

*Chapter 1-Then Came the Wedding*

*<sup>6</sup> Then I heard what seemed to be the thunderous voice of a great multitude, like the sound of a massive waterfall and mighty peals of thunder, crying out:*

*“Hallelujah!*

*For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns!*

*<sup>7</sup> Let us rejoice and exalt him and give him glory,  
because the wedding celebration of the Lamb has come.*

*And his bride has made herself ready.*

*<sup>8</sup> Fine linen, shining bright and clear,*

*has been given to her to wear,*

*and the fine linen represents*

*the righteous deeds of his holy believers.”*

*<sup>9</sup> Then the angel said to me, “Write these words: Wonderfully blessed are those who are invited to feast at the wedding celebration of the Lamb!”<sup>1</sup>*

Everything God has does from Genesis to Revelation is about The Father seeking a Bride for The Son. Marriage is used to illustrate how vastly intimate, satisfying and pure our Spiritual relationship with Jesus can and should be. It’s all about covenant relationship, commitment and fidelity.

God is our creator and our redeemer. This alone is cause for us to Worship him in every respect. The amazing thing is that his love for us, his willingness to care for us and his unending commitment to us is put in terms of a husband/wife relationship. Isaiah 54:5 says, “For your Maker is your Husband—the Lord of hosts is His name—and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; the God of the whole earth He is called. (Amplified Bible)” Acting as the perfect Husband, he desires us to be in constant fellowship. Gifts in abundance can be ours in an extravagant show of deep love.

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<sup>1</sup> Brian Simmons, trans., [\*The Passion Translation\*](#) (BroadStreet Publishing, 2017), Re 19:6–9.

We are not always the best and most faithful wife and lover. Hosea was commanded by God to marry Gomer. Gomer was unfaithful in very big ways. Yet, the story tells of God commanding Hosea to forgive her and take her back. Hosea would have to purchase or redeem her from her debtors. It was costly to redeem someone who had been so rebellious where Hosea had been a righteous husband. In our way of thinking, she would have been a complete write-off. This is a true representation of Israel's turning away from God. But wait! Her unfaithfulness is followed by God's Grace and provision. It also is how God treats us with perfect forgiveness, kindness, and love when we fail. God is all in even if we are not. Look at God's promise in Hosea 2:19-20:

*<sup>19</sup> I will betroth you to me forever;  
I will betroth you in righteousness and justice,  
in love and compassion.*

*<sup>20</sup> I will betroth you in faithfulness,  
and you will acknowledge the Lord.<sup>2</sup>*

The entirety of Scripture is about this Husband/Wife Relationship. The New Testament Church of Jesus Christ, of which you and I are a part, is a perfect analogy for the sacrificial love of Christ for the Bride he so longs to love. Paul expresses it so eloquently in Ephesians 5:25-27:

*<sup>25</sup> And to the husbands, you are to demonstrate love for your wives with the same tender devotion that Christ demonstrated to us, his bride. For he died for us, sacrificing himself <sup>26</sup> to make us holy and pure, cleansing us through the showering of the pure water of the Word of God. <sup>27</sup> All that he does in us is designed to make us a mature church for his pleasure, until we become a source of praise to him—glorious and radiant, beautiful and holy, without fault or flaw.<sup>3</sup>*

Notice how much Grace and devotion we can expect from the Groom. Also, be quick to notice what is expected of the wife in return. The words "mature", "for his pleasure", "a source of praise to him", "holy, and without fault or flaw" represent what is expected in return. Disobedience, idolatry and sin will not be accepted *Carte blanche*. The free gift of eternal life comes with the offer of righteous relationship which we must mature into. Later, we will

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<sup>2</sup> [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Ho 2:19–20.

<sup>3</sup> Brian Simmons, trans., [The Passion Translation](#) (BroadStreet Publishing, 2017), Eph 5:25–27.

address how to abide in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Even the power to accomplish this maturity is a gift from the Groom if we position ourselves to receive it.

Our headstone verse for this chapter, Revelation 19:6-9 shows this divine relationship brought to eternal conclusion. (We will discuss later how the events of Genesis and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb here in Revelation are the bookends of God's redemptive work) Here is where our promised union with Christ is celebrated in victory, eternal communion and love. Ephesians 1:13-14 tells us:

*<sup>13</sup> And because of him, when you who are not Jews heard the revelation of truth, you believed in the wonderful news of salvation. Now we have been stamped with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit.*

*<sup>14</sup> He is given to us like an engagement ring is given to a bride, as the first installment of what's coming! He is our hope-promise of a future inheritance which seals us until we have all of redemption's promises and experience complete freedom—all for the supreme glory and honor of God! <sup>4</sup>*

The engagement is finished, and it is time to experience the fulfillment of God's promises and the eternal union between God and the people he has loved and waited for.

To truly understand and appreciate this dynamic story of love, redemption and commitment we need to look at the breadth of this Husband/Wife relationship in terms of covenant love and intimacy.

To understand the covenantal relationship that God wants as Husband to his people (wife), we need to look at the way Scripture describes the promises of God and our appropriate response.

1. The Covenant Concept: Time and again, God offers his people a Covenant relationship. A Covenant is both a binding legal agreement and it is relational. It is a back and forth where promises and obligations are spelled out. God begins the covenant by promising his love, blessing, presence and protection. God has always kept his end of the agreement, affirming the enduring nature of his divine and unwavering commitment. Even in times when the people of Israel were not following God, his nature was expressed in such passages as Jeremiah 31:3-4 which states:

*<sup>3</sup> The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying:*

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<sup>4</sup> Brian Simmons, trans., [\*The Passion Translation\*](#) (BroadStreet Publishing, 2017), Eph 1:13–14.

*“I have loved you with an everlasting love;  
I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.*

*<sup>4</sup> I will build you up again,  
and you, Virgin Israel, will be rebuilt.<sup>5</sup>*

I am reminded of a New Testament verse that I use at most Holy Communion Services following the prayer of confession. 1John 1:8-10 speaks of God’s commitment and faithfulness:

*<sup>8</sup> If we boast that we have no sin, we’re only fooling ourselves and are strangers to the truth.*

*<sup>9</sup> But if we freely admit our sins when his light uncovers them, he will be faithful to forgive us every time. God is just to forgive us our sins because of Christ, and he will continue to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.<sup>6</sup>*

2. Loyalty-Fidelity: Marriage is intended to be exclusive. (From Discipleship Ministries: A Service of Christian Marriage-Historic Vows in the Methodist Church)

*Pastor to the man:*

*Name, will you have this woman to be your wedded wife,  
to live together in the holy estate of matrimony?  
Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her,  
in sickness and in health;  
**and forsaking all others keep only to her  
so long as you both shall live? (Emphasis mine)***

*Pastor to the woman:*

*Name, will you have this man to be your wedded husband.....*

God created physical marriage between a man and woman to be a precise metaphor for God’s relationship with his physical and spiritual wives—the Church. Exodus 20:2-7 plainly lays out the expectation of total fidelity:

*And God spoke all these words:*

*<sup>2</sup> “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.*

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<sup>5</sup> [\*The New International Version\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Je 31:3–4.

<sup>6</sup> Brian Simmons, trans., [\*The Passion Translation\*](#) (BroadStreet Publishing, 2017), 1 Jn 1:8–9.

<sup>3</sup> *“You shall have no other gods before me.*

<sup>4</sup> *“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. <sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, <sup>6</sup> but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.*

<sup>7</sup> *“You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.<sup>7</sup>*

One of many examples of God’s constant condemnation to his people/wife for not being faithful to this covenant even uses the word “prostitution” (in this case worshipping other god’s, spoken of in terms of spiritual adultery) in Hosea 5:4:

<sup>4</sup> *“Their deeds do not permit them  
to return to their God.*

*A spirit of prostitution is in their heart;  
they do not acknowledge the Lord.<sup>8</sup>*

God expects fidelity not only in religious rituals, offerings and services, but the heart’s allegiance.

3. Redemptive/Restorative Love: God’s commitment in the covenant has an element that only be found in true *AGAPE* love. Not only does God show his absolute desire to redeem us but seeks to restore relationship when broken. Looking again at Hosea’s situation with an unfaithful wife, we see in Hosea 3:1-3:

*The Lord said to me, “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.”*

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<sup>7</sup> [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Ex 20:1–7.

<sup>8</sup> [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Ho 5:4.

<sup>2</sup> So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. <sup>3</sup> Then I told her, “You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will behave the same way toward you.”<sup>9</sup>

God is showing us his attitude and commitment through the story of Hosea and Gomer. Because of his love and the fact that he cannot break his covenant vow he will be faithful to redeem and restore his beloved. What an assurance this is to us.

I talk to people in the church often who say they lost any relationship with God because of some sin that they were caught in. Asking some direct questions about their view and understanding of who God is and his nature, they ultimately paint a picture of an angry old man with white hair and beard holding lightning bolts ready to zap them for their sin. They are afraid to approach God because they think his holiness would demand their immediate death. Were it not for God’s redeeming love coupled with his expressed desire to show us restoring love, that would be true. I try to paint a picture instead of the father of the Prodigal Son (a representative of God the Father and his attitudes in case you didn’t know) waiting with open arms for his beloved son to return. And when the son tried to apologize to his father in Luke 15:21, this happened:

<sup>21</sup> “Then the son said, ‘Father, I was wrong. I have sinned against you. I could never deserve to be called your son. Just let me be—’

***“The father interrupted and said, ‘Son, you’re home now!’ (Emphasis mine)<sup>10</sup>***

I googled the question, “How many times in the Bible does the phrase ‘Fear not!’ occur. The answer was 365 times. Oh, that we could get people to understand Ephesians 3:17-19:

<sup>17</sup> Then, by constantly using your faith, the life of Christ will be released deep inside you, and the resting place of his love will become the very source and root of your life.

<sup>18-19</sup> Then you will be empowered to discover what every holy one experiences—the great magnitude of the astonishing love of Christ in all its dimensions. How deeply intimate and far-reaching is his love! How enduring and inclusive it is! Endless love beyond measurement that

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<sup>9</sup> [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Ho 3:1–3.

<sup>10</sup> Brian Simmons, trans., [The Passion Translation](#) (BroadStreet Publishing, 2017), Lk 15:21.

*transcends our understanding—this extravagant love pours into you until you are filled to overflowing with the fullness of God!* <sup>11</sup>

4. Engagement/Preparation/Sanctification: In the Israelite community the engagement period as much more purposeful than our modern American version. The time from becoming betrothed until the wedding itself was use by the groom and the bride with respective tasks. They would spend time together to mature in their understanding of one another so that they would not be strangers, which may have been the case when they were betrothed by arrangement. The one physical thing they were forbidden to do was intercourse. Chaperones were sometimes assigned to make sure that didn't happen. The groom was to prepare a place for the couple to live. The bride was to prepare the necessary accessories to the wedding and to begin keeping house. These will be discussed in more detail in later chapters.

In general terms, the New Testament describes the Church as a bride preparing to be joined with her husband. We are to be transformed into the likeness of Christ. In the spiritual sense we are to become “bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh” with Christ. This transformation prepares us for the eternal communion we will experience.

Jesus has also been busy preparing the place for us, fulfilling his role in the betrothal process.

5. Eternal Communion: As in earthly weddings, there is going to be the celebration of all time when the time comes. The lead verse of this chapter Revelation 19:6-9 describes it for us. The entire Bible is about the Father obtaining a Bride for Jesus. The family eventually lives together in purity, safety, harmony and love in the Father's House. Loyalty and fidelity are rewarded with divine fellowship and union. We have divine fellowship and union now, in this life, but only partly. Then, God's plan for us will be complete.

Covenant relationship established between God and his people appears throughout the biblical text. The purpose is to reveal the character of God, his nature, and to rehearse his redemptive plan. His desired relationship with us is demonstrated in these key elements of the covenant:

1. God's Initiative: God reaches out to us with his proposed covenant. Romans 3:10-11 reminds us that we would never go looking for a relationship with God. He had to come looking for us:

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<sup>11</sup> Brian Simmons, trans., [\*The Passion Translation\*](#) (BroadStreet Publishing, 2017), Eph 3:17–19.

<sup>10</sup> *As it is written:*

*“There is no one righteous, not even one;*

<sup>11</sup> *there is no one who understands;*

*there is no one who seeks God.* <sup>12</sup>

God chooses to initiate a covenant bond with us. This is evident from the beginning with God’s covenant with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and the Israelites, and finally with the Church. An example is Genesis 12:1-3:

*The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.*

<sup>2</sup> *“I will make you into a great nation,*

*and I will bless you;*

*I will make your name great,*

*and you will be a blessing.* <sup>i</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *I will bless those who bless you,*

*and whoever curses you I will curse;*

*and all peoples on earth*

*will be blessed through you.*<sup>13</sup>

2. Promises and Completion: The promises made by God are his presence, guidance, protection and blessing. What is amazing is that these extend to future generations. The completion of the covenant from God’s perspective is outside of time as he is outside of time. Israel finally entered the promised land after spending 400 years in Egypt. Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac came along. Sarah was in her 90’s, well past childbearing age. Paul talks about the promise of the Messiah from years before in the Old Testament and God’s timing in Galatians 4:4:

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<sup>12</sup> [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Ro 3:10–11.

<sup>13</sup> [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Ge 12:1–3.

*<sup>4</sup> But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,<sup>14</sup>*

The Christians of the early church thought Jesus was returning in their lifetime. Christians today often get discouraged if they have prayed for years for something to happen but have not seen it fulfilled. We must remember that God cannot break his covenant. 2 Peter 3:8-9 says:

*<sup>8</sup> So, dear friends, don't let this one thing escape your notice: a single day counts like a thousand years to the Lord Yahweh, and a thousand years counts as one day. <sup>9</sup> This means that, contrary to man's perspective, the Lord is not late with his promise to return, as some measure lateness. But rather, his "delay" simply reveals his loving patience toward you, because he does not want any to perish but all to come to repentance.<sup>15</sup>*

3. Conditions/Obligations: Like any legal contract between two parties, God's covenant has stated terms, conditions and obligations. Although God's extravagant generosity and unending love and devotion are expressed, obligations exist which we must fulfil. These obligations are outlined with the Mosaic Covenant in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17)

Noted is the fact that the first covenant made with Adam was extremely simple. God said, "I will bless you by allowing you to eat all you want, take care of the garden, be fruitful and multiply" (my paraphrase). The only obligation God placed upon the covenant was, "Do not eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil". We all know they failed. The covenant also has the penalty stated: "for the day you eat of it you will die".

The covenant gets more complicated throughout the Old Testament. Google the question, "How many commandments were given to Israel in the Old Testament"? The answer is: 613 Jewish commandments (mitzvot in Hebrew) extracted from the Old Testament.

Thank God his plan was to finish as he started. The New Covenant returns to simplicity. God commands, "Believe in the One I send you." The obligation is to "follow him" in simple, childlike faith. Jesus explains in Matthew 22:36-40:

*<sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?"*

*<sup>37</sup> Jesus answered him, " 'Love the Lord your God with every passion of your heart, with all the energy of your being, and with every thought that is within you.' <sup>38</sup> This is the great and*

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<sup>14</sup> [The Holy Bible: King James Version](#), Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version. (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2009), Ga 4:3-4.

<sup>15</sup> Brian Simmons, trans., [The Passion Translation](#) (BroadStreet Publishing, 2017), 2 Pe 3:8-9.

***supreme commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it in importance: 'You must love your friend in the same way you love yourself.' <sup>40</sup> Contained within these commandments to love you will find all the meaning of the Law and the Prophets."*** <sup>16</sup>

Many people don't realize that Jesus was summarizing the fulfillment of the massive number of commandments under the Mosaic Law found in the book of Deuteronomy and elsewhere. Thank Jesus for loving us enough to make it simple. That being said, maturity in our discipleship is required.

The penalty is stated by Jesus in John 3:18:

*<sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.*<sup>17</sup>

4. Covenant Signs: Covenants have tokens or signs. Noah was given the rainbow (which had never existed before since it never rained before the flood) (Genesis 9:13). Abraham was given circumcision (Genesis 17:11). The Passover was the sign of the Mosaic Covenant to be reenacted regularly by the people. The New Covenant sign can be the Cross and Holy Communion (Luke 22:19).

5. Mutual Love/Faithfulness: At its root, the New Covenant is more than a legal agreement. We have an invitation to be in a personal, loving, fulfilling and communal relationship with God. Deuteronomy 7:7-10:

*<sup>7</sup> The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. <sup>8</sup> But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. <sup>9</sup> Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments. <sup>10</sup> But those who hate him he will repay to their face by destruction; (my note: the penalty is also stated)<sup>18</sup>*

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<sup>16</sup> Brian Simmons, trans., [The Passion Translation](#) (BroadStreet Publishing, 2017), Mt 22:36–40.

<sup>17</sup> [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Jn 3:18.

<sup>18</sup> [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Dt 7:7–10.

6. New Covenant: The New Covenant transcends and fulfills the previous covenants. Now forgiveness of sins and a wonderful Husband/Wife relationship is possible through the blood of Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Luke 22:20:

*<sup>20</sup> After supper was over, he lifted the cup again and said, "This cup is my blood of the new covenant I make with you, and it will be poured out soon for all of you."<sup>19</sup>*

Significance of the New Covenant lies with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which is God with us! This gift is the culmination of the promise of God and demonstrates his commitment to a personal and eternal relationship with us. It calls for our dutiful obligation to faith, obedience, and love toward him.

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<sup>19</sup> Brian Simmons, trans., [\*The Passion Translation\*](#) (BroadStreet Publishing, 2017), Lk 22:20.