

I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life Pt. 2

Engaged in Expectancy John 14:6

She waits. As the sun sets one more time, the young lady quietly mouths the words that now form part of her nightly bedtime ritual; “could it be tonight?” While preparing for her fiancé’s appearance, she fondly recalls the last time she saw him. He arrived with a marriage covenant in hand, paid the costly price to secure her as his own, and together they drank from the cup that symbolized this agreement. Just as he was leaving, he carefully told her the purpose for his absence, with words that are now etched in her memory; “I am going to prepare a place for you in my father’s house, and when I return, I will take you to be with me forever.”

Now she waits. He will most likely come at night, announced by a shofar trumpet and a clear shout, “behold the bridegroom cometh.” She has been busy preparing her bridal garment as she anticipates his arrival and permanent presence. He will come again. He will take her to that prepared room in his father’s house, where they will remain until he brings her out to present her to the blessed ones who will celebrate the marriage supper.

With confidence in his character, she leaves the details to him. She need not fret about the location of the place or how she is going to get there; he himself will take her to the father’s house. She needs no map or mode of transportation; she has him. To her, he is the way.

Described for us above are features of a typical betrothal and wedding in New Testament times.¹ These practices and expectations were common knowledge among the Jews and would have framed the disciples’ understanding of the Lord’s reassurance in John fourteen. The One who said, “I go to prepare a place for you,”

¹ Levitt, Zola. A Christian Love Story. Zola Levitt, 1978. et al.

was using bridegroom imagery to assure them of His return. Let's look at it in a bit more detail.

Similar to the betrothal process, in the upper room ministry, we have a covenant, a cup and a cost. We remember that the church, which is called His body, is also described in the scriptures as the bride of Christ. (Eph 5:22-33, Rev 19:7) These eleven men represent for us the entire body of believers in the church age and as the Lord Jesus spoke to them, He clearly communicated that His purpose of establishing a new covenant would be realized. In fact, He used a cup of wine to symbolize the covenant and the price paid to enforce it. They would immediately think of a betrothal when He took the cup, gave thanks, passed it to them and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." (Luke 22:20, Darby)

We know that this new covenant primarily has to do with Israel (Jer 31:31, Heb 8:8) and is contrasted with that which Moses mediated. The old covenant failed because the people couldn't hold up their end of the deal. They had agreed, "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." (Ex 24:7), yet they did not continue in it. (Heb 8:9). But this new covenant would be unbreakable, as it would be based on better promises, a superior sacrifice and the most precious blood. (Heb 8:6; 9:12, 23). One that would not depend upon the people "doing" the works of The Law but would be based upon the one work that was "done" by the Mediator when He "offered Himself without spot to God." (Heb 9:14). And while, as mentioned, this new covenant is focused on God's promises to Israel, we are content to say that the church's manifold blessings flow out from it.

So, as they were partaking of the cup, they knew that the Man in their midst was confirming a covenant and that the price connected with this covenant would be His very own blood. Their awe is further inspired as He begins to speak as a bridegroom and says, "Let not your heart be troubled...In my Father's house...I go to prepare a place for you...I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (Jn 14:1-3).

About six weeks later, these same men followed Him to the Mount of Olives. After reminding them of the Father's authority over things to come, the Bridegroom was taken up out of their sight. (Acts 1:7-9). Since then, the expectant eyes of His bride have been looking upward. They waited. Throughout church history, with its challenges, compromises and changes, there has always been a remnant of the Lord's people who have clung to those words of hope, "I will come again." We

wait. As the water of Christian testimony becomes increasingly lukewarm, and the enemies of the believer continue their powerful barrage, faithful believers cling to those same words and ask, “could it be today?”

We listen for the trumpet and the shout (1 Thess 4:16-17), as upon His return, He will take us into the Father’s house. Afterward, to a chorus of Alleluias, He will present us to the universe as that holy bride without blemish (Eph 5:27), and we will be with Him in the centre of celebration at the marriage supper of the Lamb. (Rev 19).

His death has fitted us for that place, and His presence there has prepared the place for us, but remember, in His absence, we are weaving the very bridal garment to be worn at the wedding feast. The righteous deeds of believers, while we wait, are currently fashioning our garment of bridal glory in the kingdom! (Rev 19:8)

We wait. But do we worry? Any caring, conscientious person would bear a prayerful burden for the issues of life. And while, at times, this care becomes overwhelming and turns to anxious worry, there is one question that need not hinder our peace, “How can we know the way?” As sure as He has gone, He will return, not only as our Bridegroom but as our very method of transportation from our earthly anticipation to the heavenly realization of the Father’s house. Let not your hearts be troubled; He says, “I Am the Way.”

We plan to continue focusing on these words as our next article explores the role of the tabernacle in John’s gospel, but our best-laid plans will happily be forfeited should we hear that shout today; “Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.” (So 2:10)