

Series:

Title: The Betrothal and the Interval

Text: Hosea 2: 19-20

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Marrying a spouse is one of the most important things we will ever do in our lives. It is important because throughout the Scriptures the relationship of a bridegroom and his bride is used to portray the marriage between Christ and his church (Isa. 50:1; 54:1; 62:5; Jer. 2:32; Hosea 2:1; Matt. 9:15; John 3:29; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:32; Rev. 21:9).

We saw from “The First Marriage” between Adam and Eve, that the marriage between a man and a woman is a patterned after the union of Christ and his bride.

Proposition: Marriage between husband and wife is a picture typifying the union of Christ and his bride, the church.

Divisions: God worked in the hearts of men of old to create a tradition in the eastern world which illustrates four parts, included in the marriage of Christ and his bride.

1. *The Betrothal or The Espousal.* This is somewhat like our engagements. But the betrothal was far more binding.

2. *The Interval.* After the betrothal there came an interval. During this time, there was a very important work being performed by the groom.

3. *The Wedding Procession.* When the interval ended, the bride would prepare herself for the wedding. The groom would deck himself in his finest garments, along with his closest friends. At an unexpected time, they would go to the home of his bride in a grand procession full of pomp and singing. The announcement would be made to the bride, and her wedding party, that the groom was coming. Then the groom would take his bride and the whole party would go in a grand procession to where the marriage supper was held. (Matt. 25:1; John 3:29; Song. of Sol. 3:6-11)

4. *The Marriage Supper or the Wedding Feast.* This was an extravagant banquet completely provided by the groom and his father (Matt. 22:1). It was here that the bride and groom were publicly and permanently united in marriage before all the witnesses who were invited. The celebration of the marriage supper would last at least seven days.

I. THE BETROTHAL, ESPOUSAL

In our culture, young men and women date until they find “the one.” The man asks her father for her hand in marriage. Then the man proposes to the woman. The woman says “yes.” And they are engaged. But God ruled the hearts of men in the beginning in the east so that a betrothal took place to typify the way Christ’s bride became espoused to Christ in eternity.

Before God created the world, God the Father chose a bride for his Son. By God’s sovereign and free grace, he chose to save a multitude of Adam’s race. Those chosen children of God make up the church, the bride. Together, we were as the one beloved daughter of God our Father.

God our Father gave this bride away to Christ as a gift, upon certain set, ordered betrothal terms which agreement God the Son entered into.

John 17: 6 [Christ prayed to the Father saying]...thine they were, and thou gavest them me;

The betrothal agreement typifies the everlasting covenant of grace. Christ agreed to be our Husband betrothing us to himself as his bride. This was typified by Hosea betrothing Gomer to himself. These are the betrothal promises of Christ our Hosea concerning his bride, the church, God’s elect.

Hosea 2: 19: I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. 20: I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the LORD.

Christ betrothed us to him forever. He betrothed us to him in righteousness and judgment—promising to honor God’s law in righteous judgment. Christ betrothed us to him in lovingkindness and mercies—promising to show his bride perfect mercy in a way that does not diminish strict justice. He promised to bring us to create us anew, bring us to faith in him—I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the LORD.

There is a great difference between our engagement and the betrothal. In the betrothal between man and woman, when the terms of the marriage were publicly accepted, God's blessings were pronounced upon the union. And from that day, they were considered husband and wife, legally married (Matt. 1:18-19) This is why it was a big deal to Joseph to find out Mary was with child though they were only espoused, betrothed.

Matthew 1: 19: Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. 20:...the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. 21: And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

When Christ betrothed us to himself in eternity, though the wedding supper would not officially come until the end of time, God's blessing was upon this union so that from eternity we were Christ's lawful bride and all the dowry price—the bride price—was in Christ's hand to perform in the behalf of God's elect, his bride.

THE INTERVAL

During this interval, the groom paid what is translated in scripture as a dowry (bride price) to the bride's father for the honor of her hand in marriage.

Genesis 34: 11: And Shechem said unto her father [Jacob]...12: Ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me: but give me the damsel to wife.

If a bridegroom is a faithful believer, he desires to convince the father of the bride of his faithfulness to provide for his daughter. Christ is pictured in his faithfulness to pay the bride price in Jacob.

Genesis 29: 20: And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her

Christ would provide fully for his bride before as yet he came to her to betroth her to himself. He would not require her to pay anything. Christ knew the great **dowry** he, himself, must pay God her Father. What a price it was!

After Christ betrothed himself to us in eternity, God's elect, Christ's bride, became a wild, unfaithful, rebellious harlot. So if he would pay the dowry to redeem her from the curse and make her righteous, scripture says,

Hebrews 2: 17:...in all things it behoved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

His unfaithful bride was flesh, he must be made flesh, to lay down his life in her place. She was under the law, he must be made under the law to honor it for her. She was sin, he who knew no sin, must be made sin for her, to make her the righteousness of God in him. She was under the curse, he must be made a curse for her, to redeem her from the curse of the law.

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Oh, the everlasting love of our faithful Husband!

'From heav'n He came and sought us
To be His holy bride,
With His own blood He bought us,
And for our life He died!

But not only must his bride be made righteous by his payment of the dowry price, Christ will not marry an unbeliever. This is God's word to Christ as our Representative and it is God's word to every believer:

2 Corinthians 6: 14: Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15: And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 16: And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Therefore, Christ must make his wild unfaithful bride, faithful. He must give her a new holy heart and make her pure and spotless within, as well as without.

Psalm 45: 13: The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. 14: She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework:

So Christ must send his friend—the friend of the bridegroom—his preacher with his gospel. John the Baptist was the best man of Christ our Husband—he came tell Christ's bride the good news of what our Husband has done for us. John said,

John 3: 28: Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. 29: He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. 30: He must increase, but I *must* decrease.

Christ's preacher is like the servant of Abraham who must come forth speaking of our Isaac to each and every Rebekah that God the Father might fetch the bride for his Son.

This is just as much a necessity as the work our Husband did for us on the cross because Christ's betrothal agreement to the Father was:

Hosea 2: 19: I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. 20: I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD

So even though Christ betrothed himself to us in old eternity, he must send forth his messenger with the good news of the gospel and send forth the Holy Spirit and constrain us by his great love so that we give ourselves to him in faith. When Abraham sent his servant to fetch a bride for Isaac,

Genesis 24:53: And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave *them* to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things.

Christ sends his preacher preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ and Christ turns our hearts in faith in commitment to Christ to be our beloved Husband and Provider.

Psalm 65: 4: Blessed *is the man whom* thou choosest, and causest to approach *unto thee, that* he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, *even* of thy holy temple.

The servant of Christ—his best man—is faithful to Christ to bring the bride and present her to Christ. The apostle Paul said to the church at Corinth,

2 Corinthians 11:2: For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused *you* [betrothed you] to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

So the interval will not be complete until each member that makes up Christ bride is called and espoused to Christ! Believer, you are Christ's bride betrothed to him. Continue to be faithful to him alone! He shall come to take us to the wedding soon enough. We will look at the second two parts of the marriage next: "The Procession and the Wedding."

Amen!