

Part 9 The Bridegroom God and His Bride: A New Testament Overview

I. REVELATION OF THE BRIDE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- A. ***Bridal paradigm of the kingdom:*** A paradigm speaks of one's perspective or world view. To have a bridal paradigm of the kingdom is to have a perspective of the kingdom through the lens of a Bride. It includes subjects of wholehearted love, beauty, a wedding, and partnership with Jesus. Once you see the Bride in the Scripture, you find this glorious truth in many places.
- B. ***Summary:*** Jesus mentioned the bridal relationship three times, but always from the perspective of the Bridegroom (Mt. 9:15; 22:2; 25:1). Jesus and John the Baptist spoke of the Bridegroom rather than the Bride. Seeing Jesus as our Bridegroom God awakens understanding of who we are before Him as His cherished Bride. We see the truth of *our* identity by understanding *His*.
- ¹⁸***Beholding...the glory of the Lord, [we] are being transformed... (2 Cor. 3:18)***
1. Paul wrote of Jesus' union with the Bride without directly mentioning her (Eph. 5:25-32). He spoke of his ministry as betrothing believers to Jesus as their husband (2 Cor. 11:2).
²***I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you...to Christ. (2 Cor. 11:2)***
 2. The Bride is not mentioned directly until the last four chapters of the Bible (Rev. 19-22).
⁷***For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready...***
⁹***Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb! (Rev. 19:7-9)***
⁹***...Saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." (Rev. 21:9)***
¹⁷***And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" (Rev. 22:17)***
- C. Jesus' miracle ministry began at a wedding (Jn. 2:1-11). The master of the ceremony noted that the bridegroom had kept the best wine until the last (Jn. 2:10).
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 [saved the best, NIV] wine until now!" (Jn. 2:9-10)***
1. This was a prophetic statement that gives insight into how Jesus leads His kingdom. The wine points to the celebration of God's love at the marriage supper of the Lamb. He saves the "best wine" until the final hour of natural history when His power and revelation are released in the greatest measure in the context of preparing His Bride for the wedding of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9).
 2. I imagine Jesus sitting in this wedding watching the bride come down the aisle and thinking on His future wedding day. He may have prayed, "Father, I have waited from ages past, can I now begin My ministry to secure My Bride?" Suddenly, at the wedding in Cana, God's power was released and Jesus' public ministry began there.

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

- A. About a month after Cana, Jesus was revealed by John the Baptist as the Bridegroom God (Jn. 3:29). Gabriel appeared to Zacharias to announce the birth and ministry of John the Baptist. John went before Jesus to tell the people about Him so as to prepare them to respond to Him. John did this by turning them to the “wisdom of the just” (this was developed by John in John 3:27-36).
¹⁷He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of...the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (Lk. 1:17)
- B. The Father sent John as His messenger to tell Israel about Jesus. John had great insight into Jesus’ heart and mission (Mt. 11:10) and was sent before Jesus to prepare the people (Jn. 3:28).
¹⁰For this is he [John the Baptist] of whom it is written: “Behold, I [the Father] send My messenger before Your [Jesus’] face, who will prepare Your way before You.” (Mt. 11:10)
- C. John’s most detailed message about Jesus is in John 3:27-36. He described Jesus as, “He who has the bride is the bridegroom,” revealing His desire and sovereignty. This is the first declaration in the New Testament of Jesus as the Bridegroom God. The context of this is when John’s disciples were concerned with issues related to purification or dedication to God (v. 25) and the decrease of John’s ministry influence (v. 26). Both are answered in seeing the God of burning desire.
*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, “...²⁸I have been sent before Him. ²⁹He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom...rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. ³⁰He must increase, but I must decrease. ³¹He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth...speaks of the earth. (Jn. 3:25-31)*
1. ***He is the bridegroom:*** Jesus is not just a king who merely fulfills the function of a 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.
 2. ***He who has the bride:*** From ages past, the Father committed to give Jesus a Bride as His inheritance and Jesus was committed to purchase her on the cross. God’s commitments could not be stopped. Thus, from God’s point of view, Jesus already possessed His Bride. John spoke with the certainty of God’s sovereignty. We can declare this in worship by saying, “You are a Bridegroom and have a Bride. Your heart is set. Our destiny is sure.”
- D. John functioned in ministry as a ***friend of the Bridegroom***. This speaks of having a specific message and spirit in ministering to people. The message is to make known Jesus’ desire, beauty, and commitments as the Bridegroom God and to call people to love Him with all their heart.
- E. As believers, we seek to excel in our dedication and ministry calling. Both issues have struggles that can be answered by encountering the Bridegroom’s desire, beauty, and sovereignty. The secret of John’s life was found in encountering the Bridegroom. By seeing that we are desired by Jesus, that He is above all and already “has” the Bride, brings godly perspective to our struggle.

III. JESUS REVEALED HIS HEART AS THE BRIDEGROOM GOD

- A. **Summary:** Jesus referred to Himself as a Bridegroom, and to the apostles as friends of the Bridegroom (Mt. 9:15). He compared His kingdom to His Father arranging a wedding (Mt. 22:2) and described the need of His people to encounter Him as a Bridegroom (Mt. 25:1-13). He will return only in answer to the intercessory prayer of His Church with a bridal identity (Rev. 22:17).
- B. This is Jesus' first self-disclosure to Israel as the Bridegroom God. He revealed Himself as the God with burning desire for His people. He is not just a savior who forgives, or a king who rules. His eternal nature is to burn with desire as the Bridegroom. Being a Bridegroom is an essential part of His nature and personality. He will never change. He will live married for all eternity.
- ¹⁴The disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?" ¹⁵Jesus 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)*
- C. **The Bridegroom is with them:** He was making a statement about His emotional makeup and identified Himself as the fulfillment of prophecies about the Bridegroom Messiah. Israel knew the prophecies about the Messiah coming as a Bridegroom. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea prophesied about the Bridegroom God (Isa. 54:5; 62:5; Jer. 2:2; 3:14; 31:32; Hos. 2:16).
- ¹⁶"In that day," says the LORD, "that you will call Me 'My Husband'..." (Hos. 2:16)*
- ⁵For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is His name... (Isa. 54:5)*
- D. **Will be taken away:** This is His first mention of His death. It was made in the context of revealing His desire as a Bridegroom. He died to purchase His Bride. Jesus' passion as a Bridegroom was expressed in His passion on the cross. There is a significant connection between Jesus as the slain Lamb and the revelation of the Bride (Rev. 19:7, 9; 21:9).
- E. Jesus was declaring to John's disciples that the apostles had the same calling as John did in being friends of the Bridegroom. This conversation occurred about one year after John 3:29.

IV. THE BRIDEGROOM REVELATION: TWO PARABLES (MT. 22:1-14; 25:1-13)

- A. Jesus only taught two parables about the kingdom as a wedding and both were in the final week of His life. He spoke one publicly (Mt. 22:1-14) and one privately (Mt. 25:1-13).
- B. At the end of His ministry, after entering Jerusalem, the final public message that Jesus chose to give Israel and the human race was to set forth His kingdom as a wedding (Mt. 22:1-14). With His own lips, Jesus gave the invitation to Israel to receive Him as their Bridegroom God. Jesus made two main points in this parable. First, His Father was the king, arranging a wedding for Him (v. 2). Second, people must respond in the right way to this glorious plan of God (v. 3-14).
- ²The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son. (Mt. 22:2)*

- C. Immediately after the parable of the kingdom as a wedding, Jesus called Israel to love Him with all their heart (Mt. 22:37). The great commandment is also the great prophecy. Jesus prophesied to Israel: “You shall love the Lord with all your heart.” He referenced Moses’ end-time prophecy (Deut. 30:6) which promised that God’s people would love Him with all their heart. This promise was very dear to Jesus’ heart. This is the primary emphasis of the bridal paradigm.
³⁷***“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart...”*** ³⁸***This is the first and great commandment.” (Mt. 22:37-38)***
- ⁶The LORD...will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul... (Deut. 30:6)***
- D. Jesus, knowing that He would die in two days, looked at those before Him who were responding to His call to the great wedding and to love Him (Mt. 22:37). Jesus saw the responsive people in that hour as a down payment of God’s promise to Him (Deut. 30:6). Jesus endured the cross because of the joy set before Him. Part of the joy set before Him was the people that He called to Himself. He felt joy in seeing some say yes to His final sermon in Jerusalem.
²***Jesus...who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross... (Heb. 12:2)***
- E. God defined His joy in Scripture as being like a bridegroom who rejoices over a bride (Isa. 62:5).
⁵***As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. (Isa. 62:5)***
- F. In private, Jesus urged the disciples not to neglect developing connection and intimacy with Him as the Bridegroom God (Mt. 25:1-13).
¹***Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the Bridegroom...*** ⁶***At midnight a cry...“The Bridegroom is coming...”*** ⁸***The foolish said to the wise, “Give us some of your oil, our lamps are going out.”...*** ¹⁰***The bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. (Mt. 25:1-10)***
- G. Jesus’ final teaching to the disciples was filled with revelation of His love, care, joy, and plans for them (Jn. 14-17). His final teaching to the disciples emphasized themes related to the bridal paradigm. Jesus gave His ultimate statement of desire and 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. Jesus’ final intercession for the Church is in John 17:24-26. Here, He prayed for the core realities seen in the bridal paradigm. He prayed: 1) that His people be with Him; 2) that they experience His glory; 3) that He revealed the Father to them; and 4) that they love Him like the Father does.
²⁴***Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory...*** ²⁶***I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them. (Jn. 17:24-26)***
- I. Jesus was soon to be in anguish at Gethsemane, yet He continued to be focused on His desire for His people to be with Him. He died so we could be with Him (Mt. 9:15, Lk. 23:43; Jn. 17:24; Rev. 3:20-21; 22:17). This is a call to have consistent, deep, affectionate partnership with Him. Salvation is not just an escape from hell, but a call to be with Him and reign with Him in glory.

- J. Jesus' final recorded conversation on earth was with the thief on the cross (Lk. 23:43). Even on the cross, His desire was fixed on His Father being glorified and the Church being with Him. Jesus said to the thief what He had prayed for His disciples: "You will be with Me" (Jn. 17:24).

⁴³*Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." (Lk. 23:43)*

- K. Jesus' last message to the Church recorded in Scripture continues over two chapters in messages given to seven different churches. He starts with a call to wholehearted love (Rev. 2:4) and ends with the same (Rev. 3:20-21). To "be with Him"—dining and ruling—is the same heart cry that we see in John 17:24. He starts it with the subject of their love and ends with the wedding feast theme of dining and ruling with Him. Even on Patmos, Jesus spoke like a Bridegroom God.

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)**

1. Jesus began His final message to the Church in the Scripture, saying, "You left your first love. You don't love Me the way you used to." The theme of love was still on His heart. He didn't say, "You don't work as hard as you used to." He spoke like a Bridegroom.
 2. The church of Ephesus was a great revival center (Acts 19-20). Yet, they did not sustain the freshness in their love for Jesus. They became workers for God more than lovers of God. When we work without intimacy, we work as a hireling and the work burns us out.
- L. Jesus called for their responsiveness to open to Him by promising to dine with them and to allow them to partner with Him in ruling the nations (Rev. 3:20-21). The ultimate expression of dining or feasting with Jesus is at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9). It also speaks symbolically of dining with Him by feasting on His Word now.

V. PAUL'S REVELATION OF THE BRIDE IN EPHESIANS

- A. Romans and Ephesians are Paul's two most important doctrinal books. In Ephesians, Paul emphasizes the mystery of the Bride joined to Jesus forever (Eph. 5:31-32).

³¹*A man shall leave his father...and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.*

³²*This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. (Eph. 5:31-32)*

- B. God washes us by the Word as we fill our hearts and mind with it. The end-time Church will be washed and filled with glory as Jesus nourishes and cherishes her (Eph. 5:29). In other words, the revelation of Jesus' cherishing heart—how He feels about us—washes our heart and mind.

²⁵*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church...²⁶*that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷*that He might present her to Himself a glorious church...²⁸*Husbands...love their wives as their bodies...²⁹*No one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church... (Eph. 5:25-29)*****

VI. THE HEART IMPACT OF THE BRIDAL REVELATION

- A. John the Baptist described the emotional impact that hearing the Bridegroom's voice had on him. Joy speaks of his gratitude and of being preoccupied with Jesus rather than the difficulty of his lifestyle. He had no complaints or regrets about the lonely fasted lifestyle.
²⁹The friend of the bridegroom...rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. (Jn. 3:29)
- B. John recorded the joy of the saints at the marriage celebration and the bridal city (Rev. 19-22). He was overwhelmed at this. For example, in Rev. 19:9, while receiving a commission to write to reveal the Bride, John was overwhelmed in seeing his personal destiny. It became intensely personal as he understood it was his story. This is not just a theological issue. It is who you are.
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...⁹He said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'"...¹⁰I fell at his feet to worship him. (Rev. 19:7-10)
- C. Twice, he fell down to worship an angel: first, after seeing the marriage supper (Rev. 19:10), then again after seeing 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)

VII. THE HOLY SPIRIT'S END-TIME EMPHASIS ON THE BRIDAL PARADIGM

- A. The Church's identity at the end of the age will be as a cherished Bride, interceding for Jesus to come as the Bridegroom God that "we might be with Him." (Rev. 22:17).
¹⁷The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!" (Rev. 22:17)
- B. The final picture of the Church at the end of the age is as His glorious Bride (Eph. 5:27-32).
²⁷...He might present her to Himself a glorious church...³¹A man shall...be joined to his wife...³²This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. (Eph. 5:27-32)
- C. Hosea pointed to the prominence of the bridal paradigm in the generation of the Lord's return.
¹⁶"It shall be, in that day," says the LORD, "...you will call Me 'My Husband.'" (Hos. 2:16)
- D. Isaiah noted the prominence of the bridal paradigm in the end times by prophesying that God's people will be called Hephzibah. The literal meaning of the Hebrew is: "My delight is in her."
⁴You shall be called Hephzibah...for the LORD delights in you...⁵As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. (Isa. 62:4-5)
- E. ***The Bridegroom generation:*** The bridal paradigm of the kingdom has been reserved by God for the unique dynamics that will be present in the end times. The truths of Jesus as the Bridegroom God and the Church as His cherished Bride will lead to such transformation of the Church that the first commandment will be restored to first place. This will happen in the context of the most emotionally broken generation in history. These truths will equip the Church to walk in God's glory and love in the midst of the greatest temptations and pressures in human history.