

Preparation of the Bride

Eph 5:25-32. Under the **Old Covenant**, the Father was husband to the faithful of Israel (Isa 54:5). Under the **New Covenant**, Jesus is the **Bridegroom** of those who would receive the '**bride price**', which He paid for them. **John the Baptist** pointed to Jesus and said, "He who has the bride is the Bridegroom, but the friend of the Bridegroom who stands and hears Him, rejoices greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice" (Jn 6:29).

A PICTURE OF THE BRIDE OF CHRIST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT		
Event	Jewish Culture	Biblical Understanding
Marriage covenant	When a young man was interested in a lady, he would write a contract and in agreement with his own father, he would arrange a ' bride price '. This written, legal document stipulated the terms of the marriage proposal.	Mt 24:35. The Legal Document is the Word of God, agreed with the Father, the ' bride price ' is His own blood. He said, "this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Mt 26:28).
Leaves father	He would then leave his father's house and go to that of the prospective bride, proposing marriage and showing her and her father the contract with the ' bride price '.	Jn 6:38-40. The Lord Jesus Christ then left His Father's home to seek a bride. He prayed to His Father, "I have manifested Your Name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me and they have kept Your word" (Jn 17:6). He paid the full price for His bride through His death on the cross and the shedding of His blood, as prophesied in the Word of God. The Bible says, "you are not your own, for you were bought at a price" (I Cor 6:19-20).

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Betrothal	Once the marriage covenant was accepted, the bridegroom paid the purchase price to the father of the proposed bride, then the young man and woman were regarded as 'betrothed' (as if they were legally married). From that moment the bride was declared to be 'sanctified' - set apart exclusively for her bridegroom. As a symbol of this covenant relationship, the groom and bride would drink from a cup of wine, over which a special prayer of betrothal was said. This represented a blood commitment (covenant) to the union. At this time the bridegroom would give her several gifts, which he had brought with him.	Those who receive the ' bride price ', He sanctifies. He also gives them gifts and directions to regularly remember the covenant, by taking Communion. Jesus gave us instructions at the last supper, when He said of the bread, "Take eat, this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me". And of the wine, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me" (I Cor 11:24-25).
Bridegroom prepares a place	After this the groom would leave her home and return to his father's house. There he would prepare a place for them to live together.	Jn 20:16-17. Jesus returned to His Father's house at His ascension and is at present preparing a home for His bride. He said, "In My Father's house are many mansions I go to prepare a place for you" (Jn 14:2).
Bride prepares herself.	After he had left, she would spend time preparing herself for his return, part of which was a special bath, as part of a ceremonial cleansing. She would use the gifts to beautify herself and would wear a veil in public, to show that she was separated (sanctified) to the one who had paid the price. She would resist the offers of any other suitors.	Mk 16:16. She is now set apart (sanctified) for her Lord and is baptised in water, as an outward sign of this separation and commitment. Although her inner beauty is veiled from the world, the Heavenly Bridegroom sees her spiritual growth, as she uses the gifts given to her. In Rev 19:7 we read, "His wife has made herself ready".

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House is ready	After about a year, when the accommodation was ready, the father would inspect it and if he approved, he would send his son to collect his bride. This would usually happen at night, when he and the best man with other male escorts would leave the father's house together and make a torchlight procession to the home of the bride	Mt 24:36. Only the Father knows the exact time of the return of His Son and He will give the word, when the total number of the bride is complete (Rom 11:25). Peter wrote, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Pet 3:9).
Bride waiting and prepared	Although the bride was expecting her groom to come for her, she did not know the exact time and always had to be prepared. It was the custom to keep her oil lamp, veil and other belongings beside her bed, ready for his return. Her bridesmaids were also prepared and kept extra oil for all their lamps.	Mt 24:44. The bride is waiting today with anticipation and longing for the return of her heavenly Bridegroom and yet she does not know the exact time. Paul wrote of this event, "you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night" (I Thess 5:2).
Arrival of groom	When the group neared the house, they would give a shout and blow a trumpet (ram's horn), to let the bride know that her bridegroom had arrived.	Jn 14:3. He will return without warning in the air, "with a shout, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God" (I Thess 4:16).
Taking away of the bride	There would now be no delay, the groom would immediately rush into the house and take off his bride, who would be wearing her veil and carrying her lamp. The bridesmaids would accompany them. It would be a joyful and large procession that would return to the new accommodation at his father's house.	Mt 24:40-41. Paul wrote of this wonderful future event, "The dead in Christ will rise first, then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (I Thess 4:16-17).

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Marriage supper	Upon arrival, they would find that the wedding guests had assembled already. The bride and groom would enter the bridal chamber, where in the privacy of that place they would enter into physical union for the first time, thus consummating the marriage that had been covenanted earlier. The wedding festivities would last for seven days, during which they would all have a joyous feast called 'the marriage supper', given especially to honour the new husband and wife.	Rev 19:6-9. He will then take His bride with Him back to heaven, where the wedding guests (the saints of the Old Covenant) will be waiting. Soon after their arrival the marriage will be consummated (in a spiritual sense), completing the union (Rom 7:4), then the special marriage supper will commence. Jesus said, "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" (Mt 26:29).
Bride returns with Groom	After this they would return to her village, with her veil removed, so all could see who she was.	Mt 24:27. In Jude 14 we read, "Behold the Lord comes with ten thousand of His saints". When His bride returns with Him to the earth, the veil will be removed and all will see who she is. Paul wrote, "Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known" (I Cor13:12). As "joint heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:17), His bride will be joined to Him in a loving, marriage union through eternity.
http://www.newlifebadmin.org.uk/Bride_of_Christ2.shtml		