

Although various sources describing the practice of Jewish marriage at the time of Christ differ in the details, there is general agreement concerning its major elements. Unlike Western marriage practices, the Jewish marriage has a greater degree of formalism involving numerous steps:

Jewish marriage included a number of steps: first, betrothal (which involved the prospective groom’s traveling from his father’s house to the home of the prospective bride, paying the purchase price, and thus establishing the marriage covenant); second, the groom’s returning to his father’s house (which meant remaining separate from his bride for 12 months, during which time he prepared the living accommodations for his wife in his father’s house); third, the groom’s coming for his bride at a time not known exactly to her; fourth, his return with her to the groom’s father’s house to consummate the marriage and to celebrate the wedding feast for the next seven days (during which the bride remained closeted in her bridal chamber).<sup>1</sup>

First, the father of the groom made the arrangements for the marriage and paid the bride price. The timing of the arrangement varied. Sometimes it occurred when both children were small, and at other times it was a year before the marriage itself. Often the bride and groom did not even meet until their wedding day. The second step, which occurred a year or more after the first step, was the fetching of the bride. The bridegroom would go to the home of the bride in order to bring her to his home. In connection with this step, two other things should be noted. *First*, it was the father of the groom who determined the timing. *Second*, prior to the groom’s leaving to fetch the bride, he must already have a place prepared for her as their abode. This was followed by the third step, the wedding ceremony, to which a few would be invited. Prior to the wedding ceremony, the bride underwent a ritual immersion for ritual cleansing. The fourth step, the marriage feast, would follow and could last for as many as seven days. Many more people would be invited to the feast than were to the marriage ceremony. In the Marriage of the Lamb all four of these steps of the Jewish wedding ceremony are evident.<sup>2</sup>

The major steps of the Jewish wedding analogy are summarized below with related Scriptures:

#### Steps in a Jewish Wedding

Step	Description	Scriptures
Marriage Covenant	The father pays for the bride and establishes the marriage covenant.	Acts <a href="#">Acts 20:28</a> ; 1Cor. <a href="#">1Cor. 6:19-20</a> ; <a href="#">1Cor. 11:25</a> Eph. <a href="#">Eph. 5:25-27</a>
Bridal Chamber Prepared	The son returns to his father’s house and prepares the bridal chamber.	John <a href="#">John 6:62</a> ; <a href="#">John 14:2</a> ; Acts <a href="#">Acts 1:9-11</a>
Bride Fetched	At a time determined by the father (Mtt. <a href="#">Mat. 24:36</a> ), the groom fetches the bride to bring her to his father’s house. “Although the bride was expecting her groom to come for her, she did not know the time of his coming. As a result, the groom’s arrival was preceded by a shout, which forewarned the bride to be prepared for his coming.” <sup>3</sup>	John <a href="#">John 14:3</a> ; 1Th. <a href="#">1Th. 4:13-18</a>
Bride Cleansed	The bride undergoes ritual cleansing prior to the wedding ceremony.	1Cor. <a href="#">1Cor. 3:12-15</a> ; Rev. <a href="#">Rev. 19:7-8+</a>

Wedding Ceremony	The private wedding ceremony.	Rev. <a href="#">Rev. 19:7+</a>
Consummation	In the privacy of the bridal chamber the bride and groom consummate the marriage.	Rev. <a href="#">Rev. 19:7+</a>
Marriage Feast	The celebratory marriage feast to which many are invited.	Mtt. <a href="#">Mat. 22:1-14</a> ; <a href="#">Mat. 25:1-13</a> ; Luke <a href="#">Luke 12:36</a>

At the time of our writing, the first step in the wedding has already taken place. The marriage covenant was established at the First Coming of Christ. Whenever a person places their faith in Jesus Christ, they enter into this covenant (the New Covenant) and become part of His bride. Since the ascension of Jesus following His resurrection, He has been at His Father’s house preparing the bridal chamber:

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions ([μνοαι](#) [monai] , dwelling places); if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also. (John [John 14:1-3](#))

As we discussed concerning the [Rapture](#), passages such as John [John 14:1-3](#) are of a completely different character from what is described in Revelation [Rev. 19:1+](#) concerning the Second Coming. In John [John 14:1](#), Jesus indicates a heavenly destination for believers. He returns from His Father’s house to fetch them and to bring them to heaven. There is an emphasis on intimacy: “that where I am, there you may be also” (John [John 14:3](#)). How different this is from the scene before us in this chapter (below)! Jesus will ride forth in warfare and vengeance with the armies of heaven. There will be immense bloodshed at His coming and His return is followed by the reign of the saints *on earth* (Rev. [Rev. 20:4-6+](#)). It is irreconcilable differences such as these in various “coming passages” which tell us that His coming for the Church at the [Rapture](#) is a *different* coming than His Second Coming.<sup>4</sup>

In its description of the Second Coming, Revelation [Rev. 19:1+](#) does not mention either a translation (rapture) of living believers (1Cor. [1Cor. 15:51-52](#)), or a resurrection of dead believers (cf. 1Th. [1Th. 4:16](#)).<sup>5</sup>

At the time the events of John’s vision actually take place—during the Tribulation prior to the Second Coming—the first *three* of the steps in the wedding ceremony will be complete: the bride has been fetched to the Father’s house in the [Rapture](#) of the Church. For an extended treatment of the analogy between Christ and the Church and Jewish marriage practices, see [Showers, [Maranatha, Our Lord Come](#), 164-169].

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, [Come Quickly, Lord Jesus](#) (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1996), 67.

<sup>2</sup> Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, [The Footsteps of Messiah](#), rev ed. (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2003), 162-163.

<sup>3</sup> Renald E. Showers, [Maranatha, Our Lord Come](#) (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1995), 165.

<sup>4</sup> We see similar irreconcilable differences in OT passages concerning His ministry: He is to reign as king (Isa. [Isa. 9:6-7](#)), but He is to die for the world (Isa. [Isa. 53:1](#)). How can these both be true? The answer is found in *two* separate comings. And so it is with [Rapture](#) and Second Coming passages.

<sup>5</sup> John MacArthur, [\*Revelation 12-22 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary\*](#) (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2000), Rev. 19:11.

<sup>6</sup> Showers, [\*Maranatha, Our Lord Come\*](#), 164-169.