

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 (NIV)

[You] have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood...

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 (NIV)

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV)

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with 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 (NIV)

Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Hebrews 10:23 (NIV)

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, 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 (NIV)

Yet to all who received him, to those 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 (NIV)

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

Matthew 26:29 (NIV)

I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until

that day when I drink it anew 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 (NIV)

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God...

Acts 1:4-5 (NIV)

On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

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 (NIV)

In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

John 16:5-7 (NIV)

"Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away.

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 (NIV)

"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

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 (NIV)

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing 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 (NIV)

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (NIV)

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

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 (NIV)

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

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 (NIV)

Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God."