

Food for Thought

The sacrament/ordinance of Communion invites different thoughts and even an air of mystery depending on your religious background. Regardless, we typically understand it to be either a Spirit-enabled grace or remembrance related to Jesus' sacrifice; whether grace or memory will, again, depend on religious affiliation. However, the sacrifice is but one of *two* major points of consideration. Remembering only the sacrifice, we seemingly gloss over the other – the *covenant* Jesus' sacrifice enabled. That marriage-like covenant will be the focus of my blog.

God and our Christ have always communicated with us in terms and contexts humans understand and to which we can relate. For instance, Jesus used fishing terminology when teaching fishermen and farming concepts when instructing farmers. Likewise, God used or established human practices to guide performance and dress rehearsals for things to hope for in the future.

An excellent example of God's use of an existing practice to guide contemporary behavior was the covenant He formed with Abraham with its cutting, shedding of blood, and the promise of servitude. It constituted the basis for the renewed covenant through Moses and the dress rehearsals of the Passover feast (e.g. 1Corinthians 5:7) and a marriage-like relationship with Israel. Both rehearsals would eventually be fulfilled by Jesus' sacrifice and resulting marriage-like covenant. But what do covenant, sacrifice, and marriage have to do with Communion?

Jesus and Paul made clear that the Church is the *Bride of Christ* (see the **fulfillment** steps below) just as Israel was the *Bride of God* (e.g. Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 54:5-8). And why not? Marriage is a covenant, and there's no other human relationship meant to be as close. Therefore, the Jewish marriage served as a good 'dress rehearsal' for the relationship of God with the world through the Christ.

Understanding the process Jesus and His disciples were familiar with will help in the interpretation of Jesus, Paul, and John's comments related to the bride, a cup of the covenant, separation and preparation of a home, the return of Christ, and the wedding supper. Here are major steps of the Jewish betrothal/marriage process we fulfill with Jesus until His return:

Ancient Jewish Betrothal & Our Fulfillment

1. Father of the groom selects a potential bride: **2Corinthians 11:2**
2. Covenant sealed by bride and groom drinking from the cup of covenant: **Matthew 26:27-29**
3. Separation (**John Chapter 14; Matthew 9:14-15**) & building of a home: **John 14:2-3**
4. Father determined the day/hour of the marriage gathering: **Mark 13:26-32**

Ancient Jewish Wedding & Our Fulfillment

1. Wedding announcement by shouts and trumpet: **Matthew 24:30-31; 1Thessalonians 4:16-17**
2. Wedding feast and the drinking of the last cup: **Matthew 26:29; Revelation 19:7-9**
3. The wife goes to her new home: **Revelation 21:1-2 & 9-10**

In closing, my challenge is that we as His Bride not only remember Jesus' sacrifice during the sharing of wine and bread but also the marriage-like covenant His shed blood and broken body made possible.

Blessings,

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