

The Ancient Jewish Wedding

Step One: Selection of the Bride

In ancient Israel, brides were usually chosen by the father of the bridegroom. He would send His most trusted servant to search for a bride for his son.

1 Peter 1:2 (ESV)

...according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

Step Two: Price of the Bride

Brides in Bible times were purchased. The price was paid to the father of the bride, both to compensate him for the loss of a worker and to show him how much the bridegroom loved and valued the bride.

We, as the bride of Christ, have also been purchased with a price. A very high price—the blood of Jesus. His very own blood shed upon a cross on Calvary's hill was the price He paid for His bride.

1 Peter 1:18–19 (ESV)

knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

1 Corinthians 6:19–20 (ESV)

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Step Three: Betrothal/Ketubah

The ancient Jewish marriage ceremony consisted of two main parts, beginning with the betrothal or engagement. The betrothal is much like our engagement today, but with a much greater sense of commitment. During the betrothal the couple is actually entering into a covenant.

A covenant in Bible times was serious, final, sealed in blood and legally binding. Once a couple entered into the covenant of betrothal, they were legally married in all aspects except for the physical consummation of the marriage.

At the betrothal ceremony, a marriage contract, called a *Ketubah*, was presented to the father of the bride. This contract would consist of all the bridegroom's promises to his bride. The bride would cherish these promises.

We, too, have a Marriage Contract from our Bridegroom. Our contract is God's Word which shows us all we are entitled to as the Bride of Christ. All the promises in God's Word are for us. As the Bride of Christ, we are entitled to them—they are part of our Contract.

2 Peter 1:4 (ESV)

...by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

Hebrews 10:23 (ESV)

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

Step Four: The Bride's Consent

Although a bride was selected for the bridegroom, she still had a choice.

In **Genesis 24:57 and 58**, Rebekah was asked, concerning Isaac: "Will

you go with this man?”. She said, “I will go.” She gave her consent—her “I do.”

God is a gentleman and He never forces anyone to say “I do” to His Son. When we say “I do” to Jesus, we must believe with our heart and confess with our lips.

Have you said your “I do’s” to Jesus?

John 1:12 (ESV)

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,

Step Five: The Cup of the Covenant

After the term of the Contracts was accepted, a cup of wine was shared to seal the marriage covenant. The second cup of wine would be shared many months later during the marriage ceremony. The cup that Jesus took at His last Passover on earth was the cup of the new marriage covenant with His bride.

Luke 22:20 (ESV)

And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

Matthew 26:29 (ESV)

I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

Jesus is speaking of the second cup that the Bride of Christ will share with Him one glorious day at the second part of our marriage ceremony.

Step Six: Gifts for the Bride

The Betrothal included the giving of gifts by the bridegroom to his bride. Many times a bridegroom gave a coin or other object of value to

his betrothed bride. It would always be something special that would help her remember him while they were apart. This was because the real focus of the gift giving was to be on the giver and not on the gift.

Today we have the engagement ring. This is a symbol of love and commitment. When the bride-to-be looks at her ring, she is reminded of the one who gave her the gift. God's Holy Spirit is our spiritual engagement ring. He doesn't call attention to Himself but to the one who purchased us—Jesus.

Ephesians 2:8 (ESV)

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

Acts 1:4–5 (ESV)

And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

Step Seven: Departure of the Groom

Once the marriage covenant was sealed, the bridegroom left his bride to go to his father's house to prepare a wedding chamber.

John 14:2–3 (ESV)

In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

John 16:5–7 (ESV)

But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ But because I have said these things to you,

sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

The Bridegroom could be gone for many months, during which the Father of the Groom would oversee the building of the wedding chamber. The only person who would truly know when the Groom would return for his bride was the Father.

Matthew 24:36 (ESV)

“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.”

Our Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, has gone to prepare a wedding chamber for His bride—the Church.

Step Eight: The Consecrated Bride

The Jewish bride was set apart, consecrated, separated unto her bridegroom — the one who purchased her. So, while waiting for his return, she was to stay faithful. It was probably easy at first. But when his return was delayed, the temptation would be great. After a while, the bride may even start to question his return. In the same way, we are His consecrated bride, awaiting His return. We cannot fall into temptation. We must be ready at all times for the return of our Bridegroom and King!

Titus 2:11–13 (ESV)

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

Step Nine: Return of the Bridegroom

Jewish bride grooms usually came for their brides late at night, near the midnight hour. The sound of the shofar would break the silence of the night and there would be great shouting and dancing in the streets.

Acts 1:10-11 (ESV)

And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 (ESV)

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

Step Ten: The Hometaking

The second half of the ancient Jewish wedding ceremony is called the “hometaking.” After the Bridegroom returned for his Bride, the couple were escorted to the bridal chamber where they would be alone for **seven days**.

John 14:3 (ESV)

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

I believe that while the wrath of God is being poured out on the earth, the bride of Christ will be hidden away with her Bridegroom in the place that He has prepared for her.

Step Eleven: The Wedding Supper

Following the seven days in the bridal chamber, the bride and bridegroom emerged to join their guests for a joyous marriage feast. Playing of music and dancing was a regular part of the celebration.

And for this element of the Ancient Jewish wedding ceremony we look no further than this very chapter in Revelation 19...

Revelation 19:9 (ESV)

And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."