

Here Comes the Bride!

Text: Revelation 19:6-9

Everyone loves a wedding. A wedding has a wonderful effect on people and society. Our hearts have been broken this week with the tragic deaths from Sante Fe, Texas. And yet through all of the bad news, Saturday morning came with a joyous celebration as a prince took his bride. Fairy tales became real. Little girls dreamed and older girls reminisced.

Today, I would like to take advantage of the opportunity and talk about the most famous wedding of all time. It is the wedding of Christ and His Bride, the Church. To understand the significance, we need to use the template for the Jewish wedding.

I. The Betrothal

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.”

In ancient Jewish weddings the father gave his servant things of value and sent him to another village to find a bride for his son, a young lady whom that son had, oftentimes, never met. This is seen in Genesis 24:1-4. The servant would make the best offer the father could afford. The price would typically be silver or gold (Genesis 24:53). Like one of Abraham’s servants who came looking for Rebekah, one of God’s servants came looking for us (Luke 14:23). The parallel is truly biblically aligned, because we did not go looking for God; He came looking for us (John 6:44). The Bride is given a choice to say “yes” or “no” to the proposal (Genesis 24:5, 8). If the fathers approved of the match, the meeting would be arranged and the betrothal would cement a covenantal setting. Betrothal is called also Erusin or Kiddushin. This is from the Hebrew word “kadosh” which mean holy or sanctified.

II. The Payment made by the Groom

The first time the bride and groom meet, the groom pays the Mohar also called “bride price” (Luke 15:8). Then in front of his entire village, he proclaims with a loud voice, “the price has been paid in full!” I Corinthians 6:20 reminds us, “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” Once the payment had been made, a Ketubah, which was a document making valid the covenant promise, was signed to record the agreed terms of betrothal. Once the Ketubah was signed, the bridegroom declared in a loud voice, “It is finished!”

III. The Groom Prepares a Place For His Bride

“Once the Mohar was paid and the Ketubah was signed, there was a grooms speech of promise. He would say, ‘I have to go; I’m going to prepare the Chuppah (bridal’s chamber), a place for you at my father’s house.’ This tradition is kept even in our day. The groom went back to his Father’s house to build an addition to the existing dwelling where he would receive his wife in about one or two years. In modern Israel you can see many additions that have been made for this purpose. The bride would then say, ‘Do not go,’ and the groom would respond, ‘It is better for you that I’ll go but I will come back.’ ‘When?’ she asked. And the groom would respond, ‘I do not know, nor the servant, only my father knows the day,’” (The Ultimate Wedding). See John 14:1-6; Matthew 24:36, 50.

IV. The Symbol of The Mikvah

Mikvah was a ritual immersion in “living waters” in a pool called Mayim Chaim. The ancient Temple and modern synagogues have mikvahs. The water comes from a source like a river or stream where the candidate is immersed. When a bride or a gentile convert went through the Mikvah, it represented that the bride became a new creation (II Corinthians 5:17). John the Baptist served as the best man going before Christ and preparing the way for both Jew and Gentile to be in one body through Christ (Matthew 3:1-8; John 3:29).

V. At The Formal Wedding, The Bride is Lifted Up

This final Wedding Ceremony begins with the Nisuin which means “to lift up” or “carry.” The bride is lifted in a carriage by poles. This is where the lifting up of the bride and groom on chairs came from. In the church we have another name for this lifting up—we call it the rapture! (I Thessalonians 4:13-14). Then the lifted bride is placed beneath the small canopy, also called the Cuppah, symbolical of the marriage chamber.

VI. The Wedding Garment

The Kittel was a garment worn by the bridegroom. The Kittel is from the Hebrew word Katal, which means to slay. It was a garment worn by the priests during certain sacrifices such as Passover or Yom Kippur Sacrifice. In Matthew 22:11, 12 we learn that no one comes to the wedding unless through the blood of the Passover and one and only Atonement. Revelation 19:13, 14 shows us that if we haven’t come to our Lord through the sacrifice He has provided through His only begotten Son, then the Son shall return in wrath with His war kitten rather than the wedding kittel.

VII. The Light

The custom for the groom was to come at night, most often at midnight. And the wedding guests were to provide the light. Light is a symbol of God's presence, the Shekinah Glory (Matthew 5:14-16). This brings a whole new "light" to Matthew 25:1-13.

VIII. The Significance of the Cup

The shared cup of the fruit of the vine is taken first by the groom, then by the bride signifying that she accepts the covenant of marriage. It was no accident that our Lord Jesus performed His first miracle at a wedding where He transformed water into the fruit of the vine, thus extending the celebration. The cup is broken after the groom and bride partake, showing the fragility of life and also (I believe) representing that this marriage is to last until this fragile life of ours is shattered by death. Mathew 26:27-29 is ever a reminder to the church of the continual relationship that will last beyond even life itself, into the kingdom that will come.

IX. The Celebration

The consummation takes place when the groom takes his bride to the Chuppah he has prepared for her. When he signals that consummation has taken place, rejoicing begins by the wedding party for seven days. After seven days the groom returns to the village to celebrate. The village-wide celebration is contingent on the wealth of the bridegroom! "...And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4c).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.