



Ancient Jewish
Weddings

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Welcome to Jesus Time where we spend time with Jesus in His time and culture.

Today's topic is : Ancient Jewish Wedding Customs.

As a class we have just completed our study of Jesus first miracle of turning water into wine which can be found at the beginning of chapter 2 within the Gospel of John.

This miracle of our Lord is forever more remembered as the "Wedding in Cana" of Galilee.

As such the relating of and the filling in of many of the fascinating details of a first century Jewish Wedding in Jesus Time is quite a cultural study all by itself.

However our true purpose of this study of the ancient Jewish Wedding customs is that within these traditions are in fact the reasons as to Why? our Lord Christ Jesus always referred to us; His Church, as in those whom love and believe in Him as His Bride.

In fact these details are the details of what is known as our "Blessed Hope," aka the Rapture of the Church. As we begin our study of the ancient Jewish Wedding details, please watch for the Rapture comparisons in which we will review at the conclusion of this study.

Jesus's Words teach us that the traditional Jewish Wedding parallels the future Wedding in Heaven between He- our Lord and Savior, and we- His Bride the Church of Christ.

The ancient Jewish Wedding consisted of 5 very distinct purposeful events.

1st was the Arrangement of Marriage.

2nd The Betrothal Ceremony.

3rd The Preparation Period.

4th The Wedding Ceremony.

5th The Wedding Feast.

Now my friends let's begin, let's look at them one by one, and see for ourselves how ancient Jewish Weddings were done !

1. The Arrangement:

Was called the " Shiddukhin " this was the first step at coming to an agreement before the legal binding of a Betrothal took place.

This was the time of matchmaking quite often initiated by the father of the Groom and discussed between he and the father of the Bride.

Even though this was an official solemn negotiation of arrangement, often the couple in question had never even seen each other before, & it was normal for the father of the Bride at some time during these proceedings to check with his daughter to see if she approved of their marriage.

Once the selection was confirmed then the parents prepared the " Ketubah."

This means a legally binding contract that spelled out precise mutual obligations between the Bride & Groom. This included all of his & her requirements and conditions such as the Groom's responsibilities and provisions as in the " Bride's rights " for her entire life with him.

It was also customary that the Groom gave gifts to His proposed Bride at this time.

The Bride's Dowery :

This she brought into the marriage & by in large it was supplied by her father. This could include livestock, property, and any produce from the land such as fruit or grain and at this time even servants to work the land if she was from a wealthy family.

In Jesus Time it was customary that each Bride received at least a minimum of 50 Jewish Zuzim silver coins. This was about 25 shekels in Hellenistic currency & was enough to provide for the Brides needs for an entire year.

However most parents gave more as they could afford.

Now with a maiden as in a first marriage in which the woman was usually quite young & if the Bride's father was deceased- then her brothers if any were required to provide the customary Dowery. If the Bride had no brothers then the amount could be deducted from her fathers estate. Finally if the Bride be an orphan or she was an elder sibling and had no one who could bear her Dowry's financial responsibility, then community funds would supply her Dowery as a daughter of Abraham.

Likewise in select communities it was not unheard of for the father of the Groom too also match the Dowery given by the Brides father unto his new Daughter in Law.

The Babylonian Talmud (recordings of Sanhedrin Law & Theology) determined that if a Bride died childless within one year of her marriage then all of her assets in which she brought into her marriage by her Dowery were then to be returned unto her birth family.

If the Bride died within two years of her marriage again childless then one half of her Dowery was to be returned to her family. After that all that she had was to remain with her husband.

2. The Betrothal Ceremony:

Once the contract was established and accepted then the couple would prepare separately to engage in the Betrothal Ceremony. When the time of ceremony was determined and when begun, each the Bride and Groom would ritually immerse themselves within water and this signified each their physical and spiritual cleansing.

This ceremony included the exchanging of vows and rings which were often decorated symbolically of Synagogue or Temple meaning their vows and rings were legal and binding before Jehovah GOD. Often additional valuable gifts were now exchanged between the Bride and Groom as well. Then the Bride and Groom shared their first cup of wine together. At the completion of this ceremony the couple were now legally married.

This legally binding marriage concluded with a private joyful celebration between the two families alone. Then each the Bride and Groom would return to their own homes being "Betrothed" by which according to Jewish Law, only a legal divorce could now separate them.

However they did not as of yet live together nor have marital relations.

Instead the Bride and Groom maintained totally separate lives each at their fathers homes. This be until the Groom had made all of the preparations for their future lives together.

3. The Preparation Period:

This time of preparation was known as the Betrothal period.

Again during this time the Groom prepared living quarters at his fathers home.

Normally this was by building an addition unto his families home.

The Bride at this time while she waited for her Groom to arrive had three specific goals to achieve.

The first was time itself. As in the normal minimum waiting time was nine months to insure that she was not pregnant.

Second the Bride consecrated herself.

This means she deeply examined all that she was and believed.

As such she was expected to change nearly anything about herself in which she deemed necessary to be ready to enter into what was considered to be a Holy covenant of marriage.

In fact in Jesus Time Jewish leaders began to call this time of preparation for the Bride as: "Mekadesh. " During the previous Betrothal Ceremony when the Bride & Groom exchanged their vows it was customary for the Groom to actually say unto his Bride that she was now "Mekudeshet " meaning she was consecrated before GOD unto him the Groom.

Thirdly the Bride had not the luxury of shopping at the nearest Bridal shop which meant she had to literally make her own " Wedding Garments." Made by the Brides hands and expected to meet all Jewish Wedding customs. Also the Wedding dress was permitted to include any special or unique touches that showed the Bride's personality.

4. The Wedding Ceremony:

During the maximum of up to a year long Betrothal period the Bride waited in anticipation for her Groom to arrive and then for the Wedding Ceremony to commence.

By custom the Bride and her Wedding party kept oil lamps burning all through the night just in case the Groom & his Wedding party arrived.

For the record : Neither the Bride nor the Groom knew the exact hour of their Wedding. When the Bridegroom was asked when is your wedding? The correct customary answer was; " No one knows except my father. "

When the time was right; the Grooms father would issue unto his son his approval for the Ceremony to begin. The Grooms father no doubt had to have some knowledge passed unto him as to when the Bride was in fact prepared and then he alone observed and made the decision as to when to begin.

Upon his fathers instruction and with his fathers blessing the Groom would then immediately gather his prepared Wedding party, and then set out no matter the hour and proceeded unto his Brides family home.

Day or night, rain or shine, the Grooms party would shout: " Behold! The Bridegroom comes." The shouting was accompanied by the blowing of a Shofar. (Trumpet) After arriving at her home the Groomsmen would then lead the Bride's prepared Wedding party back to the Grooms home to where a Wedding canopy or " Huppah " was awaiting them.

As they traveled to and fro Jewish Culture demanded that anyone regardless of rank or privilege, at any hour within hearing distance, must stop all that they were doing and join in the rear of the procession while walking along clapping their hands and shouting with joy for the Wedding couple. Even if they did not know them personally.

This was because it was children of Abraham who were being joined by Jehovah Almighty. (In a similar but sober manor all were likewise expected to follow funeral processions as well.)

The “ Huppah ” was a cloth usually of pure white that was either supported by four poles that could be decorated with flowers or vines, or be supported by hand at the four corners by attendants of the ceremony. Underneath this canopy the couples final vows were exchanged. The Wedding Ceremony or “ Nissuin ” was now to be completed. This time the exchange was in front of all of their guests & not just before immediate family. After their final vows were exchanged once again a cup of wine was shared between the Bride & Groom.

5. The Wedding Feast:

The Wedding Feast was the highlight & conclusion of the Wedding Ceremony. The Wedding Ceremony itself lasted for seven full days with food, music, dancing, and celebration. Everything within Jewish Wedding customs were primarily focused upon the Bride. However it was the concluding feast that was held in honor of the Groom.

All of the guests were expected to compose poetry or songs- and then to present them in performance of joy unto the Groom. Also at this time during the Wedding Feast in honor of her Groom, this is when the new wife would arrive at the concluding celebration to the feast now wearing her prepared Wedding garments that she herself had made during her time of Preparation. This was to impress and honor her Groom at his Wedding party.

Do not forget this was one of the very few times in the Brides life in which she was literally permitted and expected to be publicly on display as the center of attention in honor of her husband with her face uncovered. This feast concluded the ancient Jewish Wedding tradition.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Brothers and Sisters in Christ;

Let us now compare the Ancient Jewish Wedding unto our Lord’s Words within His New Testament as to Jesus’s taking of His Bride, our Blessed Hope- as in the Rapture of the Church.

1. The Arrangement of Marriage:

The Holy Spirit negotiates with us for our eternal soul. First the Lord convicts our hearts that we are indeed sinners as He convinces our minds that we need a Savior.

Jesus His Son the Living Word of God, is that Savior, and He is our Bridegroom.

Then when, we say yes to His proposal- eternal life in Christ is ours forever through Him.

✠ Then I passed by you and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love; so I spread My garment over you and covered your nakedness. I also swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine, declares the Lord GOD. Ezekiel 16:8 NASB

The Book of Ruth symbolically clarifies for us that the one who redeems us from our debt of Sin unto GOD means; our Redeemer covers us with His garment as in He assumes care for us as an individual. Like wise Revelation 19:7-8 explains that our nakedness means no Righteousness. As in within GOD’S sight we were previously unsaved and ashamed with nothing to conceal our crimes, nor are we able to deny our guilt or to escape or hide away from the Lord. Because Hebrews 9:27 clarifies that we all must die and then we all must stand before the Lord. Jesus is either your Savior or your Judge it is as simple as that.

2. The Betrothal Ceremony:

Once we have agreed to agree with the Holy Spirit's proposal by accepting Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, our " Marriage Contract " unto Jesus is complete.

We are to Worship Him alone and have no other false gods before Him. (2nd Corinthians 11:2)
Remember anything or anyone that we prioritize above GOD by our time and effort is a false idol.
Our Baptism each separates & sanctifies us unto Jesus to be each physically and spiritually clean.
When we say our vows this be our sinners Prayer unto Christ Jesus, He in turn vows to set us free of our Sin by paying the ultimate price for our freedom. This was of course by His very life upon a cross.
We- the Bride of Christ, then give unto our Bridegroom our most precious gift: Ourselves.
The essence of our being our eternal God given Soul now also restored to Spiritual life by Christ.
The Jewish Wedding Betrothal concluded with the sharing of a cup of wine.
Today we too do this each and every time we partake of the Ordinance of Sanctification known as Communion. When we solemnly complete this rite of Remembrance unto Jesus as our Christ.

✝ For your Maker is your husband— the LORD Almighty is his name.

The Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; He is called the God of all the Earth.

Jesus as Deity is our maker, Christ as a man is our redeeming Savior, Note He is identified as being from Israel. Isaiah 54:5 NIV

3. The Preparation Period:

(Almighty GOD Jehovah's Heavenly Realm)

After the Betrothal our Groom returned unto His Fathers Home to prepare a place for Him and us, His new wife to live. The Groom will return & collect us; his Bride in His Fathers time.

✝ Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

²In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

John 14:1-3 KJV

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

Matthew 24:36 ESV

Like the awaiting Bride of Jesus Time, we too await the return of our Bridegroom.

When Jehovah Almighty says it's Time, Christ Jesus will Rapture us away with His Trumpet call & whisk us unto our " Wedding Ceremony " in His and our Heavenly Fathers Home.

✝ Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.
1st Corinthians 15:51-53 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. ¹⁷ 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.
1st Thessalonians 4:16-18 NIV

Again like the waiting Bride of Jesus Time, we too await the return of our Bridegroom. Christ Jesus will Rapture us away with His Trumpet call and whisk us unto our Wedding Ceremony in His and our Heavenly Fathers Home.

As we wait for our “Blessed Hope” known as the Rapture we like an expectant Bride from Jesus Time, we too are expected to examine each and every aspect of our lives as we live for Christ in anticipation of His arrival for us or the conclusion of our days whichever comes first.

We are to prepare our “ Wedding Garments “ by using our Righteous works, acts, and deeds. None of our actions can Save us because Salvation is by Christ alone. (Ephesians 2:8-9) However our actions in the Lord prepare us to be clothed in Righteousness on our Wedding day.

✝ Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!

For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

⁸ Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people.

Revelation 19:7-8 NIV

4. The Wedding Ceremony:

This celebration in Heaven will last for 7 years while those upon the Earth will go through the Trib./Great Tribulation. For us the Redeemed in Christ, during this time our “ Bema “ or rewards judgements takes place in which our Righteous deeds actually become our Wedding Garments. Each a personal pattern of Righteousness unto our Lord with each garment as unique as we are.

✝ Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,

Hebrews 9:27 NIV

✝ For it is time for judgment to begin with God’s household; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

1st Peter 4:17 NIV

✝ For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³ their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. ¹⁴ If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

1st Corinthians 3:11-15 NIV

Again my Christian friends this judgement is not to be feared.

For our Sin has been washed clean, again this is our time of rewarding for what we have said and what we have done for our Lord Christ Jesus during our lifetime. In effect we are also at this time presenting our composed poetic respects unto our Groom Christ Jesus with and by our life’s work.

We do this by trying to live GODLY lives by Biblical principals in and for the Lord.

When we do the right things at the right times just because it is GOD’S Will- this honors the Lord. This time known as “ Bema “ is when GOD honors those who have lived to honor Him.

5. The Wedding Feast:

After all of the rewards are completed the Wedding banquet feast concludes the festivities. Each Matthew chapter 22 & Dr. Luke within chapter 14, have details of what will be.

When we combine them both we have an astonishing picture of the Church as the Bride of Christ.

First from Dr. Luke chapter 14:16-24 when Jesus was responding to a comment about the Wedding Banquet Feast that will be in Heaven.

✠ Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. ¹⁷ At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’ *(Messiah has come!)*

¹⁸ “But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’

¹⁹ “Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’ *(For many the concerns of this*

²⁰ “Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’ *life are more important)*

²¹ “The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’

(The Spiritually poor & Gentile non – Jews are now invited)

²² “‘Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’

²³ “Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. ²⁴ I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.’” *(The Pharisees & Sadducees of old & those opting out unto today)*

Now Again adding more detail from Matthew chapter 22: 1-14

✠ Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: ² “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. ³ He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. *(Again the religious pious of Jesus Time and also the denying of all times)*

⁴ “Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’

⁵ “But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. ⁶ The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. ⁷ The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. *(Ancient Israel whom the Kingdom was prepared for- was destroyed for disobedience)*

⁸ “Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. ⁹ So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ *(Jew & Gentile alike, King or Pauper, all made alive in Christ)*

¹⁰ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹ “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. *(an unsaved pious person thinking they deserve Salvation by their efforts)*

¹² He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’

The man was speechless. *(No Salvation means no Righteousness which means no Wedding Garment)*

¹³ “Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

¹⁴ “For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

Revelation 19: 9 records our Wedding Banquet which will take place in Heaven.

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

Now finally in conclusion by switching to our modern Wedding customs for comparison we can glean a little more understanding. As in we can better comprehend our future forever Wedding with Jesus in this “Way.” (A follower of the “ Way “ was the earliest term for a Jesus believer.)

Almighty Jehovah is the Grooms Abba (Father) & He is also of course the officiating Pastor in charge of the Wedding.

No doubt the Holy Spirit is Jesus’s best man.

The Bride of Christ is us from the Age of Grace. (The Church)

The 12 Apostles are our Bridesmaids.

The 12 sons of Jacob representing the 12 tribes of Israel are the Groomsmen.

On the Brides side of the Wedding Chapel are our guests the Tribulation Saints. (Post Rapture)

Of course I believe the Tribulation Saints are also “Betrothed” unto the Best Man the Holy Spirit.

On the Grooms side of the Church is the Fathers Bride Israel. (The Saints of the Old Age of Law.)

GOD’S Bride Israel & Father Jehovah are currently estranged over their Son Jesus, but they will indeed be reconciled in the future. When she, Israel- finally recognizes Jesus as her Messiah.

Remember the Age of Law looked forward to Messiah (Christ) while the Age of Grace looks back to Christ. (Messiah) It is the same.

It just depends upon our place and time within GOD’S design.

Either looking forward in anticipation with belief that Messiah (Christ) will come, or again looking back in belief that Christ (Messiah/Jesus) is our Savior.

Each & all from every time (Age) has to believe GOD’S Word that unto us a Savior is born.

For more information on the Rapture of the Church it has been my pleasure to have completed an entire series upon this subject and they can be found on “ You Tube “ under my name Lanny Sterms. Also within our Revelation study which can also be found on You Tube under the heading of Wintersville United Methodist Church are the Rapture chapters of Revelation 4 & 11.