**The Lord of the Banquet Series**

**“The Wedding”**

**John 2.1-12**

**Introduction**

Last week I began the four-part series entitled “The Lord of the Banquet.” We are looking at Jesus’ first miracle of turning water into wine at the wedding at Cana of Galilee.

Let’s begin this morning by reading the text recorded in John 2.1-12.

*On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there;**and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding.**When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no wine.”**And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.”**Now there were six stone water pots set there for the Jewish custom of purification, containing twenty or thirty gallons each.* *Jesus said to them, “Fill the water pots with water.” So they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, “Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter.” So they took it to him. When the headwaiter tasted the water which had become wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom,**and said to him, “Every man serves the good wine first, and when the people have drunk freely, then he serves the poorer wine; but you have kept the good wine until now.” This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him. After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother and His brothers and His disciples; and they stayed there a few days.*

**The Invitation**

Last week we looked at those invited to the wedding and concluded that Mary, Jesus, and Jesus’ brothers were invited to the wedding because they were close family friends or relatives. But Jesus’ disciples were not family. The disciples probably didn’t know the Bride or Groom and the Bride and Groom probably didn’t know the disciples. The fact is Jesus’s disciples had been invited only a couple of days before the wedding. Jesus’ disciples were strangers. So, why were strangers invited to a weeklong wedding celebration that included a full course of food and drinks? Because Jesus wanted to underscore the truth that in His new community strangers are welcomed to the banquet. Brothers and Sisters, in Christ *you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are*members *of* *God’s household.* (Eph.2.19) You are members of Jesus’ family. Jesus made sure His disciples were invited to the wedding because when Christ calls us to be His disciples we become one with Christ. The two become one flesh! (Eph.5.31-32)

**The Wedding**

This morning I want us to focus on “The Wedding” and reflect on the redemptive significance behind the wedding ceremony. Sad to say but our culture often portrays a negative perspective of getting married. The story is told of a little girl’s first time to attending a wedding. When she sees the bride she whispers to her mother, “Why is the bride wearing white?” Her mother softly responds, “White is the color of happiest and today is the happiest day of her life.” The child thought for a moment and asked, “So why is the groom wearing black?’ In today’s culture Bridal and Bachelor parties are designed for “one last ‘hurrah’” before entering in matrimonial prison.

Even though modern culture might portrait a negative view of getting married, the Bible has a very positive view of marriage. As a matter of fact the Lord instituted marriage into the human relationship because it was not good for man to be alone. (Gen.2.18) God ordained marriage as the most intimate relationship known to humanity. In His Word God uses the marriage relationship of a man and a woman as the closes relationship that exemplifies Christ’s love for His Church, His disciples, believers in Christ. I believe when you see the parallel between the Jewish wedding ceremony and the relationship between Christ and His Bride, the Church, you will discover why Jesus chose the wedding of Cana to be His first miracle and why Jesus insisted His disciples be invited.

The Jewish marriage customs can be outlined in six phases: First the betrothal, then paying the dowry, then the interval, then preparation and procession, then receiving the bride, and lastly wedding banquet. Let’s work through each of these phases together.

**Betrothal**

First, was the “betrothal.” A betrothal was far more binding than our modern day “engagement.” At the “betrothal” the marriage terms are accepted in the presence of witnesses and God’s blessing was pronounced. From that day the groom and the bride are legally husband and wife. We see this with Mary and Joseph when the Bible refers to them as husband and wife even though they had not come together. (Mt.1.18-19; Lk.1.27)

**Paying the Dowry**

Next was the “Paying of the Dowry.” The bride’s father would set the price that the groom had to be paid to secure the marriage. We see this with Jacob working for his father-in-law, Laban, for seven years for Rachel’s hand in marriage. (Gen.29.15-20)

**Interval**

Next comes “The Interval” when the groom leaves his bride and returns to his father’s house for a period of twelve months.

**Preparation and Procession**

During this time the bride prepares and adorns herself for the upcoming wedding banquet. When the time comes the groom dresses in his best attire and accompanied by his friends make a procession back to the home of his bride singing and carried torches.

**Receiving the Bride**

After arriving at the home of the bride the groom receives his bride and with a returning procession travels to the place where the wedding banquet will be held.

**The Wedding Banquet**

The Wedding Banquet would go on for at least seven days with food and drinks provided by the host family the entire time. The Wedding Banquet is what Jesus and His disciples were invited to at the wedding at Cana.

**The Redemptive Significance**

Hopefully you can see you see the parallel between the Jewish wedding ceremony and our relationship with Christ as His bride. Let me unpack it for you. The believer is betrothed to Christ. We were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph.1.4) and claimed as His bride. Through our confession of faith we make a public profession that Christ is our husband. God the Father set the price of the dowry to be the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Christ paid the dowry for His bride with His blood. *You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold . . .**but with precious blood . . . the blood of Christ.* (IPt.1.18-19) As the hymn writer wrote, “From heaven He came and sought her to be His holy bride; With His blood He brought her, and for her life He died.” (The Church’s One Foundation) After paying the dowry the interval began with Christ’s ascension back to the Father in heaven. During the interval His bride, the Church, is making herself ready. Then the time will come when Christ will return for His bride in a holy procession from heaven. When Christ comes again He will receive us as His bride and will escort us to the Wedding Banquet – The celebration of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

I think the redemptive parallel between the Jewish wedding ceremony and our relationship with Christ as His bride is why Jesus insisted that His new disciples were invited to the wedding at Cana. Jesus wanted to use this wedding to lay the foundational idea of His relationship to the Church, the new community, He came to establish. In His future ministry Jesus will use the wedding and the banquet as metaphors to illustrate the truth about the Kingdom of God. We will look at some of these teachings of Christ in the weeks to come.

**Christ and His Bride**

Scripture again and again communicates the martial relationship Christ and His Bride. For example, in the Old Testament the Lord spoke through the Prophet Isaiah, *“For your husband is your Maker, whose name is the Lord of Hosts; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, who is called God of all the earth.”* (Is.54.5) One of the best images of this marital relationship between Jehovah God and His people is seen in the Prophet Hosea’s unfailing love toward his unfaithful wife Gomer. Even though Gomer was unfaithful to her husband, Hosea mercifully restores her to her former position of honor as his wife.

This martial relationship between Christ and His Bride is completely reveal in the New Testament when the Apostle Paul in the book of Ephesians chapter 5 uses the marriage relationship between a husband and wife as the divine example of the relationship between Christ and His Church. (Eph.5.23-33)

This morning I have edited that passage to highlight the teaching about Christ and His Bride.

*Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; that she would be holy and blameless. Christ nourishes and cherishes the church because we are members of His body. The two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.*

This passage of Scripture captures the beautiful relationship between Christ and His Bride, the Church. I want you to understand that what the Lord tells us about our collective relationship with Him as the Church is true about each one of us as His disciple. In this passage we see that Christ as our husband is constantly concerned for the welfare of His Bride. He is her Savior who has mercifully restores her to a position of honor, even though she has been unfaithful. He loves His Bride so much that He gave Himself up for her. He sets her apart from all others and continuing cleanses her from the impurities of this world by bathing her in His word of truth. He is relentless in His bounteous, elaborate, unremitting, and sympathetic love for His Bride. The brilliance of her beauty is discovered in His eternal desire to present His Bride without spot or wrinkled or any such thing. His great love for His Bride is discovered in His desire that she would be holy and blameless – brilliant in purity. The fact is that His Bride owes all her beauty to Him, her Bridegroom, her Husband, because she is the single object of His everlasting love.

The passage continues to tell us that Christ nourishes and cherishes His Bride as His own body because Christ and His Bride have become one flesh. This oneness between Christ and His Bride, between Christ and His Church, between Christ and His disciples is a mystery that has been revealed in Christ’s abounding love for His Church. This mystery that for ages had been hidden is now completely revealed in Christ. This mystery is rooted and ground in love that enables us to begin to comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ for His Church, His people, His Bride. This mystery reveals that Christ’s love for us is far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think. This mystery reveals that all the glory and all of the praise belongs to Christ. This mystery that reveals that our beauty has nothing to do with our good works or personal attempts at perfection but because of Christ’s bounteous, elaborate, unremitting, and sympathetic love for us, His Bride. (taken from Eph.3.9-21) That is who you are in Christ. You are His wife and He is your husband! These truths are not imaginations, nor exaggerations, nor empty metaphors; but simple, scriptural, sanctifying, saving truths.

We can certainly conclude that Christ has chose us to be His Bride, He has paid the dowry to the Father with His blood, and He has return to His Father in heaven. Today, the Church is in the interval stage of the wedding ceremony, when the bride is making herself ready, waiting for the Bridegroom to return when He lead His bride in a heavenly procession to the wedding banquet – the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Next week we will look at “The Banquet” and consider our participation in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. But as I conclude this morning I want to challenge us as the Bride of Christ to make ourselves ready for the coming of our Bridegroom.

**The Bride Making Herself Ready**

The book of Revelation tells us about the Bride making herself ready by adorning herself for her Husband, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rev.19.7; 21.2) But how do we do that? I believe we make ourselves ready for the coming of our Bridegroom by bathing in His word of truth. We open ourselves up to be soaked in God’s Word, to be saturated in His Word, so that we would become holy and blameless before Him. We look to Christ to cleanse us by His Word scrubbing out our spots and ironing out our wrinkles. Let’s resist the temptation of the five virgins who became lazy and complacent in our preparation for the bridegroom’s return. (Mt.25.1-13) Let’s make ourselves ready for His return. The Bible says, “*Blessed are those who wash their robes.”* (Rev.22.14) Let’s wash our robes and make them white through the blood of Christ. (Rev.7.14) The Bible says that the bride made herself ready by adoring herself for her Husband. (Rev.21.2) Let’s adorn ourselves in white robes of Christ’s righteousness as we make ourselves ready for the return of our Husband, our Lord Jesus Christ. (Rev.7.9)

**Call to Prayer**

*Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.* (Ps.51.7)