step in the Jewish wedding system is the arrangement. In the arrangement, the father of the groom makes the arrangement with the father of the bride and pays the father of the bride the bride price. This stage may occur when the bride and groom are children; often they did not even meet each other until their wedding day. In fact, that was true in the case of my own grandparents, who first met each other on their wedding day.

B. The Application to the Bride of the Messiah

The application to the Bride of the Messiah is that God the Father, the Father of the Groom, made the arrangement and then paid the bride price. The bride price was the blood of His Son. This is seen in two passages of Scripture. The first passage is Ephesians 5:25b: *Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it.*

The second passage is John 3:16a: *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.*
By giving up the Son and by shedding the blood of the Son, the bride price was paid and thus the arrangement was sealed with blood.

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II. THE PREPARATION

A. The Jewish Wedding System

The second step in the Jewish wedding system is known as the preparation. That is the period of the betrothal. It lasts for at least a year but could also last for many years, especially if the arrangement was made when the bride and groom were only children. This is the period of time when the bride is being trained and prepared to take on the role of a wife. This is the period of time when she is observed for her purity. That is why the betrothal always lasted for a minimum of one year. This will allow at least a full nine months to pass to make sure that, at the time of the betrothal, the bride was a virgin. If she gives birth before the year is up, it is known then that she was in a state of immorality.

Again, the period of preparation, the period of betrothal, may be of a long or of a short duration. It might be as short as a year, but it might be many, many years because often the arrangement that led to the betrothal would occur when the bride and groom were children.

B. The Application to the Bride of the Messiah

The application of the stage of the preparation to the Bride of the Messiah, the Church, is that the Bride is even now in the process of being perfected for the Groom. Two passages deal with this stage.

The first is II 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.*
Paul states that the Church has been *espoused* or betrothed *to one husband*. The goal is that she might be presented as *a pure virgin* to the Messiah. She is now in the period of preparation when the bride is being prepared to become a fitting wife for her husband. When that day comes, she will be presented *as a pure virgin* to the Messiah.

The second passage is 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 church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*
According to verse 26, the Church is now undergoing a process of sanctification. The word "sanctification" means, "to be set apart." So *the church* is now being set apart for the Messiah, in accordance with II Corinthians 11:2, to be presented eventually *as a pure virgin* to the Messiah. Furthermore, verse 26 points out that she is being *cleansed* by means of sanctification. The means of sanctification is *by the washing of water with the word*. This is not by *water* baptism, but by the water of the Word of God. As the Church becomes more and more conformed to what the Word of God teaches, she becomes more and more that *virgin* to be presented to Him.

NOTES

Then verse 27 gives the purpose for the process of sanctification in verse 26. The purpose for this process of sanctification is to present the Church *a glorious church*. This is just another way of saying what he said in II Corinthians 11:2 that the intent is to present the Church as *a pure virgin to Christ*. Here it is put in terms of being presented as a *glorious church.*

He then gives the four characteristics of a glorified church. First, it will have no *spot*, meaning there will be "no outward defilement." Secondly, there will be no *wrinkle*, meaning there will be "no evidence of age." Thirdly, it will *be holy*, meaning that it will eventually "reach full sanctification." Fourthly, there will be no *blemish*, meaning there will be "no inward defilement." The time that this is going to take place ultimately and finally is at the Judgment Seat of the Messiah, where the members of the Church will have the wood, hay, and stubble burned away and the gold, silver, and precious stone purified by the fire of that judgment.

Then Ephesians 5:29 states: *for no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourishs and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church.*
In this verse, Paul reveals two things. First, the way that the Church is being made into a *glorious church*; the Church is being nourished; the Church is being built up and given strength. Secondly, he reveals that the Church is being cherished; it is receiving care with warmth and tenderness.

III. THE FETCHING OF THE BRIDE

A. The Jewish Wedding System

In the Jewish wedding system, the groom would go to the home of the bride on the wedding day to fetch her to his home. This would lead to a bridal procession like the one found in Matthew 25:1-13, for example. The groom had left and he is now coming back with the bride. The virgins in this parable do not represent the Church. The virgins go out to meet the groom as he is returning to his home with the bride.

B. The Application to the Bride of the Messiah

The application to the Bride of the Messiah is the Rapture of the Church. The fetching of the Bride of the Messiah will be accomplished by the Rapture of the Church. The main Scripture for the Rapture is I Thessalonians 4:13-18. In verse 13, the question is asked, "What about dead saints? Will they miss out on the benefits of the Rapture? Will only living ones benefit?" In verses 14-15, Paul states that they will not miss out on the benefits of the Rapture; rather, they will begin to receive the benefits even before living believers do.

Then in verses 16-17, he spells out the seven steps by which the Rapture will occur. First, the Messiah will come from Heaven into the earth's atmosphere and, in that sense; He will enter into the realm of

the home of the Bride. Secondly, He will then give a *shout*. The Greek word used is the word that means, "a military command." Thus, He will issue the command as a military general does for the process to begin. The third step will be *the voice of the archangel*. Michael the archangel is pictured here as the sub commander, who will repeat the order of the chief commander. Then in the fourth step, *the trump of God* will sound. After the sub commander had issued his orders, the trumpeter would issue his calls so the soldiers could know what to do: whether to attack, to retreat, to go forward or right or reverse or whatever. So the trump of God will sound. Then fifth, *the dead* in the Messiah will *rise first*. This is why the dead saints will not miss out on the benefits of the Rapture; they will receive them first by being raised first. Sixth, those who are alive will *be caught up* [or raptured] *to meet the Lord in the air.* Seventh, the believers will *ever be with the Lord*. From then on, believers will be with Him because He is the believer's husband. So in verse 18, that is a word of *comfort* for those of us who have believing friends and relatives who have now passed away; they will some day be resurrected. If we are alive then, we will join them in that Rapture.

It is after the fetching of the Bride into Heaven that the final point of cleansing and sanctification will come. I Corinthians 3:10-15 describes the Judgment Seat of the Messiah, when "the wood, hay, and stubble will be burned away and the gold, silver, and precious stone will be purified."

According to I Corinthians 15:50-58, the Church will indeed be glorified because, at that point, "mortality will put on immortality and corruption will put on incorruption."

IV. THE CEREMONY

A. The Jewish Wedding System

The fourth step, the ceremony, was conducted in the home of the groom. Only a few, usually the immediate family and two witnesses, were invited to come in and observe the wedding ceremony.

B. The Application to the Bride of the Messiah

The application of this fourth step to the relationship of the Church as the Bride of the Messiah is that there will be a ceremony in Heaven and the few who will be invited to this ceremony are the few who will already be in Heaven, not all the others. Only those who have already been raptured will be able to participate in the wedding ceremony.

The main Scripture for the wedding ceremony is Revelation 19:6-8: *And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself*

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ready. And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

This Scripture contains the fourth step in the Jewish wedding system, the ceremony. The ceremony is in Heaven and it is followed by the Second Coming of the Messiah. John discusses the Second Coming in verses 11-16. The marriage ceremony in Heaven will take place just preceding the Second Coming to the earth. As in the Jewish system, only a few will be invited, those already in Heaven.

In these verses, there are three main things. First, *the marriage of the Lamb is come*. Here he is dealing with the marriage ceremony of the Lamb, which will occur in Heaven just before the Second Coming. Secondly, the *wife has made herself ready*. She is now glorified. There is "no spot, no wrinkle, no blemish, nor any such thing." Thirdly, she is arrayed *in fine linen, bright and pure*. He interprets *the fine linen* to represent *the righteous acts of the saints*. This shows that by this time the Judgment Seat of Messiah is over, the sanctification process is complete, and she is indeed *a pure virgin* now being presented to the Messiah at the wedding ceremony.

V. THE MARRIAGE FEAST

A. The Jewish Wedding Feast

The marriage feast is the fifth step in the Jewish wedding system, and there are many more people invited to the marriage feast. Whereas a few are invited to the wedding ceremony, many others are invited to the marriage feast to celebrate the marriage of the son. Often the marriage feast lasted for a total of seven days.

B. The Application to the Bride of the Messiah

The application to the Church as the Bride of Messiah is that the marriage feast will take place on earth. As a matter of fact, the Kingdom will begin with the marriage feast. Many more will be invited to the marriage feast than were at the marriage ceremony.

For example, the Old Testament saints are going to be at the wedding feast because the Old Testament saints are resurrected after the Tribulation (Is. 26:19; Dan. 12:2). In John 3:28-30, John the Baptist considered himself as being neither the groom nor part of the Bride, but classified himself in a third category, known as *the friend of the bridegroom.* The friends of the bridegroom are the Old Testament saints, and they will be the "many more" invited to the wedding feast. A second group that will not be at the marriage ceremony but that will be at the marriage feast will be the Tribulation saints. The Tribulation saints will be resurrected after the Second Coming (Rev. 20:4-6). They will also be guests at the wedding feast.

A third group will be Israel. Those who survive the Tribulation will enter into the Messianic Kingdom, and also will be invited guests of

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the wedding feast with which the Kingdom begins.
The fact that the Kingdom begins with the wedding feast is taught by Isaiah 25:6. In the context of the Kingdom he 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.* So the Kingdom does begin with a feast, specifically with a wedding feast. This is where the others are going to be invited to participate.

Just before the Second Coming, the invitation to the wedding feast is sent out. Revelation 19:6-8, it was noted, talks about the wedding ceremony. Then in verse 9, he talks about the wedding feast: *And he said 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, he simply sends out the invitation. The invitation goes out just before the Second Coming. Verses 11-16 describe the Second Coming and, after a seventy five day interval, the Kingdom will be established. The Kingdom will begin with the marriage feast. Just as the wedding feast could last for seven days, even so the *marriage supper* might last for seven days or perhaps even for seven years. During that seventy five day interval, there will be a resurrection of the Old Testament saints and a resurrection of the Tribulation saints who are the "many more" that will partake in the wedding feast.

VI. THE HOME OF THE BRIDE

A. The Jewish Wedding System

The sixth step concerns the home of the bride. In the Jewish context, the groom is responsible to provide a suitable home for the bride, and he does this during the preparation stage, the second stage.

B. The Application to the Bride of the Messiah

When Yeshua (Jesus) went back to Heaven at the Ascension, one purpose was to prepare a place for the Bride (Jn. 14:1-3). The place He is preparing for the Bride is known elsewhere as "the New Jerusalem." That is the application: Yeshua is even now preparing a suitable home for His Bride, the Church, and the believers will move into that home in the Eternal State, the Eternal Order.

The main Scripture is Revelation 21:9-22:5, where John is able to see the home of the Bride. Verses 9-10 state: *And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spoke with me, saying, Come hither, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.*
According to verse 9, the Bride is now *the wife of the Lamb* because, by this time, the wedding ceremony and the wedding feast have taken place, and they have been married 1,000 years. After the 1,000 year Kingdom, John next sees the eternal home of the Bride, the New Jerusalem in verse 10.

NOTES

Then, beginning in verses 21:11-22:5, he spells out the details of the New Jerusalem, which will be the home of the Bride.

That is the relationship between the Jewish wedding system and the Church as the Bride of the Messiah. Some things have been fulfilled; some things are in the process of being fulfilled; and others are still in the future. There is a great future for those who have believed in the Messiahship of Jesus.✡

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IF YOU ENJOYED THIS BIBLE STUDY, DR. FRUCHTENBAUM RECOMMENDS:

MBS002, 003, 005, 006, 007, 015, 018, 026, 027, 040, 062, 080, 087, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 122, 134, 155, 157, 158, 176, 177, 178 and 179