

The Marvelous Mystery of the Bride

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Eph. 5: 25-32

Introduction

New Testament ministers are to be “stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1). Scriptural “mysteries” are previously concealed truths which God in the progress of revelation has chosen to reveal to His people. The New Testament contains 11 “mysteries.” While Ephesians 5 is frequently considered by those who would perfect their marital relationship, we should be mindful that the text was given by the Holy Spirit to reveal the marvelous mystery of the bride of Christ—the church! While the passage provides pointed instruction for husbands and wives, it also contains a mysterious revelation of the relationship of Christ to His bride. Of Ephesians 5, Charles Haddon Spurgeon was very right to say, “This is one of the most wonderful texts in all of the Bible. It is fitted to be the theme of one hundred elaborate discourses. We can no more hope to compass it than a child can hold the oceans in his hands.”

Ephesians 5 reveals the marvelous mystery of the marriage that Christ has entered into with His bride, the church. As we analyze the analogy that the Spirit of God reveals in Ephesians 5, we find ourselves in awe of God’s grace!

I. The _____ the heavenly groom paid for his bride (v. 25)

The imagery used throughout this passage is based on the traditions of the Middle Eastern wedding. The Middle Eastern groom was expected to present a gift (a dowry) to the bride’s family. According to Deuteronomy 22, the customary price for a bride was _____ ounces of silver. In Genesis 24, Abraham’s servant took _____ camels loaded with gifts for the family of Rebekah. In Genesis 29, Jacob finds himself penniless and so passionately in love with Rachel that he willingly offered himself as a servant for seven years.

While the Old Testament contains the record of enormous bridal gifts given, the greatest love gift ever given was given by our Savior (John 15:13; 1 Peter 1:18; Galatians 2:20; Revelation 5:9). It is the love of Christ which compels us to “walk in love as Christ hath loved us and given himself for us.” (Ephesians 5:2).

II. The _____ the heavenly groom performs for his bride (v. 26)

In order to fully understand and appreciate the picture presented in Ephesians 5, we must be familiar with the marital customs of the ancients.

When Esther was selected to be the Queen of the Persian king Ahashuerus, the second chapter of the book that bears her name tells us that the king gave “that which was necessary for her purification” (v. 9). Esther had seven maidens attending to her every need. For six months Esther was purified with oil and myrrh (v. 12) and for six months she was prepared with sweet perfumes (v. 12). Only then could Esther be called before her groom, the king.

Alfred Edersheim, the Viennese scholar who converted from Judaism to Christianity in the 1800s, wrote, “In Judea there were at every marriage two groomsmen or ‘friends of the

groom.’ One served the groom, the other served the bride. Before the marriage, they acted as intermediaries; at the marriage they escorted the bride to her chamber. They were guarantors of the bride’s chastity (II Cor. 11:2).”

We must often be reminded that the One who paid our purchase price expects that we be “unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).

III. The _____ the heavenly groom has promised his bride (v. 27)

In every culture, the presentation of the bride represents a very special moment. One day the heavenly bride, the church, will be presented to the Father’s “only begotten son.” Revelation 19 beautifully pictures the presentation of the heavenly bride. Note with great care that the “white linen” with which the bride is arrayed is the

_____ of the saints.

We must submit to the wonderful working of the Spirit of God as He weaves upon us the beauty of holiness while preparing us to be presented to the Glorious Groom.

IV. The _____ the heavenly groom has provided for the bride (v. 30-32).

We certainly tread on holy ground when we walk through Ephesians 5. To think that the Second Adam has made us “members of His body” (v. 30) is indeed a mystery. Nevertheless, the Word of God makes it plain, from the moment that He slept in death for us, He has given to the church a unique privilege!

As His bride, we share His _____ (II Cor. 5:17).

As His bride, we have are His loving possession (John 10:27-28).

As His bride, we are forever secure (Eph. 1:13).

As His bride, we always know His care (I Pet. 5:7).

V. The _____ the groom has pronounced for his bride (Rev. 22:17).

The Lord has graciously, personally, freely and generously invited us into His presence forever.

What a marvelous mystery to ponder—Christ and the church! In a generation that enamored by worship styles and novel ministries, our approach to the topic of Baptist fundamentalism must begin with a right foundation. Our foundation is found in Ephesians 5. For Him “who loved us and gave Himself for us,” we are to be a “glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.” May God help us to walk wisely and to remain “unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).