

The Bride of Christ: A New Testament Overview

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The Bridegroom message is a call to intimacy with God by encountering His heart (emotions, affections, and commitments) and walking in partnership with Him in a spirit of abandonment—Jesus gave everything and is raising up a Bride who gives her all for love.
- B. The message of the Bridegroom God and His Bride is established in the New Testament (Mt. 9:15; 22:1-14; 25:1-13; Jn. 3:29; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-32; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:9; 22:17).
- C. In the Gospels, the bridal relationship of God’s people with Jesus is mentioned directly four times. Jesus referred to the bridal relationship of the redeemed on three occasions (Mt. 9:15; 22:2; 25:1), and John the Baptist spoke of it once (Jn. 3:29). Each time it was from the perspective of the Bridegroom rather than the Bride. Seeing Jesus as our Bridegroom God gives us insight into who we are to Him as “His cherished Bride.” The truth of *our* identity is seen in seeing *His* identity.
¹⁸We...beholding...the glory of the Lord, are being transformed... (2 Cor. 3:18)
- D. Jesus’ ministry began at a wedding (Jn. 2:1-11). Six stone waterpots each held 20 or 30 gallons (2:6), thus there was a total of about 150 gallons. The master of the feast noted that the bridegroom had kept the good wine (best wine, NIV) until the end of the banquet (Jn. 2:10). Two prophetic statements are made: the best wine was kept until last, and Jesus started his ministry at a wedding.
⁹...the water that was made wine...¹⁰And he said to him [bridegroom], “Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good [the best, NIV] wine until now!” (Jn. 2:9-10)

II. JOHN THE BAPTIST’S REVELATION OF THE BRIDEGROOM GOD

- A. John the Baptist was the first person in the New Testament to reveal Jesus as the Bridegroom God (Jn. 3:29). This occurred in Aenon (just south of Samaria) right after Passover AD 27.
²³Now John was baptizing in Aenon...²⁵There arose a dispute between some of John’s disciples and the Jews about purification. ²⁶And they came to John and said, “...He [Jesus] is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!”²⁷John...said, “...²⁹He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom... rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice.” (Jn. 3:23-29)
- B. ***He is the bridegroom:*** He is a bridegroom in the essence of His personality. He feels, thinks, and acts as a bridegroom because He is a bridegroom forever.
- C. ***He who has the bride:*** From God’s point of view, Jesus already possessed His Bride.
- D. ***Friend of the Bridegroom:*** John functioned as a “friend of the Bridegroom.” This speaks of those who share a specific message—the Bridegroom message—and who, in their ministry style, intentionally draw the attention of people to Jesus, not themselves. The role of the friend of the Bridegroom is comparable to the best man at a wedding, whose concern is that the Bride not be distracted by other things but be focused on receiving the embrace of her Bridegroom.

III. JESUS REVEALED HIS HEART AS THE BRIDEGROOM GOD

- A. On three occasions, Jesus revealed Himself as the Bridegroom. Each occasion was a very important moment in Jesus' life as He spoke under the Father's strategic direction.
1. He highlighted *His identity and the identity of His messengers*. He declared that He was the Bridegroom and the apostles were "friends of the Bridegroom" (Mt. 9:15).
 2. He revealed the *nature of the kingdom* as a wedding that His Father planned (Mt. 22:1-14).
 3. He taught on the necessity of His messengers *sustaining a close relationship* with Him by prioritizing "getting oil" in staying connected to the heart of the Bridegroom (Mt. 25:3-4).
- B. Jesus first revealed Himself as the Bridegroom God (Mt. 9:15) just before Passover (AD 28) in Capernaum. This was about one year after John spoke of Him as "He who has the Bride" (Jn. 3:29).
- ¹⁴*The disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?"* ¹⁵*Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast."* (Mt. 9:14-15)
1. *As long as the Bridegroom is with them*: This is a statement of His identity as the fulfillment of prophecies about the Bridegroom Messiah, about His heart and personality, and about the nature of the relationship of His people to Him. Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah prophesied about the Messiah as a Bridegroom God (Hos. 2:16; cf. Isa. 54:5; 62:5; Jer. 2:2; 3:14; 31:32).
 2. *Will be taken away*: Jesus' first mention of His death was made in the context of revealing His desire as a Bridegroom. He died as a Lamb to purchase His Bride (Rev. 19:7, 9; 21:9).
- C. Two years later, in the final week of His life (Passover AD 30), Jesus taught two parables that give insight into the Bridegroom. He spoke one *publicly* (Mt. 22:1-14) and one *privately* (Mt. 25:1-13).
- D. The final public message that Jesus gave Israel described His kingdom as a marriage (Mt. 22:1-14). In this parable, He revealed the *nature of the kingdom* as a wedding that His Father planned.
- ²*"The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, ³and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding."* (Mt. 22:2-3)
- E. Immediately after this parable, Jesus called Israel to love Him (Mt. 22:37). Moses *prophesied* that Israel would love God with all their heart in the generation of the Lord's return (Deut. 30:1-6).
- ³⁷*"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart."* (Mt. 22:37)
- F. Jesus highlighted the need for His messengers to "get oil"—to stay connected to His heart as the Bridegroom God (Mt. 25:1-13). They will not be able to function as friends of the Bridegroom who call others to the Bridegroom without *sustaining a close relationship* with the Bridegroom.
- ¹*"Then the kingdom...shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the Bridegroom...³Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, ⁴but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps."* (Mt. 25:1-4)

- G. Jesus' final teaching to the disciples in the upper room emphasized themes related to the intensity of His love for them (Jn. 13-17). He gave His ultimate statement of love for us in John 15:9-11.

⁹***“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” (Jn. 15:9)***

- H. In Jesus' final prayer for the Church, He prayed for aspects of the bridal relationship—that they be with Him, that He reveal the Father to them, and that they love Him like the Father does.

²⁴***“Father, I desire that they...may be with Me where I am...”***²⁶***I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them.” (Jn. 17:24-26)***

- I. Jesus' last message to the Church is found in His message given to the seven churches (Rev. 2-3). He started with a call to wholehearted love by urging them to return to their first love (Rev. 2:4) and then ended with a promise that they would both dine and rule “with Him” (Rev. 3:20-21).

⁴***“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.” (Rev. 2:4)***

²⁰***“If anyone...opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”***

²¹***“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne.” (Rev. 3:20-21)***

IV. PAUL'S REVELATION OF THE BRIDE

- A. Paul proclaimed that part of the mystery of God is a Bride who is “joined to Jesus.” He interpreted Moses' words in Genesis 2:24 as God speaking about Jesus and the Church (Eph. 5:31-32). Seeing Jesus as the Bridegroom God enables us to see ourselves as His “cherished Bride.” He cleanses the Church, washing her with the Word, especially revealing how He cherishes her (Eph. 5:29). As the redeemed feel cherished, they are empowered to walk in obedience and resist compromise.

²⁶***“...that He might...cleanse her with the washing of water by the word...”***²⁹***“For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church...”***³¹***“A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife [Gen. 2:24], and the two shall become one flesh.”***³²***“This is a great mystery...I speak concerning Christ and the church.” (Eph. 5:26-32)***

- B. Paul taught on overcoming strongholds (2 Cor. 10:3-5) in relation to engaging with truths about being the Bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2). He highlighted two essential truths—that we are *betrothed* to Jesus and that He made us each to be as a *chaste virgin* before Him (2 Cor. 5:17).

²***“I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” (2 Cor. 11:2)***

1. ***Betrothed:*** Hosea prophesied that the Lord would betroth His people to Him (Hos. 2:19-20). This occurred at the cross. He made binding commitments to give His heart to us forever.

¹⁹***“I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me.” (Hos. 2:19)***

2. ***Chaste virgin:*** Sin is energized by despair. If you *feel* clean, you'll *live* clean.

V. THE REVELATION OF THE BRIDE IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION (REV. 19-22)

- A. In the first two chapters of the Bible, we see a bride and a bridegroom in a garden (Gen. 1-2). In the final four chapters, we see a Bride and a Bridegroom in a garden paradise (Rev. 19-22).

B. The ultimate gladness of the human heart is found in seeing the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7).

⁶And I heard...the voice of a great multitude...saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! ⁷Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready..."...¹⁰I fell at his feet to worship him. (Rev. 19:7-10)

1. John was overwhelmed when he saw the reality of the Bride from many nations standing before the Lord filled with great gladness. It was intensely personal to him in that he saw his personal destiny in this multitude. It was not just a theological issue. It is your destiny too.
2. Twice, he fell down to worship an angel: first, after seeing the marriage supper (Rev. 19:10), then again after seeing the New Jerusalem as the Lamb's wife (Rev. 21:9; 22:8).

⁸I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. (Rev. 22:8)

C. The New Jerusalem is the very place that Jesus prepared for His Bride (Rev. 21:9).

⁹Then one [angel]...talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." (Rev. 21:9)

1. The city was designed for the Bride—the beauty, the light, the glory, the fragrance, the songs, the food, the water, and more—everything in the city energizes His people with love.
2. The city is called the Bride because it was tailor made for her. Jesus prepared a place "for us" (Jn. 14:3).

³"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (Jn. 14:3)

D. The final emphasis of the Spirit will be that God's people understand and function as His Bride. The final prayer and prophecy in the Word is about encountering Jesus as Bridegroom King!

¹⁷And the Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come...²⁰"I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! (Rev. 22:17, 20)