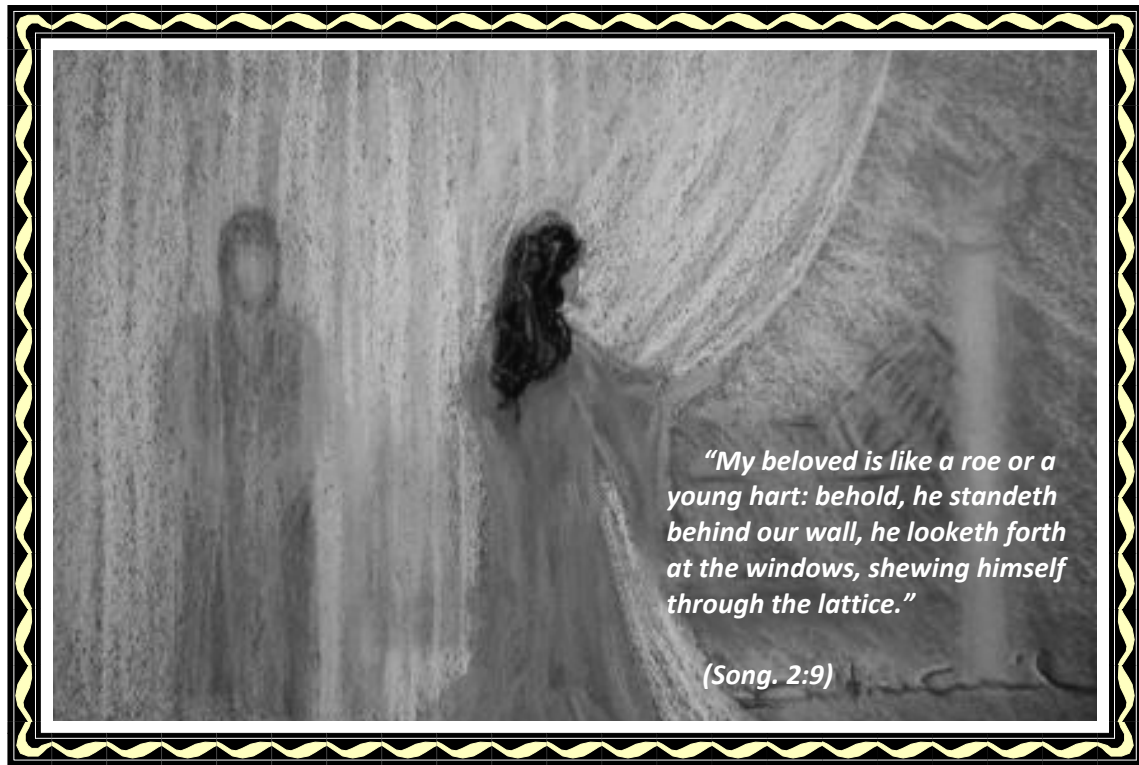


The Parable of the Bridegroom

*Matt. 9:14-15; Mark 2:18-20;
Luke 5:33-35*



*"My beloved is like a roe or a
young hart: behold, he standeth
behind our wall, he looketh forth
at the windows, shewing himself
through the lattice."*

(Song. 2:9)

The Parable of the Bridegroom

Scripture Reading: Matt. 9:14-15; Mark 2:18-20; Luke 5:33-35 (cp John 3:25-30)

- ⇒ **Introduction:** John the Baptist first used the figure of the bridegroom when a question among his disciples and the Jews arose with regard to purification. At the time both he (John) and Jesus were baptizing for the remission of sins. John was at this point a well established icon of religious reform, esteemed by the people as a prophet who straightly stood apart from the religious establishment. The popularity of Jesus, however, was on the rise and so it appeared to some that a competition was in the making. How sad that some will view others toiling in the Truth's vineyard in such a context if only to excuse themselves from putting their own hands to the plow. Nevertheless, Jesus immediately quelled their misguided query into the situation. There was no competition. Both were working at the same time for the same ends—light had come into the world in the person of Jesus Christ the bridegroom, and thus, a bride must be prepared for a marriage of the two, a union for the glory of Yahweh, and by His, grace, the salvation of a remnant of mankind (**John 3:36; 8:12; I Cor. 2:9**).
- ⇒ **The Children of the Bridechamber:** Interestingly, in each Gospel account the disciples of Jesus are called the "*children of the bridechamber*" and not the "bride". This ascription is appropriate to the circumstances where the ecclesia of Christ had not yet been established, but was nonetheless being carefully prepared for the day in which great tribulation upon all concerned would bring forth the peaceable fruits that Yahweh desired; the firsts fruits from the dead in the person of his glorified son, and a new born ecclesia, the House of David, founded upon the Chief corner stone, Jesus Christ the righteous. His showing unto Israel had come by John, and the children of the bridechamber rejoiced at his long-promised coming (**Luke 2:22-38**), his masterful teaching and miracles, but greater things were to come still by his obedience unto death (**Luke 1:67-80**, prophecy of John and Jesus), and then, as Jesus rightly stated, they would mourn for him.
- ⇒ **When the Bridegroom shall be taken:** No more ruder interruption of friendship and fellowship can be described than that which occurred on the eve of the Passover nearly 2000 years past, when an angry mob arrested Jesus on baseless charges of blasphemy and treason, and the children of the bridechamber were scattered. They had enjoyed first hand instruction and the intimate fellowship of the Son of Yahweh—the creator and sustainer of the Universe—for three and a half years, listening to his every word—the words of life everlasting—attending to his needs and carrying out his instructions amidst a nation that at length would reject his ministry. Yet they believed that this was the very Christ, the son of the living God, the Messiah spoken of by all the prophets (**John 1:38-51**), so how could this all end in such inexplicable and violent acts that were all beyond their control? The record states that these things were hidden from them (**Luke 9:43-45**), and perhaps it was so for several reasons, but our concern should be focused on the fact that Yahweh brought these things to pass that the perfection of the groom and the way of salvation for the full development of the bride would be brought to pass in due time. This full development of fruit required a most painful sundering between the two, a sundering met with many tears and anguish, suffering, pain and death. Yet, could we desire any other outcome? Christ would thereafter arise and ascend to the right hand of his Father in heaven, taking up his office as mediator and high priest over his house, and each of the disciples would arise to their respective office of apostleship, laying the foundation walls of the house of David and toiling twelve-fold in Christ's behalf for

The Parable of the Bridegroom

NOTES

the benefit of the fledgling ecclesia. In retrospect, the Apostles—the children of the bridechamber—understood why the bridegroom had to be taken from them. Jesus had told them this,

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In 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. 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. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him” (John 14:1-7).

⇒ **The role of the Bridegroom:** The above passage from the Gospel of John reveals a basic explanation of the role of the bridegroom; *“I go and prepare a place for you”*. How this is accomplished is a multifaceted affair and quite beyond our comprehension in our mortal frame. Yet, we do know that Yahweh has given Christ authority over all things even as Pharaoh did so to Joseph once circumstances were arranged in his behalf. And following a substantial trial of his faith, none would be greater than Joseph in all of Egypt except Pharaoh in the Throne. Yahweh oversaw the lives of many other faithful ones of old as well and through Christ, we may certainly conclude that providence is at work in our lives also. This is part of the work of the bridegroom. While he prepares a place for his bride, we must be prepared to receive it. In the following outline we list some of the duties of the bridegroom of which we have knowledge from the Scriptures which should give the prospective ecclesial bride comfort to know that we are not alone in our pilgrimage.

- ◆ Redeemer / Savior (**Song 1:7-8; Ruth 2:8-10; 2 Tim 1:10**)
- ◆ Perfect Example (**John 13:14-15; I Peter 2:21**)
- ◆ Mediator and High Priest attending to our prayers (**Heb. 7:25-28; 8:6; 9:15**)
- ◆ Provider of spiritual food (**Song. 2:3-4; Song 5:2; John 4:10; 6:48-51**)
- ◆ Giver of hope through the signs of his coming (**Song 2:8-11; 17; Rev. 1:1**)
- ◆ Tender of his spiritual garden (**Song. 6:11; 7:12; John 15:1-2**)
- ◆ An advocate with the Father / comforter (**I John 2:1-3; Psa. 119:50; Song. 2:5-6; Esther 2:11**).

⇒ **The role of the Bride:** Likewise there is a role for the bride to play which is rooted in faithfulness and unwavering fidelity toward her beloved. The bridegroom desires to view his bride-to-be in faithful attendance of the ways of God. As she longs and searches for him and the way that leads to everlasting life, he leads her from afar and her attention to spiritual matters gives him great pleasure. Israel’s example, on the other hand, shows the folly of the way of unfaithfulness. Israel turned their hearts to many strange wives and at length went after the gods of the heathen as well. Their fidelity to Yahweh’s first commandment, *“Thou shalt have no other Gods before me”* went quickly by the way (Exod. 20:3), and the next three commandments were naturally disannulled by their unrighteousness—they bowed themselves down to other gods, in doing so they took the name of Yahweh in vain, and they profaned the Sabbath by refusing to remember all that Yahweh had done for them in favour of heathen traditions.

The Parable of the Bridegroom

- ⇒ In the following outline we list some of the duties of the bride of which we have knowledge from the Scriptures that should help us to remember what our part is in developing a relationship that, Yahweh willing, will result in becoming of one substance with the bridegroom at his coming.
- ◆ Faithful and humble bride-to-be (**Song 1:5-6**)
 - ◆ Follower of his teaching (**Song 1:4; 4:8**)
 - ◆ Prayerful and full of almsgiving and of giving thanks (**Song 1:4; 3:1**)
 - ◆ Partaker of his spiritual banquet (**Song 2:5;)**
 - ◆ Watchman for the signs of his coming (**Song 2:8;**)
 - ◆ Attentive to his spiritual garden, bringing forth fruit (**Song 4:12-16; Song. 7:7-8**)
 - ◆ Keeping lamps full and lights burning brightly (**Matt. 25:1-13**).
 - ◆ To develop qualities to be desired by the bridegroom (**Song 4:1-5; Song. 6:9**).
 - ◆ Always remembering the bridegroom, his sacrifice and continual leadership in our lives, despite his absence (**Song. 5:5-6**).
- ⇒ **The Marriage:** In the above referenced parable of the ten virgins, there was a marriage for which all the attendant virgins were waiting, some wisely, keeping their lamps full of the oil of the word, and others, foolishly, making no preparations for the long night ahead. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. This teaches us that many of the household will indeed fall asleep before the return of Christ to the earth. However, some will have well prepared themselves for the great events to shortly transpire upon the earth—the resurrection, the gathering of the elect to judgment, and then the judgment seat itself where the future of every member of the household will be determined—eternally. Others will not have prepared themselves for this day. Their lamps will be empty. They will be ill prepared to meet

the Judge of all the earth and there will be no time or opportunity to add unto their account of the daily ledger of the book of life what they should have done. The books will have been closed and the record sealed until the time of judgment. They will desire to come in unto the marriage and to sup with the bridegroom when it is prepared, but will not be able (**Luke 13:23-28**).

When we come before the memorial table of the bridegroom, we remember all that the bridegroom has done on behalf of the attendant bride-to-be—the virgins. We remember his faithfulness, his longsuffering and perfect obedience, his unwavering stand for the Truth in the midst of a perverse and corrupt generation of vipers. As Jesus himself commanded, we also remember his death. The bridegroom now stands at the door in anticipation of His Father's command to return to the earth to restore the kingdom to Israel and to build again the Throne of David which has



The Parable of the Bridegroom

NOTES

fallen down. Then will come the time of the great marriage of the lamb (**Rev. 19:7-8**).

- ◆ The bridegroom has been patiently waiting and preparing one spiritual virgin at a time to complete this bride-to-be. Everything has now been prepared; the marriage is set, and she must now be perfected and joined unto the bridegroom. Through Yahweh's superintendence in our lives our every need as been provided for this noble day to be accomplished, and nothing has been withheld that would help us to prepare for the marriage to come (**Esther 2:9, 15**). But what have we, the bride-to-be, been doing while the bridegroom tarried? Have we been preparing? Have we remembered him? Have we proclaimed his death? Not just on Sunday morning, but during the week, in our reading, in our studies, in our prayers, in our doing those things that we hear and learn.
- ◆ Now is the time for self examination. And if we should judge ourselves—and make corrections where we have been deficient in our service and attendance to the bridegroom's spiritual garden—we should not be judged, we will have time to renew our lamps with spiritual oil (**I Cor. 11:31-32**). Let us not neglect our reasonable service and privilege to do so. Let us carry with us the exhortation of the Lord's table into the week before us and do those things that we ought to do and keep our lamps filled with spiritual oil and our lights burning brightly, for the midnight cry shall surely come.

⇒ **Garments of Salvation:** In the Lord's parable of the bridegroom, he includes two subsequent parables that are connected with the first; the parable of the patched cloth and the parable of the wine skins. In Isaiah's prophecy of Yahweh's anointed, he makes the following record which was possibly upon the Lord's mind when he uttered his parable:

"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations" (Isa. 61:10-11; **cp. Jer. 33:7-11**).

- ◆ Garments figure prominently as part of Yahweh's parables throughout the Old Testament writings (particularly as priestly attire) and so it is no surprise to find them associated with the character and mission of the bridegroom. Garments hid the nakedness of the priest (nakedness representing sin and the need for atonement, or a covering; **Exod. 20:26**) and now that the object of the atonement and high priest of Yahweh's choosing was come—Jesus (**Heb. 8:1-6**)—it was time for the old priestly garment, that is to say, the Aaronic priesthood and all the associated formalities of the law, to be taken away. The two could not be knit together. The weakness of the law (which was the failure of the flesh) could not be "fixed" by adding to it the teachings of Christ—both would be spoiled, or rent. When the Lord expired upon the stake, it is no coincidence that the veil in the temple was rent from top to bottom as the Aaronic priesthood had run its course and could no longer provide a means of sin covering and reconciliation to Yahweh (**Heb. 13:10-13**).
- ◆ This second parable of the patched cloth plays into the third. We note again that in Isaiah's prophecy that the earth (once sown with the word) would bring forth

NOTES

The Parable of the Bridegroom

her bud, and the garden of the bridegroom would thereafter spring forth fruits to be gathered at his coming (**Song. 6:2**). That which was sown was Christ's doctrine, the wine. Those who would be able to receive it had to be a "new man" as it were, one able to receive Christ's teaching (which was fulfilling the Law) and to bring forth fruit in return, as opposed to those whose salvation was aborted—like the wineskins that burst—on account of their refusal to give up the traditions of the Law or the way of the flesh (**Acts 1:16-18; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:22-24; 2 Tim. 4:10**).

Summary: The bridegroom tarries it would seem, but in reality he is preparing a place for his bride by working out Yahweh's plan in the earth. Meanwhile, his dutiful bride occupies herself by faithfully attending to the things of the spirit. She does not rest upon yesterdays successes, nor does she cast doubt upon the mercies of Yahweh because of her failures. She places her life in the hands of the bridegroom to help her along the way which is dark and full of trouble until the day dawn. His sin covering has provided the means of reconciliation to Yahweh, yet this is only provisional, as the bride is tasked with keeping her garment unspotted from the world. If faithful in keeping herself free from sin and pure from the corruption that is in the world through lust, there is great joy to come; as her bridegroom approaches there is no hesitation, for she has made herself ready for the marriage for which she has longed. Those of faith will enter abundantly into this glory and triumph over the flesh. Those who were foolish, on the other hand, will be driven out. Let us, therefore, make our calling and election sure by preparing ourselves as the dutiful bride-to-be (**2 Peter 1:5-11**).

