

Dear Intercessors,

On Saturday 1st March Rev Murray Dixon spoke at our seminar 'The Holy One of Israel'. Murray was for seven years the Anglican rector of Christ Church in Jerusalem.

We thought his teaching was such a prophetic insight into the preparation we are in before the Great Marriage Supper of the Lamb, that we asked for permission to reprint it here.

God bless you as you continue to intercede for South Australia and our nation.

*Jenny Hagger.*

### Marriage in the Teaching of Jesus

#### JEWISH MARRIAGE

People didn't 'fall in love'. Marriages were more normally set up and executed according to a plan that fitted the needs of the whole society of the Jews. When a young man saw the girl he wanted he consulted with his father about the idea of marrying her. Sometimes his father picked the girl and no consultations were necessary. When the bridegroom approved the choice, the young man would go to the bride's house and speak with her father. Fathers really counted for something in Israel.

At the bride's house the young man would do three very important things:

- a) *He would make a covenant with a bride – not a contract.*
- b) *He would drink a cup of wine with her which sealed the covenant – symbolized the blood.*
- c) *He would pay a price for her. Her father would be entitled to money for his daughter. A young man had to be very serious about getting married because he had to make a sacrifice. In olden times a man with a daughter had suffered financially bringing her up since she was not the field worker that a son would have been.*

After the groom had made the covenant, drunk the cup, and paid the price, he would make a little speech to the bride. He's going to leave her for a long time and go back to his father's house. He was going to **build a bridal chamber** for her, a place where they would have their first coming together in marriage (modern 'honeymoon'). Before he left her he would tell her: '**I go to prepare a place for you**'. The contract, cup and money were her security that he would return no matter how long it took him to build the bridal chamber. The groom would have to finish the chamber and have it approved by his father. It had to be stacked with provisions - the bride and groom were going to **remain inside for seven days**, the prescribed length of the 'honeymoon'. It took quite a bit

of work on the part of the groom to build a first class bridal chamber. If anyone asked the bridegroom, during the building process, when he would be getting married he would say, '**I don't know, only my father knows.**' He could not go back and claim his bride until his father approved the chamber and said that the time was right.

During this time the bride waited with dignity. She would wear her veil whenever she went out, in order that some other young man would not try to initiate a contract with her. Now she was called **set apart, consecrated, bought with a price**. In effect she was no longer her own person, but an individual contracted to her bridegroom.

She conducted herself with due respect and she used her time to think about married life and to prepare herself for it. As she gathered her trousseau, she always waited, being home every night, especially as time went on. She didn't want to be caught away from home when the bridegroom came. The tradition was that he would come at night, even at midnight, and try to take her by surprise.

It was an 'abduction'. The bride was 'stolen' from her house. She would be waiting with her bridesmaids and her sisters and whoever she wanted to take in the wedding party with her, and they would all have **oil in their lamps** in case the groom did choose to come at night. As time went on they were ready to go every night. And **suddenly**, one night **the bridegroom would come**. The bride's father and brothers would look the other way, as long as it was the young man with the contract, and the **bride and her friends would be whisked off** into the night. When the groom's party was close enough to the home of the bride to be heard, they would **shout**; and when the bride heard that shout, she knew she was as good as married.

The young men would head towards the groom's father's house with the bride and her friends. They

would travel through the streets making quite a bit of noise with their laughing. If strangers looked out they would not know who the bride was, because the **veil hid her**.

The bride and the groom would go into the chamber while the wedding party waited outside. There would also be a large crowd of wedding guests - friends of the groom's father - assembled at the house, awaiting the couple. Everyone would wait until the bridegroom would tell a trusted friend through the door that the marriage was consummated. Then the celebrating would start. There were never any annulments, and every marriage was started right, in its proper place at the proper time.

The next time the crowd would see the bride, at the end of seven days, she would have her veil off and would be a wife, not a bride. They would have spent the entire time celebrating the grand occasion for seven days. Sometimes they would run out of wine and have to get more; it was hard to plan for so many people for so long a time. At the end of seven days of celebration the bride and groom would come out, now husband and wife. And then there would be a **grand marriage supper**, what we call a reception. Everyone would congratulate the new couple and there would be a scene of wonderful joy. And finally the new couple would leave to take up residence in the husband's house. He would have prepared a place for them to live, in his own **kingdom**, as it were, and the couple would go there leaving his father's house. They would permanently reside there, with the husband hoping they wouldn't have too many daughters and have to go through all that with each one.

At the modern Jewish wedding:  
*'Chuppa', the canopy, symbolizes the old bridal chamber. The cup is drunk at the wedding. The honeymoon is at the home of the bridegroom's father.*

**Old & New Covenants and the Wedding Covenant**  
Read Hebrews Ch 8, special reference to vv 8-9:

God was actually replacing the old system of laws with a new system: quoting Jeremiah 31: 31-32. This new covenant has to do with the Messiah's coming. The new covenant had to be signed in **blood**. Abraham had to divide animals when he received the covenant from God that made the **Jews a chosen people**. And Moses had to sacrifice, too. It is the blood that makes the covenant go into effect.

The Messiah came like a sacrificial animal and gave His blood to **seal the new covenant**. John the Baptist called Him *'the lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.'* (John 1:29) Isaiah said the Messiah would come as a lamb to the slaughter.

The relationship of God and Israel has always been a marriage. The book of Hosea spells that out clearly. And Jeremiah's language in announcing the new covenant is very interesting, he says, *'My covenant they break, although I was a **husband** unto them.'* Jer 31: 32b

God was a disappointed Bridegroom when the Jews failed to keep the old laws. But Paul, another Jew, explained marriage by saying, *'This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.'* Eph 5:32

The proper relationship between the believers and the Messiah would constitute a happy marriage for God. The Church is called the Bride of Christ. The Gentiles in the Church have not always cared for the Jews as they were supposed to but the Messiah said, *'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel'* Matt 14:24 NASR

Paul says Gentiles become grafted into the Jewish tree when by faith they come to the Jewish Messiah (Rom 11:17-19) They become chosen like the Jews. They are called the spiritual seed of Abraham (Gal 3:23-29).

**The New Covenant is a Wedding Covenant**  
**1. The Messiah drank the cup at the Passover table**, and He said, *'This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for many for the remission of sins.'* Matt 26:28  
In the new covenant, Jesus promises, *'I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sins no more.'* Jer. 31:34. Jesus put that into effect when He drank that cup. He redeemed us. That cup the Jews drink with the hidden piece of bread at the Passover meal: the Cup of Redemption.

**2. The Crucifixion was the price Jesus paid for His Bride.**

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayer, *'Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.'* Luke 22:42 And His sweat fell like great drops of blood while He was contemplating the Cross. The Crucifixion was the highest price any bridegroom ever paid. He was obedient to His Father's will. Some Jewish bridegrooms came back to their father after learning the bride price and asked their Father's advice about whether it was worth it: *'Your will, not mine, be done.'*

**3. The Father sent an angel to strengthen His Son. That was His answer.**

Jesus paid the price for us. Then He left His Bride and went back to His Father in heaven after His resurrection. He had even made the typical bridegroom's speech: *I go to prepare a place for you.'* John 14:2b And He went like any Jewish bridegroom, back to His Father's house. Jesus is still at His Father's house preparing our place. And we are waiting for Him to return. We are waiting in a **consecrated** way – **set apart bought with a price** (1 Corinthians 6: 19-20).

We are to act like the covenanted Bride and be waiting at all times for our Bridegroom to come. We are to have oil in our lamps to be ready to travel, even at night (Matthew 25:1-12). **Our oil is the Holy Spirit**, who came to the Jews at Pentecost, after the Messiah ascended. We need to be **filled with the Holy Spirit** and ready to go at any moment.

#### 4. The Lord will return for His Bride.

There will be a bridal chamber in heaven where Jesus and the Church will spend **seven years** –like the ancient **seven** days – and there will be a marriage supper like the Jews used to have. Every detail of Jesus' great wedding will be accomplished, and it will be carried out in the exact tradition of the Jewish people because Jesus is Jewish. Each person must respond to His proposal. The Messiah said His own sheep would hear His voice. (John 10:14,16)

#### 5. The Bride must be waiting for the Bridegroom.

The Jews knew when the **trumpet** sounded the harvest was over. There has to be a cut-off point somewhere. The bride who is ready goes to the wedding when the bridegroom comes. **Shavuot**, or Pentecost, is the harvest holiday. All summer following Pentecost the people plant and till the ground. But when the trumpet sounds, on what Jews call **Rosh Hashanah**, the old Feast of Trumpets, the crops are in and the harvest is finished. Jeremiah, just to mention one prophet, could see that the Jews would not be ready - not all of them. *'The summer is ended, and we are not saved.'* (Jeremiah 8:21)

Paul says, *'Now is the accepted time.'* 2 Cor 6:2 Paul gave us a wonderful picture of that when the Groom will return for His Bride, see 1 Thess. 4:16-17. That fulfils everything. You have the **shout** of the Bridegroom to notify the Bride of His coming; you have the **trumpet** to finish the harvest and to proclaim liberty for God's people. The Jews used to blow the trumpet on each Jubilee to proclaim liberty (Lev. 25:10).

#### The Meaningful Symbols

**1. The Promised Land.** Joshua had entered the *'Promised Land'* with the **shouts** of the people and the **trumpet** blasts which felled the walls of Jericho (Joshua 6:5) The Hebrew name for **Jesus, Yeshua is Joshua**. This is the Old Testament basis for the miracle the Father will perform. That is, an *'Anointed One'* (Messiah) coming back to Israel – to the whole world, in fact – to take the believers to the Promised Land.

**2. Taking the Bride of Christ.** Just as the bridegroom calls for his bride rather suddenly, and takes her off to his father's house, Jesus will take away the believers quickly – *'in the twinkling of an eye'* 1 Cor. 15:52. The Bride is to be ready and waiting.

She will have her veil on, and so the people of the world today certainly don't recognise the Bride of Christ. They see churches and people going into them, but they do not appreciate the Bride as a bride. It is as though the true believers are wearing a kind of spiritual veil and are not recognisable to the unbelievers. Even when this great wedding takes place, the rest of the world will go on as it was, after the Bride has departed in her veil.

**3. The Oil Lamps.** The wedding party would go through the streets by the light of the oil lamps. The bride had to have her lamp trimmed and ready. The **oil** is the **Holy Spirit**. Believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Oil is what Jesus used to **anoint** His saints and He still uses it in the form of the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament symbol is the **Menorah**, the candelabrum **in the Tabernacle**; it was **lit just once**, but the **priests replenished the oil constantly**. So the believer in the Messiah received the **light** of the world **once**, but he is **constantly indwelt** by the Holy Spirit. In this way his light shines on others; anyone close to him can see it clearly. A flame is a beautiful symbol of the faith in the Messiah; a flame can ignite one hundred other flames without being diminished itself. And **Jesus** is called ***the light of the world***. (John 8:12)

**4. The Wedding Guests.** When the bridegroom finally arrived at the groom's father's house, they would find quite an assembly of wedding guests – friends of the groom's father. So will the believers when the Messiah brings them to heaven, His Father's house. The **friends** of the Father are the **old testament saints**. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will attend this wedding, along with the prophets and the faithful chosen people of the centuries before the coming of the Messiah. But the celebration will not begin when we arrive. As is the wedding custom, the bride and groom must first go into the chamber for the seven days. And the **groom's friend** will wait outside until he hears the groom's voice. He will tell the guests when the wedding is consummated.

The N. T. equivalent of that is found in John 3:29. The Pharisees had been asking **John the Baptist** if he were the Messiah. In a way, they would have preferred him to say he was. They could put up with a 'Messiah' who stayed out in the desert and preached **repentance** to a few ascetics. The One they could not abide was the gentle Carpenter of Galilee, with whom none of them could argue. But John set them straight in John 3:29—*The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.*

When the **Bridegroom's voice is heard, the marriage is accomplished**. A Scripture like that one is much more clear to Jews who know their heritage

than to Gentiles. Anyone who tells the truth about **Judaism** leads to Jesus Christ. When any man speaks the truth, he is talking in some way about Jesus. Jesus: *'Everyone that is of the truth hears my voice.'* John 18:37

**5. The Judgment Seat of Christ.** The 'honeymoon' in heaven. The Scriptures call it the judgment seat of Christ. We will all go before the Messiah in heaven, and He will look at our works done for Him in the flesh. All of us on earth who believe in Him are His servants, and we do both good works and bad. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that men's works will be graded 1 Cor3:11-15. Some works are as valuable as gold, silver and precious stones, and some only amount to wood, hay and stubble. The Judgment will use fire on these works, and we will all see what bums up.

The judgment of works is not to be confused with God's judgment of sin. All of man's sins were taken care of at the Cross. Judgment is not going to charge us for what is already paid for. Everybody's sins are forgiven if they accept the forgiveness. The Messiah has provided a 'gift certificate'. When somebody gives you a gift certificate, you just take it to the store and claim the gift. You do not have to pay anything, the **giver has already paid**. That is the message of the Gospel in simplest terms.

This judgment seat is like the honeymoon. A honeymoon is where **the groom removes the bride's veil and knows her secrets**.

**6. The Great Marriage Supper.** When the announcement is made that the marriage is consummated - the saints have their crowns, and the Lord has examined them all. And then the celebrating begins outside the chamber. The marriage is now official and the guests can rejoice. All of the celebrating will culminate in heaven in a marriage supper - what we would call the reception. And the Bride will be greatly honoured: Rev 19: 7-8

Notice how the Scripture says 'Wife *'instead of 'Bride'*. The honeymoon is now finished, and we are now married to the Lord. Then, after the supper, we will leave to live in our Bridegroom's Kingdom. We will leave His Father's house and claim our sweetest time on earth, and we will reign with our Husband in the

Kingdom of God for a thousand years. What a moment to look forward to!

There we are, arrayed in white linen, the queen of the Kingdom: perfected saints. All our sins paid for, all our works rewarded. The Scriptures say that we will give our crowns to the Lord as a wedding gift. Even John, as an old man, looked forward to being a bride. How he longed for the Lord's coming. The Romans left him on a barren island, Patmos, a stone quarry where practically nothing grew. He was supposed to slowly starve to death, but he saw the revelation of Jesus instead. And he said at the end of the wonder revelation, *'Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'* Rev22:30 He was so eager to see the Messiah come.

**7. The Father Appoints the Time.** It was not the bride who appointed the wedding day. The bridegroom's father, the host of the whole wedding, picked the day. Jesus said, *'No-one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.'* Matt 24:36. But it was up to the bride to be waiting. She waited every day no matter how long it took.

The Bible is a Jewish Book. The prophets were Jewish. They saw the Messiah coming, and He came, *'Salvation is of the Jews'*, the Messiah said: John 4:22 We all killed Him because of the extent of our crimes. He had to go to the Cross. It was the only way a just God could forgive us. Each one of us killed Him with our sins. Those who put him on the Cross did not know what they were really doing. Jesus said from the Cross: *'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'* Luke 23:34. But He chose to die for His friends, for all of His followers. That was the greatest single act of love which man has ever seen.

**The Example of Rebekah.** The Bible says in Genesis 24 that when Isaac was to have a wife, a servant was sent to get her for him. The servant was like the Holy Spirit; he brought the things of the bridegroom to the bride, and he brought the bride back with him. The servant travelled to where Rebekah was and *'Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel'* Genesis 24:15. And he brought her back, and Isaac went out to meet her, just as the Messiah will come on the clouds to meet all the believers, His Bride. Rebekah never even saw her bridegroom, and yet she came, believing what the servant told her.

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