

Elements of a Bible Wedding

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“I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.”

Psalms 119:128

Let Us Define Exactly What We Are Considering Under the Topic of Scriptural Weddings.

- A. We understand the term “wedding” to intend the event that initiates and formally acknowledges the marriage of a man and woman.
- B. In scripture, the word “marriage” can simply intend this initiatory event (Matt 22:1-4).
- C. Since God ordained marriage (Gen 2:18-25), it should be obvious that His revelation in scripture is the only true guide for a proper wedding and marriage (II Timothy 3:16-17).
 - 1. If God invented marriage, wise men will quickly grant Him the right of instruction.
 - 2. Women will find their greatest fulfillment married to a godly man God’s way.
- D. My emphasis reflects God’s emphasis (Isaiah 6:8) and our perverse society (II Cor 10:5).

It Is Helpful to Consider the Nature of a Traditional Wedding By Its Chief Features.

- A. Traditional weddings (1) generally occur in a church building, (2) are performed by some sort of a priest, (3) are religious in nature, (4) emphasize the bride over the groom, (5) completely ignore the groom’s father, (6) basically ignore the bride’s father, (7) are replete with vain and inane customs, etc.
- B. Traditional weddings are esteemed (Luke 16:15) and popular (Exodus 23:12); but God has called us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2).
- C. These traditions must be analyzed, proved, and either held on to or rejected, because they reflect a philosophy of marriage that will affect the marriage itself.
- D. Weddings provide another illustration of how men have corrupted the word of God.

The Sources of These Traditional Elements Can Be Rather Easily Identified.

- A. The religious aspects – priest, church, and ceremony – come from Roman Catholicism.
 - 1. God says Rome is the mother of harlots and of abominations of the earth (Rev 17:5).
 - a. Consider the abomination of pagan holy days taken by Rome for “Christian” use.

- b. Consider the celibate priesthood and offices of Catholicism and their evil.
- 2. Rome attempts to control her members with sacraments from the cradle to the grave.
 - a. Baptism of infants for eternal life gets control of a life as soon as birth occurs.
 - b. Extreme Unction, or last rites, leaves such soul dependent upon Rome at death.
 - c. The other sacraments are confirmation, penance, Mass, orders, and matrimony.
 - d. Consider baptism and Mass as examples of Catholic perversion of ordinances.
- 3. Holy Matrimony is a sacrament of Rome. It is the Catholic concept of marriage.
 - a. A sacrament to a Catholic is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace.
 - b. Catholics absolutely cannot marry except before a priest of the Catholic Church.
 - 1. Catholics married by a civil official i.e. justice of the peace are not married.
 - 2. Such parties commit adultery and their children are illegitimate.
 - 3. Marriage by any other minister is not only sin but brings excommunication.
 - c. It is amazing how much Protestant and Baptist ceremonies copy from Rome.
 - 1. The bridegroom and bride and their attendants are to appear at the altar.
 - 2. The words "I do" and "to have and to hold . . ." are all taken from Rome.
 - 3. The priest ratifies and blesses the marriage by authority from the Church.
 - 4. The Catholic wedding is part of Mass and both parties take communion.
- 4. Consider these further Roman Catholic concepts of marriage: (a) Christ raised marriage from a sacred contract to a sacrament, (b) Christ's first miracle at a marriage feast shows its holiness, (c) Eve being created from Adam's body shows perfect equality between husband and wife, (d) a Catholic marriage can only be ended by death, (e) the first and chief purpose of marriage is to populate the earth.
- 5. Women absolutely love the Catholic emphasis of spirituality, equality, eternity, etc.
- B. The emphasis on the bride reflects the insubordination and haughtiness of natural women.
 - 1. The nature of all sinful created beings is to reject superiority in others.
 - 2. Most women view this day as their day in the sun – they are the objects of glory.
 - 3. Most brides show far more concern for their dress, their attendants, their guests, the ceremony, the groom's conduct, etc. than for the groom himself.
 - 4. Most brides believe they are honouring a man with marriage but this is perverse.
- C. The neglect of parental authority reflects the lack of due honour for God's authority.
 - 1. With children ruling parents today, the concept of parental authority is almost lost.
 - 2. Education has promoted the ignorance of parents until children think they are wise.

The Elements of a Scriptural Wedding Should Be Identified and Clearly Understood.

- A. A wedding is a practical event that does not need a religious ceremony to make it valid.

1. Marriage is a practical relationship comparable to employment, citizenship, etc.
 - a. As they do not need a religious ceremony for initiation, neither does marriage.
 - b. Marriage is not a spiritual union, so there is no special need for religious ritual.
 - c. We can be thankful Rome did not make getting a job a sacrament of the church.
 - d. What kind of religious event was required with a captive woman (Deut 21:10-14)?
 - e. What kind of religious event did Isaac use with Rebekah (Genesis 24:61-67)?
 - f. What kind of religious event did Benjamin use at Shiloh (Judges 21:19-23)?
2. Marriages, or weddings, in the scriptures were always festive times of celebration.
 - a. A wedding in scripture is a supper party (Matt 22:1-10; John 2:1-10; Rev 19:7-9).
 - b. It was a feast that often lasted seven days (Genesis 29:22,27; Judges 14:10-12).
 - c. The feast was primarily for men, since they receive the blessing (Genesis 29:22).
 - d. Keep in mind a feast was made for laughter (Eccl 10:19). So shorten the ritual.
 - e. The only role Jesus had at a wedding was to replenish the wine (John 2:1-10).
 - f. The wedding “official” is a governor or ruler of the feast: master of ceremonies.
 - g. We never read of Christ, a prophet, an apostle, or any minister in a ceremony.
 - h. Scripture can make the man of God perfect (II Tim 3:16-17), but where he is taught on how to perform a wedding in the traditional sense?
3. Marriage is no more a spiritual union by comparison to Christ than is employment and families (Ephesians 5:25-33 cp Colossians 3:22 – 4:1 cp Psalm 103:13).
4. A wife is no more an heir together of God’s grace than any other sister (I Pet 3:7).
5. Beside our civil duties, marriage is “performed” by the couple in a private ceremony.
6. There is no evil making mention of the sexual nature of marriage (Gen 2:25; 29:21).
 - a. Consider guaranteeing and obtaining the tokens of virginity in O.T. marriages.
 - b. A seven day feast assumes seeing the couple immediately following consummation.
 - c. Displaying a bride’s beauty properly is not wrong (Ge 12:11-12; 26:7; Es 1:10-12).
 - d. The essential elements of providing for a wife include the sexual duty (Ex 21:10).
 9. It would be perfectly appropriate for a wedding to consist of a great party.
- B. A wedding must reflect the parental authority and approval that makes marriage possible.
 1. Parents are far more qualified to select and qualify spouses than are children.
 - a. Foolishness and immaturity is bound in the hearts of children (Prov 22:15; 29:15).
 - b. A twenty year old child’s parents have twenty years of marital experience.
 - c. Parents are objective by being free from youthful emotion and its blinding affect.
 - d. While our nation has laws of parental consent regarding marriage, they are weak.
 - e. A father or husband has the authority to abrogate a woman’s vow (Numbers 30).
 2. God’s people and others during the Old Testament chose spouses for their children.
 - a. Hagar took a wife for her son Ishmael from the land of Egypt (Genesis 21:21).

- b. Abraham and his servant carefully chose Rebekah for Isaac (Genesis 24:1-4,61-67).
 - c. Bethuel and Laban determined that Rebekah would marry Isaac (Gen 24:50-59).
 - d. Isaac commanded Jacob and influenced Esau with their wives (Gen 27:46; 28:1-9).
 - e. Laban gave Leah to Jacob subtilly when he did not even want her (Ge 29:23-26).
 - f. Shechem and his father asked Jacob and his sons for Dinah (Genesis 34:4,8,11-12).
 - g. Judah selected and obtained Tamar to be the wife of his son Er (Genesis 38:6).
 - h. When Moses dwelt in Midian, Jethro gave him his daughter Zipporah (Ex 2:21).
 - i. A father in Israel could sell his daughter as a maidservant (Exodus 21:7-11).
 - j. Moses' law assumed parental determination of marriages (Ex 34:16; Deut 7:3-4).
 - k. Rape was punished in Israel by marriage without a divorce option (Deut 22:28-29).
 - l. Caleb selected a husband for his daughter by a great test of courage (Jos 15:17).
 - m. Naomi took it upon herself to select and obtain a husband for Ruth (Ruth 3:1-2).
 - n. Saul tried to give away his oldest daughter Merab to David (I Samuel 18:17).
 - o. If the son selected a woman, the father still obtained her (Ge 34:4,8; Jgs 14:1-3).
3. Even in the New Testament, Paul assumed incredible parental choice (I Cor 7:36-38).
4. Dating and engagement must clearly reflect parental authority leading to marriage.
- a. Persons, places, and practices of dating ought to be determined by the father.
 - 1. Dating as we know it is an invention of very recent origin that would not have been tolerated in probably all other generations.
 - 2. It is the father's duty to preserve his daughter's virginity (Deut 22:13-21).
 - 3. Bob Jones University's rules, though often ridiculed, are exceeding wise.
 - b. Engagement is between the groom or the groom's father and the bride's father as we can see from various examples (Genesis 29:15-20; Judges 14:1-3; 15:1-2).
 - c. The emphasis should be on the groom winning the favor of the bride's father.
5. A wedding should exalt both the persons and the office of father before all present.
- a. Both fathers should clearly acknowledge their roles and approval of the spouses.
 - b. The bride should not even compete with these illustrious parties to the wedding.
 - c. Questions and charges could be very edifying for both wedding party and guests.
 - d. The marriage reflects on the character and progeny of both the fathers present.
- C. A wedding must emphasize God's blessing on the groom for whom marriage was ordained.
- 1. Marriage was made for the man, and a wedding should emphasize this fact (Ge 2:18).
 - 2. The woman was made for the man, and a wedding should emphasize this (I Cor 11:9).
 - a. A good wife is a blessing from God on the groom (Proverbs 18:22; 19:14).
 - b. Man's object in marriage is to present to himself a perfect woman (Eph 5:25-27).
 - c. The bridegroom is rejoicing for having obtained a bride (Isaiah 62:5; John 3:29).
 - d. The bride is the possession of the groom like other assets (Ex 20:17; Deut 5:21).

- e. We would be scriptural if our weddings resembled a bachelor's party (Gen 29:22).
 - f. Why should we start a marriage with the bride thinking she is something special?
 - g. The danger of these false traditions is the erroneous emphasis they create.
 - h. If you have the bride speak, let her reverence her lord (I Sam 25:41; I Pet 3:6).
3. The arrival of the groom should be the central event by far (Matthew 25:1-10).
 - a. The man is the glory of God, but the woman is the glory of the man (I Co 11:7).
 - b. "Here comes the bride" severely contradicts "Behold, the bridegroom cometh."
 - c. The "attendants" at a wedding should reverence the groom (Matt 25:1; Sol 1:3).
 - d. Why stand for the bride? Regardless of your thoughts, this tradition is perverse.
 - e. What chance is there in heaven the church will receive more glory than Christ?
 - f. The bridechamber in scripture is where the groom stays (Joel 2:16; Matt 9:15).
 - g. The entrance of the bridegroom ought to be the most glorious event (Psalm 19:5).
 4. Consider the difference in cost and emphasis in dressing the typical bridal parties.
 - a. There is far more attention paid to the apparel and appearance of the bride.
 - b. Ornaments and jewelry are not wrong, but they should reflect creation (Is 61:10).
 - c. Brides should be adorned as best they can for the groom (Jer 2:32; Rev 21:2).
 - d. A bride should always reflect her position as the glory of the man (I Cor 11:7).
 5. It was usually the groom and his father that provided for the marriage feast.
 - a. Why should the man losing his daughter pay for the event taking her away?
 - b. The marriage of a daughter is typically not as glorious as the marriage of a son.
 - c. The groom's family today neither pays a dowry nor pays for the wedding itself.
 - d. The emphasis has shifted from the groom to the bride and to the bride's mother.
 - e. The great event is the man getting the woman, so the groom's family should pay.
 - f. See how Abraham sent gifts for the bride and for the bride's family (Gen 24:53).
 - g. The groom provided the feast, but he left its direction to a governor (Jn 2:1-10).
- D. A wedding should reflect in some way whether the bride is a virgin or not.
1. The importance of a bride's virginity has been almost obliterated from the U.S.
 - a. Consider Rebekah (Gen 24:16), a requirement of high priests (Lev 21:14), the only captives preserved (Num 31:17-18), the cause of humbling (Deut 22:23-24,28-29; Ezek 22:11), a hard thing to violate (II Sam 13:2), the assumed desire of young men (Isa 62:5), and something to guard with jealousy (II Cor 11:2).
 - b. The woman owes the man her virginity; the man does not owe the woman the same; but the man does owe God his abstention from fornication (I Cor 11:9).
 - c. God has always had a double standard here in identifying and judging violations: the woman can become pregnant, was created with a hymen, had her hand cut off for touching a man's secrets, and was subject to the test of jealousy.

- d. Lost virginity should be a cause for great shame and disgrace – God created it.
 - e. Lady Diana had a gynecologist's certification of virginity before marriage.
 - f. Girls from an early age should be taught (1) the extreme importance of virginity specifically, (2) the tremendous sacrifice of future value for present gratification, (3) the unequal compensation of the present gratification, and (4) the response of Amnon in II Samuel 13:15 as being typical of many men.
 - g. Marrying a woman not a virgin takes the risk (1) she will play the whore again, (2) he will have bitter and jealous thoughts, and (3) he will be insecure.
 - h. Other than pagans and perverts, all men want a woman that is all his, only his, and always his.
 - i. When have you seen a woman, her father, or her family honored for virginity?
 - j. In our society for the last two generations, girls have been shamed for virginity.
2. The virginity of a woman on her wedding day was very important (Deut 22:13-21).
 - a. The tokens of virginity were the blood-stained bed sheets of the first night.
 - b. Such evidence is infallible by young marriages and the providence of God.
 - c. It is clearly obvious that steps were taken to guarantee and obtain these sheets.
 - d. Parents were responsible for guaranteeing a daughter's virginity for their own honour (Lev 21:9), their daughter's protection, and for a proper dowry.
 - e. A man could be chastised and fined for bringing reproach upon a virgin of Israel.
 3. The king's daughters wore garments identifying them as virgins (II Samuel 13:18-19).
 - a. The public shame of common clothing was understood by Tamar (II Sam 13:13).
 - b. Once she had been violated, she tore her garment, which no longer applied.
 4. It has been an informal tradition in our nation for only virgins to wear white gowns.
 5. It is an informal tradition for ivory gowns in second marriages (Genesis 38:14,19).
 6. Some further public recognition or commendation of a bride's virginity could occur.
 - a. The purpose of any public recognition is to (1) honor the bridegroom marrying a virgin, (2) honor the virgin herself, (3) establish a virgin's integrity for the future, (4) shame those that have played the whore, and (5) provide motivation and warning to all others.
 - b. Inability to discuss virginity shows unscriptural prudery and sacrifices true riches.
 - c. A gynecologist's statement would be a relatively discreet form of public honor.
 - d. Public commendation by the father, the groom, or the groom's father would work.
 - e. The public shame of a colored dress is most appropriate given the offence.
 7. Tamar is a case of a virtuous young woman that lost her virginity (II Sam 13:1-20).
 - a. Consider her wise rebuke of Amnon's intentions and her willingness to marry him.
 - b. Consider her wise comparison of raping her and then hating and rejecting her.
 - c. Consider her willingness to publicly disclose her loss. She could have hid it.
- E. A wedding should include means for identifying how the groom and bride were qualified.

1. The concept of a dowry is not only scriptural, but it is also exceedingly wise.
 - a. A dowry compensates a father for (1) a lost child to his family name, (2) a lost worker for his family, (3) a reward for wise and diligent child training, and (4) preserving her virginity.
 1. Have you guarded your daughter's weight, hygiene, dress, etiquette, etc?
 2. Have you trained a daughter's personality, professional knowledge, etc?
 - b. Since the father of the bride wants to qualify her husband, a dowry does it best.
 1. The average young man today is in debt – he cannot even see break-even.
 2. God considers financial measurement a wise tool (Proverbs 10:4; 12:24; 21:17,20; 22:29; 24:30-34; 28:19; Matt 25:21; Luke 16:10-12; Rom 12:11).
 3. A dowry is great evidence of diligence in earning, temperance in saving, patience in accumulating, and wisdom in investing.
 - c. Requiring a dowry is not the issue as much as the concept of a dowry.
2. The amount of a dowry varied but depended on the bride's father (Genesis 34:11-12).
 - a. The minimum for a virgin in Israel was fifty shekels of silver (Ex 22:16-17).
 - b. Fifty shekels of silver bought oxen, a threshing floor, and tools (II Sam 24:24).
 - c. Jacob offered to work seven years, not months, for Rachel (Genesis 29:18).
 - d. If a maid was not a virgin, she obviously brought less than did a virgin.
 - e. Ruining a virgin could cost a virgin's dowry without the woman (Ex 22:16-17).
 - f. David agreed with Saul for Michael for one hundred foreskins (I Sam 18:25).
3. There are several complicating factors that make the use of a dowry difficult.
 - a. Scripture gives no minimum and the market has not determined the going rate.
 - b. The bride's father and the groom must determine the amount by discussion.
 - c. Being stubborn about a dowry today could leave you with a daughter for life.
 - d. What account is taken of personal assets the bride may take into the marriage?
 - e. What account is taken of personal gifts or inheritance to the bride (Job 42:15).
 - f. Consider returning the dowry after several years of maturing and marriage.
 - g. Consider making this return conditional on his performance in the marriage.
4. The groom's character and performance should be identified and encouraged publicly.
 - a. A brief history of the groom's character and accomplishments should be made.
 - b. Note how Abraham's servant described the financial status of Isaac (Gen 24:36).
 - c. The groom's duties should be clearly established by pledges, questions, or charges.
 - d. Note how Caleb chose a test of courage and skill for his son-in-law (Josh 15:16).
5. The bride's character and value should be identified and honoured publicly.
 - a. Abraham and Isaac had plain reasons for their sons' wives (Gen 24:37-38; 28:1-2).
 - b. Boaz had a very good basis for his willingness to marry Ruth (Ruth 3:11).

F. A wedding should include some aspect of a covenant or commitment on both parties.

1. Marriage involves a covenant in scripture (Job 31:1; Prov 2:17; Ezek 16:8; Mal 2:14).
 - a. Such “covenant” passages do not even imply ceremonial vows made to each other.
 - b. The most important “covenant” of any relationship is God’s covenant (Ex 24:7-8).
 - c. However, a public pledge or commitment separates marriage from fornication.
 - d. South Carolina still honors common law marriages with a public commitment.
2. Vows made to each other are nice, but they are less binding than to both families.
 - a. Vows should invoke a higher authority and should be made to a higher authority.
 - b. By charges and pledges to both fathers, the groom makes his marital covenant.
 - c. By charges and pledges to family and groom, the bride makes her covenant also.
 - d. “As the Lord liveth, I will,” is far superior to “I do” (Judges 8:19; Jer 12:16).
 - e. When you hate your spouse for some offence, what good is a vow made to them?
 - f. Vows by a woman are only as good as the father or husband determine (Num 30).
3. Marriage involves leaving father and mother (Ge 2:24), so this aspect should be seen.
4. Public approval of the marriage is good i.e. “. . . or forever after hold your peace.”
- G. A wedding should include some opportunity for pronouncing a blessing upon the marriage.
 1. Bethuel and Laban blessed Rebekah with a great and prosperous progeny (Gen 24:60).
 2. Isaac blessed Jacob with great blessings upon his proposed marriage (Genesis 28:1-4).
 3. Those of Bethlehem blessed Boaz and Ruth’s marriage with prosperity (Ruth 4:11-12).
 4. The giving of gifts is a token of blessing upon a new couple (Joshua 15:16-19).
- H. The first year of marriage should be planned and managed carefully for wisdom’s sake.
 1. Moses’ law gave leave to married men to remain at home for one year (Deut 24:5).
 - a. This text should not be abused to teach a one year honeymoon without duties.
 - b. The man is to be kept free from duties that would take him away from home.
 - c. Given the true nature of marriage, a bride might need a year of cheering up.
 2. Plans should be made to minimize care and any absences during the first year.
 3. Honeymoons are not taught in scripture beyond the seven-day feast of marriage.
 - a. The cost of a honeymoon is usually not a wise investment for newlyweds.
 - b. A trip after several months of personality and sexual adjustment might be wiser.

The Application of this Lesson Is the Practice and Emphasis We Shall Observe Hereafter.

- A. God did not call ministers to be marriage counsellors in the current use of that title.
 1. While ministers must preach the word – and the word deals with marriage – they have not been called to give personal and intimate advice to engaged persons.
 2. The obligation for marriage instruction falls primarily on the two fathers involved.

3. When the job has not been done, it falls on the minister to provide some instruction.
- B. God did not call ministers to be priests and “perform” a wedding as tradition expects.
1. To have a minister give a charge or blessing to a new couple would be appropriate.
 2. However, his role in this matter has no scriptural basis above that of any guest.
 3. A New Testament minister should avoid association with priestly functions of Rome.
 4. A scriptural ministry should promote scriptural principles as far as possible.
 5. There may be social cases of offence where even a minister must compromise some.
- C. Scripture leaves each family with great flexibility as to the actual wedding event.
1. Fathers should attempt to the extent of their faith to incorporate God’s principles.
 2. The degree to which any or all principles are followed is a matter of personal faith.

NOTE: There is no audio available for the first sermon in this series.