

The Scriptural Wedding Ceremony

The Jewish bridegroom took the initiative in marriage by leaving his father's house, or sending someone on his behalf, as in the story of Isaac's servant in Genesis 24, to travel to the home of the prospective bride.

John 1:4: The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

At the home of the prospective bride, the Jewish bridegroom would negotiate with her father to determine the price that he must pay to purchase his bride.

I Corinthians 6:19-20: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price."

Acts 20:28: "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood."

The Bride must be the one to accept the offer.

I Thessalonians 2:13: "And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe."

Acts 2:41: "Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day."

As a symbol of the covenant relationship, the groom and bride would drink from a cup of wine over which a betrothal (engagement) blessing had been pronounced.

Corinthians 11:25: "In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Once the groom paid the purchase price and the marriage covenant was established, the young man and woman were regarded as husband and wife although they did not live together until after the groom had returned from his father's home where he had gone to prepare a place for his bride.

John 14:2-3: In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Upon returning to his father's home, the bridegroom would leave a deposit with His Bride's family, guaranteeing the covenant relationship that would be consummated at his return.

Corinthians 5:5: "Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come."

Ephesians 1:13-14: "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory."

From that moment on, the bride was declared to be consecrated or set apart; sanctified exclusively for her bridegroom. During this period the bride would participate in the "mikvah", which was a ritual water immersion.

I Corinthians 6:11: ".....you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

Ephesians 5:25-27: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy, set apart and blameless."

After the groom left the bride's home and returned to his father's house, he would remain separate from his bride for an undetermined period of time, known initially only by the father.

Mathew 24:30 and 36: "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

Although the Jewish bride was expecting her groom to come for her, she did not know the exact time of his coming. She occupied herself, during this time of waiting and watching, by preparing her garments for the wedding, and because the groom often came at night, she would keep her lamps full of oil and burning.

Revelation 19:7: "Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready."

Luke 12:34-35: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning."

At the end of the period of separation, when the Bridegroom's father was satisfied with the work done on the home, he would release his son to gather up his bride...he did this with the sounding of trumpets. The groomsmen would run ahead of the groom, sound the Shofar, and shout that he was coming in order to forewarn the bride to be prepared for the coming of the groom.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17: According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air..."

John 3:29: The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.

After the Jewish groom received his bride together with her female attendants, the enlarged wedding party would return from the bride's home to the groom's father's house. The Bride would be carried in a carriage lifted up by poles. Upon arrival there, the wedding party would find that the wedding guests had assembled already. Shortly after arrival, the bride (remaining veiled) and groom would be escorted by the other members of the wedding party to the bridal chamber. After the marriage was consummated, the groom would announce the consummation to the other members of the wedding party waiting outside the chamber. Upon hearing this good news, the wedding guests would begin the feast and make merry for the next seven days while the Bride remained hidden.

Isaiah 26:20-21: "Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut the doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until his wrath has passed by. See, the LORD is coming out of his dwelling to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The earth will disclose the blood shed upon her; she will conceal her slain no longer."

At the conclusion of the seven days, the groom would bring his bride out of the bridal chamber, now with her veil removed, so that all could behold His Bride.

Colossians 3:4: "When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."