

## **Jewish Marriage and the Second Coming**

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Marriage to the Jews of Jesus' day was a practical, legal matter. It was established by contract and carried through by exacting procedure. The young man would arrive at the chosen girl's house with a covenant (a true legal agreement) giving the terms by which he would propose marriage. The most important aspect was his willingness to pay for this bride.

A clear parallel occurs between the marriage arrangements and the LORD Jesus Christ's coming to Earth; for He came bearing a New Testament of His love for all whom He had created. His Covenant, which binds His Bride, the Church, to Him for eternity, requires Her to forsake sin and to embrace Him only as her object of love and trust.

If the terms were suitable to the young Jewish couple, the prospective bride and groom would drink a cup of wine together as a seal of their mutual commitment. This cup was significant in that it demonstrated the bridegroom's willingness to sacrifice in order to have this bride. Simultaneously, it demonstrated to him the bride's willingness to marry. Then, the groom paid the price required to marry the girl of his choice.

The mutual Commitment between Christ and His Church was sealed with the shedding of His blood upon the Cross of Calvary; and the ones believing receive His sacrifice as a once-for-all payment-in-full for their sins.

Back at his father's house, the young Jewish man would build a dwelling place where he and his bride were to enjoy life together. This construction usually took the better part of a year, and the father of the groom would decide when it was finished. If anyone asked the bridegroom when the wedding was to take place, he would answer, "Only my father knows."

The LORD Jesus arose from the dead and returned to His Father, stating, "I go to prepare a place for you..." (John 14:2b). He is now there and soon to return for His Bride, the Church –the time of which no one knows. For when asked, "What will be the sign of Your coming?" He said, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of Heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone" (Mat 24:36).

The young Jewish bride was obliged to do a lot of waiting. The Custom demanded that she have an oil lamp ready and be ready to depart at a moment's notice should the bridegroom suddenly return for her. This long period of waiting was referred to as having been "bought with a price."

The Scriptures say, "Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep..." (Mat 25:5).

Finally, when the bridegroom's father decided the bridal chamber was ready, the groom and his friends would start off to claim his bride.

But, at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those virgins rose, and trimmed their lamps" (Mat 25:6-7).

All Jewish brides were said to be “stolen.” It was thrilling to her to be “abducted” and carried off into the night, not by a stranger, but by one who loved her so much he had paid a supreme price to obtain her.

The Apostle Paul tells us, “...the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night” (I Thes. 5:2). And Jesus said, “Then there shall be two men in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. Therefore, be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming” (Mat 24:40-42).

Jewish decorum, however, declared that the bride receive at least a brief warning of her beloved’s return; so a friend of the groom would give a shout as they neared the house. The bride only had time to light her lamp, grab her honeymoon attire and race to meet him!

“For the Lord Himself will descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord” (I Thes. 4:16-17).

When the groom and his bride reached the house of the groom’s father, the couple would go into the bridal chamber which the groom had prepared, and shut the door. The wedding guests would be assembled in the father’s house to celebrate the marriage. The wedding actually took seven days; but the celebrating did not commence until the marriage had been consummated and was announced by the best man. Then the celebration began and continued for seven days!

In like fashion, the Church will then be formally assembled at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Those who have not committed themselves to His Covenant by the preparedness through repentance and faith, will not be present. The Church, however, laden with previously unconfessed sin will there and then confess and be forgiven; it is there that true believers, comprising the Church, will be brought into doctrinal adjustment with the LORD; and it is there that true believers will be rewarded for their faithfulness.

At the end of the week, the Jewish bride and groom appeared and joined the guests for the wedding supper. After the marriage supper, the bride and groom would leave the house of the groom’s father and go to their own home.

When our LORD Jesus Christ returns to this Earth for His Bride, all true believers, having committed themselves to Him, will be suddenly snatched away into the heavens to meet their LORD in the air; and thus shall they ever be with the LORD. As vital as it is that a man and a woman prepare themselves for a life together by committing themselves to each other, nothing compares with the preparation of us all to meet our Coming LORD Jesus Christ.