

THE GIFT OF THE BRIDE
The Treasures of the Cross: Part Three
May 3, 2020

Review I from Week One: Six big ideas we see about the meaning of the cross from a straightforward reading of the Gospels/Acts:

- A. The cross was absolutely necessary and it stands at the center of our story.
 - B. The cross was voluntary and intentional and purposeful.
 - C. There is some kind of rescue, saving, ransoming going on.
 - D. The cross deals with sins somehow and provides forgiveness.
 - E. The cross is connected to the Passover, the New Covenant, and fulfills the OT story
 - F. The cross was a victory of authority for Jesus
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Review II from Week Two: Six ways of thinking about what was happening while Jesus was dying on the cross

- A. Substitution One: Ransom Theory: Early
 - B. Substitution Two: Satisfaction Theory: Anselm
 - C. Substitution Three: Penal Theory
 - D. Substitution Four: Blood Sacrifice Understanding
 - E. Christus Victor: Christ winning a battle over enemies
 - F. Model of Love: the cross exemplified the love of God and Jesus
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Today's Question: Why did God create the human beings in a great cosmos in the first place?

- A. He was lonely?
 - B. He desired an uptick in praise from creatures?
 - C. He needed a host of workers to do some kind of work on His behalf?
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The Self-Sufficiency of God Refutes All Utilitarian Theories

- A. God has no needs: see **Psalm 50:7-15; Job 41:11; Acts 17:24-25; Romans 11:33-36**
- B. We were not created for some necessary utility
- C. Out of the overflow of the love between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- D. Jonathan Edward's idea of the Holy Spirit as the love between Father and Son
- E. The love of the Father toward the Son before the foundation of the world: **John 17:24**
- F. We were made out of the overflow of Trinitarian love to be loved!
- G. We are loved by being made a supreme unneeded love-gift from the Father to the Son
- H. Which puts us in the middle of the action but Jesus at the very center of the whole creation story! **Colossians 1:15-23**

Which brings us to our thesis:

“God created human beings and the cosmos along with them as an expression of His overflowing love for the Son to “find Him a suitable bride”: a corporate body made in His image, skilled in reigning, pure in heart, and full of love.”

Don't get stuck in the metaphor! The language of a Bride for the Son is figurative, but it is a figure that is prominent throughout the Scriptures as I shall show. The metaphor simply suggests our created destiny for a unique intimate relationship of love and shared dominion with the Lord Christ in whom all things hold together (**Colossians 1:17**) and in Whom God is summing up all things in heaven and earth (**Ephesians 1:10**).

If this is true, then, our creation on the earth was to prepare our suitability to become a truly compatible Bride for Jesus by learning to reign (Gen 1:26), learning to obey God's wise ways, and learning to love God with all of our hearts.

This is why the creation itself was called “good” by God (to call something “good” implies there is some larger purpose in mind to which the something truly leads toward). This creation was the perfect setting or stage or laboratory in which humans would prepare to become a suitable Bride for the Son.

Why didn't God just make humans a suitable Bride to begin with? It appears in God's economy that “suitability” is something that must be achieved through a process of will over and against other options. Love, to be love, must need to be tested against

alternatives to love. If not, love must not be the fullest expression of love. Why would God have gone the route that He did, especially knowing that it would cost Him so much!

With God's knowledge of what would happen in terms of humankind's rebellion and sin (in essence, their failure in their training to be a suitable Bride), God must have seen that through the path of failure and forgiveness, the final version of the Bride (having failed, sinned, captured by death and dark powers, rescued, forgiven, and restored) would in the end be **more suitable** for Jesus than some version in which humans begin in innocence and never fall. For one thing, the Scriptures say that the one who is forgiven much, loves much (**Luke 7:47**), and so the love coming out of sin and death promises to be a greater love than if the human creature had never fallen into love. Perhaps it is this eventual profound love that Jesus sees on other side of the cross and fills Him with joy (**Hebrews 12:2**)

Am I placing a creative metaphor over the Scriptures, just trying to be clever or original, or does a plain reading of the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation uphold this thesis with sufficient data? To check, let's do a quick survey through the whole Bible of the theme of Bride, as a way to undergird our thesis that the purpose of the whole creation was for God to find a suitable Bride for His beloved Son as an extravagant expression of His love.

Let's go from the back to the front!

1. The last scenes of the book of Revelation emphasize God's people as a Bride being married to Jesus the Lamb, and as the end of history as a wedding feast. The way a story ends is a great clue to how the story was meant to go in the original (especially if you have a sovereign author) **Rev 19:6-8; 21:2; 22:17**
2. Paul sees marriage between a husband and a wife as a parable of a greater, truer story, the marriage of Christ and the Church: **Ephesians 5:21-33, 2 Corinthians 11:2**
3. Jesus appears as the Bridegroom in the Gospels: **Matthew 9:15; John 3:28-30**, Jesus first public miracle in John is at a wedding (**John 2:1-12**), and Jesus tells multiple wedding feast parables and stories (e.g. **Matt 22:1-13; 25:1-13; Mark 2:18-20; Luke 12:35-40**)
4. Prophets: Consistent spousal metaphor for God throughout the prophets, especially see **Hosea 2:16-20; Isaiah 62:5; Ezekiel 16**.

5. Wisdom Literature: Song of Songs possible celebration of married love as a picture of the ultimate wedding; **Proverbs 31** as a picture of the church as the Bride of Christ; also see the Proverbs that warn of the harlot (**5:1-23, 6:20-35, 7:1-27**)) leading up to Chapter 8 in which Wisdom is personified and which is often seen as a reference to Jesus (**8:22-32**)
 6. History Books are replete with stories that serve as types (pre-figuring pictures) of this idea of God and the people as His Bride: (Esther, Ruth and the Kinsman Redeemer, Isaac and Rebekah (see the interesting **Gen 24:60!**), Jacob and Leah and Rachel, and more. See extra resource below. Also the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai is often seen as a kind of marriage ceremony. See extra resource below.
 7. The Adam and Eve story as the primary type: Adam looking for his suitable partner and finding such in the “building” of Eve from Adam’s side (Christ: I will build my church: **Matt 16:18**), and the irresistible connection to the cross when the spear is piercing Jesus’ side as His bride the Church is being rescued and purified.
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Implications if Our Thesis is True:

A. We are God’s ultimate love gift to His Son, which is an unbelievable honor, if you can even begin to grasp it! **Here is today’s core take-away!**

B. The dominion passages of Genesis 1, the reigning passages of the New Testament, the royal priesthood passages in Israel’s story, passed on as metaphors for the church, all suggest that a “suitable Bride” for the Lord Jesus is one which is trained up as royalty, able to wield power and authority appropriately and this casts light on our vocation as humans: to reign as ambassadorial vice-regents over the created good order as our preparation to take our place as the Bride of Christ, in some mysteriously way included in the Trinitarian family of Father, Son, and Spirit.

D. Our suitability as a Bride for Christ also requires our faithfulness to Christ, our purity, maintained by obedience, and invites our lives as fully lived expressions of love and gratitude to Him.

E. I grew up saying we were created for fellowship with God. Yes, but in what way? This thesis fleshes out the more general notion in a more concrete manner.

We are ready now to recognize the great problem in the story of the Scriptures: that God's candidate for a suitable Bride for His son has disqualified herself, dishonored her betrothed, fallen into impurity and captivity, has gone into exile, away from the Garden and the Tree of Life, and the whole joyful prospect of God's great love gift for His Son looks to be in ruin.

Next week we will take this up by examining how the Bride-to-Be forfeited her glorious destiny, all that resulted from her rebellion and failure, and then look at God's undaunted plan to put His original plan back on track, choosing Abraham (and thus Israel) as agents of fixing the problem, and, once we have all that in hand, then we will be able to make sense of all that Jesus was doing on the cross of Good Friday!

The Five Great Festival/Feasts of Israel as Mirroring a Wedding

Tim Hegg proposes that the five biblical festivals were decreed by God as illustrations of His love for His people, and hence follow the pattern of a wedding.¹ The significance of the feasts is not limited to their nuptial allusions/connotations, but this aspect of

the holidays is often overlooked. The Passover (*Pesach*) begins the cycle, followed by the Feast of Pentecost (*Shavuot*), Feast of Trumpets (*Rosh Hashanah*), Yom Kippur, and Booths (*Sukkot*).

The Passover commemorates the redemption of Israel, and foreshadows the redemption of all the elect, by the God who chose the nation and purchased it for a price (cf. 1Co 6.20,23). This festival parallels the eastern custom of the groom and his father paying a bride price, as the first step in the betrothal process.

The first Pentecost occurred at Mt. Sinai, and commemorates the giving of the law, an event that parallels the presentation of the *ketubbah*, marriage contract, at a Jewish wedding. The biblical prophets, and Jewish rabbis to this day, consider the making of the Sinai covenant as the betrothal or marriage of God to Israel.

Jewish people understand the blowing of the trumpets (*shofars*) at *Rosh Ha-shanah* as a call to return and repent. In the betrothal/marriage between God and Israel, this is understood as God graciously exercising His right to call His wayward bride back to faithfulness.

Ten days after *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, is a day of cleansing. Perhaps this mirrors the ritual bath of the bride immediately prior to the wedding. Paul alludes to this nuptial washing in Eph 5.25 where he attributes the brides cleansing to the word of the gospel.

The Feast of Booths (*Sukkot*) commemorates the time in the wilderness when God made the Israelites live in tents or booths (Lev 23.42-43), even as He dwelt with them in the tabernacle. This feast also looks forward to the time when God will fully dwell with His people (Rev 21.3). When will this occur? Immediately after the marriage of the Lamb (Rev 19.7-9)!

1 Hegg, Tim. *Introduction To Torah Living*, (Tacoma, WA: TorahResource, 2010), pp. 134-137. Timothy Ministries 2016-2017

Typological Passages Undergirding The Theology Of The Bride

The Forming Of Adam And Building Of Eve — Genesis 2; cf. Matthew 16.18.

Abraham (Exalted Father) Obtains A Bride For His Only Begotten Son — Genesis 24; cf. Hebrews 11.17.

Suffering Joseph Saves His World And Wins A Priestly Bride — Genesis 41. The Sojourning Shepherd-Prince Marries A Priestly Bride — Exodus 2.16-22.

The Marriage of God and Israel At Mount Sinai, With Concluding Marriage Supper

— Exodus 19-24.

The Redeemer Responsible For The Fruitfulness Of The Widowed Bride —
Deu 25.5-10; cf. Romans 7.2-4.

Rahab The Harlot, Redeemed With Her Family, Becomes A Bride In Israel
— Joshua 2; 6.17-25; Matthew 1.5.

Othniel Wins The Bride — Joshua 15.15-19; Judges 1.12-15. The
Redeemer Marries The Humble Widow — Ruth

The Anointed David Marries Abigail (Delight Of The Father), Widowed
From Nabal (Futility) — 1Samuel 25.

The Royal Bride Who Who Intercedes For Her People — Esther

Marriage Of The King — Psalm 45.

Woman Of Peace, King Of Peace And The Pursuit Of Intimacy — Song of
Songs. Parable Of The Wedding Feast — Matthew 22.2-14.

A Woman With A Non-Husband And The Man Who Fulfills — John
4.1-42.

A Tale Of Two Cities: The Great Prostitute And The Bride Of The Lamb —
Revelation.

Prophetic Foundations

The Bridegroom Like The Sun — Psalm 19.

The Shepherd Bridegroom Brings The Bride To His Home — Psalm 23.5-6;
cf. John 14.2-3. Jerusalem The Bridal Crown — Isaiah 62.1-7.

Messiah In Wedding Garments — Isaiah 61.10-11.

Remembering The Honeymoon In The Wilderness — Jeremiah 2.1-3.

God's Betrothal Of The Proto-Bride — Ezekiel 16.1-14.

God Calls For The Return Of His Wayward Bride — Hosea.

Wise And Foolish Virgins — Matthew 25.1-13.

A Reminder From The Friend Of The Bridegroom — 2 Corinthians 11.2

The Glorious Promise — Revelation 19.7-9.

Timothy Ministries 2016-2017. See www.tmin.org