

Most Popular Month to Get Engaged: December (16%)

Most Popular Month to Get Married: June and September (15% each)

After the reception hall, the most expensive item in the wedding is the engagement ring. Adrian Rogers who pastored and counseled couples for decades noted that couples exert **far greater energy** planning for the **wedding day** than they do for the **marriage itself**. He said it ought not to be that way.

Review

You may recall, the last time we met, we looked at the “blessed hope” called the Rapture of the church – that future event that can happen **at any moment** where both the dead in Christ and we in Christ who are alive and remain will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. We saw that we will **not** face the wrath of God that is to come and looked at how the Lord rescued Enoch and Lot (as a picture of the church) as well as how God sheltered Noah through the storm (likely a picture of Israel).

Today we want to continue on that theme and explore a very interesting aspect of **our** relationship with the Lord. The church, that is the body of believers, is referred to as *the Bride of Christ*.

Bride of Christ

Where did this idea the *Bride of Christ* come from anyway? Is it in the Bible or is it just a metaphor invented by theologians? Clearly it **is** in the Bible. We will briefly touch on some of three passages that spell this out.

The first comes from that section of scripture where the Apostle Paul gives instructions to husbands and wives on how to have a happy marriage. Does anyone know where that is found? Today our focus will be **not** on earthy marriages. Instead we want to see how scripture teaches that our covenant union with the Lord is like the husband and wife relationship.

Ephesians 5

[20] *Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;*

[21] *Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*

[23] *For the husband is the head of the wife, **even as Christ is the head of the church:***

Here we have the metaphor laid out for us:

Christ and the church ↔ husband and wife

and he is the saviour of the body.

[24] *Therefore as **the church is subject unto Christ**, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.*

[25] *Husbands, love your wives, **even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;***

[26] *That he might*

sanctify and

cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

[27] *That he might*

present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any **such** thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

No more wrinkles, no more blemishes!

[29] *For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but*
nourisheth and
cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

[31] *For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.*

[32] *This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

Clearly we see the Bride of Christ being taught here.

Next we have a single verse. It too draws the analogy of Christ being the husband of the church. The Apostle Paul is talking to the church at Corinth:

II Corinthians 11

[2] *For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*

And finally, right before the King of Kings and Lord of Lords comes to defeat the nations **and** the forces of Satan we read :

Revelation 19

[7] *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for **the marriage of the Lamb** [of course this refers to Jesus Christ “the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29)] is come, and **his wife** hath made herself ready.*

[8] *And to her was granted that she should be **arrayed in fine linen**, clean and white: for **the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.***

You may have noticed that the bride is dressed in pure white. Perhaps that helps explain why most bridal gowns are white.

[9] *And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto **the marriage supper of the Lamb**....*

Wedding Model

Now that we established this image of Christ and His church as a Bridegroom and His Bride, let's move on and extend the metaphor to gain further insight into this relationship by taking a look at the

customary Jewish wedding traditions during the time **that** Jesus walked on this earth. In the process, we will see how the Rapture of the church folds into this picture in a beautiful way.

Historians tell us that the Jewish wedding was a year-long process that involved two parts:

1. Betrothal
2. Consummation

We will look first at

Part 1: Betrothal

When a young man fell in love with a girl in that culture, he went to **her** father's house to negotiate a price with the father for his daughter. Once they came to a mutually agreed upon *purchase price* for his bride, the girl was consulted. If she agreed to marry this man under the terms **just** negotiated, they proceeded to *covenant* with each other **and** to seal the agreement.

This was done in a formal service like a wedding ceremony that was concluded with the bride and groom drinking wine from the same cup and a benediction being pronounced. The bride was then **espoused to** and **sanctified** (or *set apart*) **for** the bridegroom. This was the status of Mary and Joseph when they learned that Mary would be the mother of Jesus.

At this point, the bridegroom *returned to his father's house to prepare a place* for them to live while the bride prepared herself to begin a new life with her bridegroom. This period of preparation was typically about a year, but the exact day and hour (or even month for that matter) of **his** return was unknown to the bride.

This brings us to:

Part 2: Consummation

After about a year, the bridegroom went back to claim his bride. **She** had to wait patiently for his arrival. His return date was unknown. He, along with some of his male friends, would come to call his wife home usually at night. As he neared her house he would **shout**. His waiting, veiled bride with her bridal party would then meet him and go with him to his father's house. There the couple would go **alone** to the bridal chamber to unite physically with each other.

The husband announced the consummation of the marriage to the waiting bridal party. The bridal party then passed the news on to the guests gathered at the house to celebrate the big event. The bride would remain hidden there for seven days while guests celebrated outside with a great wedding feast. After seven days, the bride would emerge with her groom unveiled so all the guests could finally see her.

With this background, let's now pull together these many symbols from the Jewish Wedding Model and see how they line up with the church's relationship to the Lord.

Parallels

- *Lord Jesus came from the Father's house down to our house (word made flesh: John 1:14)*

- *Paid the price of His blood for His bride (gave His life a ransom for many: Mark 10:45)*
- *Bride accepts the Lord of her own free will (whosoever believeth: John 3:16; Revelation 3:20)*
- *Bride is espoused to be married and a marriage contract is made (II Corinthians 11:2)*
- *Bride is set apart (Ephesians 5:26)*
- *Bride signifies her covenant with the Lord by drinking from the same cup (our communion service commemorates that event: I Corinthians 11:25)*
- *Jesus returns to his father's house (I go to the Father: John 16:10; Mark 16:19)*
- *Jesus prepares a place for his bride to live (I go to prepare a place for you: John 14:2)*
- *Jesus returns suddenly with a shout (descend from heaven with a shout: I Thessalonians 4:16)*
- *Jesus takes His bride home (so shall we ever be with the Lord: I Thessalonians 4:17)*
- *A week-of-years tribulation period ensues (confirm a covenant for one week: Daniel 9:27)*
- *Jesus returns to earth with His saints (the armies in heaven followed Him Revelation 19:14)*

Application

There's something very happy about weddings. There's great anticipation. Beauty and love mark the occasion. The young couple has high hopes. They look forward to a lifetime of happiness in the embrace and tender loving arms of their true love.

While earthly marriages often fall short of the lofty dreams of newlyweds and even the wedding day itself is not without its glitches, the wedding that the Bride of Christ will celebrate will rise above all expectations. Both the bride and bridegroom will be perfect. Their beauty will be beyond words and will never fade. And their love for each other and devotion to each other will never falter.

Our Lord has gone to prepare a place for us and when He's ready He will call us home to live with Him forever. That's our hope. That's God's promise. Our loving bridegroom the Lord Jesus Christ will take us, His bride, to **glory** to be with Him.

We started out today with the most recent Presidential Proclamation. Perhaps it would be fitting to close with another:

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

*Whereas it is the **duty** of all nations to **acknowledge the providence of Almighty God**, to **obey His will**, to **be grateful for His benefits**, and **humbly to implore His protection and favor**; and*

*Whereas **both Houses of Congress** have, by their joint committee, requested me "to **recommend to the people of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer**, to **be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favors of Almighty God**, especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness:"*

Now, therefore, I do recommend and assign Thursday, the 26th day of November next, to be

devoted by the people of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being who is the beneficent author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be; that we may then all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks

Now skipping through with a few key phrases:

... for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed, ...

... most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations, and beseech Him to pardon our national and other transgressions; ...

Given under my hand, at the city of New York, the 3d day of October, In the Year of Our Lord 1789.

[President]

GO. WASHINGTON.

That was the **first** Presidential Proclamation – what a difference! As we see where we started, it's shocking how far we have descended in less than 225 years.

With the very foundations of our country crumbling before our eyes, and the intentional and relentless onslaught on the holy union of marriage instituted and defined by God, now more than ever, we need to look to the word of God and to good and godly men of our heritage for solace, perspective, and respite. We are the Bride of Christ. Our glorious future is promised and sealed by the Lord Himself. The pure wedding model of the Bible stands above the mire and muck **that** has become our culture.

Again quoting from Adrian Rogers **as** he spoke of the male and the female he said:

*God made them **different** that He might make them **one**. And **any society that blurs the distinction between male and female is headed for disintegration and for disaster.***

God has made us **one** with Him through our Lord Jesus Christ. We are **espoused** to Him. He has gone to His Father's house to prepare a place for us. He will come again. We patiently and with **great** anticipation await that **shout** from our Bridegroom when we will meet Him in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord. What a **glorious future** is ours!

Behold, the Bridegroom cometh. (Matthew 25:6)

Are you ready?

Benediction

*And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly;
and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body
be preserved blameless*

*unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Faithful is he that calleth you,
who also will do it. (I Thessalonians 5:23-24)*

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