

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Life, be blessed. Welcome as we continue our study of God's Word. Today, we focus on holy marriage—how it is solemnized according to biblical principles and divine order.

Two Types of Marriage: Earthly and Spiritual

First, it is essential to understand that there are two distinct types of marriage:

1. Earthly marriage between a man and a woman.
2. Spiritual marriage between Jesus Christ and His Church (His Bride).

Marriage is a divine institution rooted deeply in Scripture, designed perfectly by God. Satan opposes holy marriage because it limits his influence over individuals and society (Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:22-33). This opposition is seen in the increasing rise of false teachings, including those discouraging marriage, as foretold in the last days (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

The Biblical Order of Marriage in Human Society

God is a God of order (1 Corinthians 14:40). The first marriage in Genesis 2:18-24 (ESV) illustrates this divine order:

- God created Adam first (Genesis 2:7).
- God gave Adam responsibility to tend the garden (Genesis 2:15).
- God created Eve from Adam's rib as a helper (Genesis 2:21-22).
- The man was appointed as the leader and provider in the marriage (Ephesians 5:23).

This order establishes that before a man marries, he should prepare the physical and spiritual environment for his wife and family.

After the first marriage, God instituted that human procreation would happen through the natural order—birth through the womb (Genesis 3:16). This meant future marriages must follow social and familial processes, reflecting God's order and community involvement.

Marriage Procedures in the Old Testament (Jewish Custom)

Contrary to popular belief, the Old Testament had clear procedures for marriage. It was not a free-for-all:

- When a man desired to marry, he first approached his parents.
- The parents would negotiate with the woman's family (Genesis 24:1-67).
- Upon agreement, two key steps followed:

Step 1: Betrothal (KUPOSA)

This legally binding step involved the groom presenting a bride price (mohar) and exchanging vows with the bride (Deuteronomy 22:23-27). During betrothal, the couple was considered legally married but did not cohabit or have sexual relations (Matthew 1:18-20). This period allowed the groom to prepare a home.

This is when Mary was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit after betrothal to Joseph (Matthew 1:18-25, ESV).

Step 2: Wedding Ceremony (Harusi)

The groom, accompanied by friends and family, would go to the bride's home and bring her to his home with great celebration (John 3:29). The marriage was finalized by repeating vows, supported by Scripture readings from the Torah.

After the ceremony, the bride and groom would separate privately for seven days before beginning married life fully.

The Spiritual Marriage: Christ and His Church

The spiritual marriage between Christ and the Church parallels this earthly process but on a heavenly level:

- Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her (Ephesians 5:25).
- He betrothed the Church with His own blood—the ultimate bride price (Ephesians 5:26-27; Revelation 19:7-9).
- After His resurrection, Christ ascended to the Father to prepare a place for His Bride (John 14:2-3).
- He will return with great celebration to take His Bride to eternal dwelling (Revelation 21:2).

Like the earthly betrothed woman, the Church must remain holy and faithful as we await His return (2 Corinthians 11:2).

The Importance of Vows and Covenant

Marriage vows are sacred promises before God, known as *nadhiri*—binding pledges that must not be broken (Ecclesiastes 5:4-5; Matthew 5:33-37). They require faithfulness “until death do us part” (Romans 7:2-3). Breaking these vows carries spiritual consequences (Hebrews 10:26-31).

Call to Repentance and Faithfulness

If you are living in a relationship outside of God's order, repentance is always possible. God is merciful and will bless your obedience (1 John 1:9). Begin by involving families and the Church to solemnize your union properly.

If you have not accepted Christ, I urge you to enter into the spiritual marriage with Him today. Accept the bride price of His shed blood at Calvary (Romans 5:8). Live holy and prepared, avoiding spiritual adultery like idolatry and immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18-20).

Reflection: The Parable of the Ten Virgins

Reflect on Matthew 25:1-13 (ESV):

"Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise... Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

This parable reminds us to live prepared and faithful lives, ready to meet the Bridegroom at any moment.

Conclusion

Marriage, when conducted in divine order, is God's perfect plan, reflecting the sacred union between Christ and His Church.

May the Lord bless you as you seek to honor Him in your relationships.

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