

Here Comes the Bride...Groom!



*And now abide faith, hope and love,
These three;
But the greatest of these is
Love.
1 Corinthians 13:13*

Spend a moment in prayer in order to confess any known sin and to ask the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of your heart.

Please read Isaiah 62:1-5.

What is God working to accomplish in verse 1?

Although God is speaking about the city of Jerusalem in this verse, we can apply what He is saying to the modern day believer. For application sake, please replace the word *Jerusalem* with your own name and repeat the verse out loud.

The fact that God will not rest until my "righteousness goes forth as brightness" fills me with hope! I do not have any righteousness of my own and I need all the help I can get! At times I am discouraged because I seem to have so many flaws and faults and I despair that I will never reflect the righteousness of Christ. Just the fact that this verse is in the Bible encourages me because I know that God has made provision for people like me! The truth of the matter is whether I feel like it or not, He is constantly working to conform me into the image of His Son.

The Hebrew word for *righteousness* in this verse is *tsedeq* which is derived from another a Hebrew word *tsadaq*; these words mean "to be

just, be righteous, be in the right, to be put or made right, declare righteous, cleansed, deliverance, victory and prosperity” (BLB).

As a believer in Christ, which part of the above definition means the most to you and why?

Please fill-in the following blanks:

God says that He will not rest until our righteousness is as _____ and our salvation is as a _____ that burns.

The original word used in this text for *brightness* means what you think it would: “light, shining, to enlighten” (BLB). Please consider for a moment the wonderful gift of light.

How do we benefit from light? In the space provided, list as many advantages as you can.

How can others benefit from the righteousness and light that God is developing in us?

Against the backdrop of this dark, lost world, any flicker of light will shine forth to show others how to follow Jesus. Let’s not be satisfied with shining forth as a birthday candle of light. Let’s keep working with God until our righteousness shines like a blazing bonfire that can be seen for miles and miles.

Who shall notice our righteousness (verse 2)?

What shall we receive?

Who will give us this new name?

I don't know about you, but the idea of receiving a new special name from God makes me excited! Nicknames are usually a sign of acceptance and brotherly affection. I have special names for all my immediate family members. I also have nicknames for some of my students at school. A very special uncle used to call me by a pet name. When he called me by that name I felt very loved! How about you? Do you have a nickname?

According to verse 3, when we have been saved by Christ and He has brought forth His righteousness in us for all to see, we will bring Him glory! We will cause others to praise Him when they see the changes He has worked in our lives. Sometimes we don't notice the changes God has wrought because they have happened inch by inch over a long period of time. It's time to take a look back and be encouraged by how we have changed over the years.

What changes has God worked in your life since you became a Christian?

He who began a good work in you is faithful to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus!

Now please reread verse 4.

List two words that describe what our lives were like before we accepted Christ for our Savior.

The English transliteration for the word *forsaken* is 'azab which means "be remote, absent, leave, to leave behind, abandoned, widowed" (BDB). Among other things, the original word for *desolate* means "ruined, ravaged, desolate and devastated, unfruitful." Before Jesus, we were *abandoned* and *widowed* and by our own choices, our lives were *devastated* and *desolate*; that accurately describes my life B.C. (before Christ).

What was your life like before you met Jesus?

Please list the two words that God uses to describe the lives of those who believe on Him for salvation.

Hephzibah and *Beulah* do not sound like very exciting names to our western ears. As a matter of fact, I cannot think of many other names that I would rather not have than Hephzibah or Beulah! But in Hebrew these names have a wonderful heritage! *Hephzibah* means "to take great delight in, to be pleased with, to take pleasure in something." *Beulah* means "to be married, husband, wife, to possess, to own" (BLB).

Taking what we have learned about these two words, please write a couple of sentences that describe our relationship with our Heavenly Father upon our conversion.

Did you write down that God commits Himself to us as a bridegroom to his bride? When I was growing up I had the privilege of attending a Catholic school. During the course of my education I learned that the

nuns who worked at our school wore a wedding ring on their left hand to signify their commitment to Christ. I love the symbolism behind this tradition. May we be as devoted to Christ!



Now let's take a look at what the word *bride* means in the original Hebrew—I think you will be blessed by this definition and maybe gain a little freedom in Christ!

The original word for bride, *kallah* is derived from another Hebrew word *kalal* which means "to complete, perfect, make complete, make perfect, made perfect." The word *kallah* is also used in the Old Testament, in a verse referring to military equipment. As wives, we complete our husbands; they are more with us than without us. As wives, God has given us important positions as equal partners with our husbands within our marriages. We have different but equally valuable roles within the family.

The word for bridegroom in Hebrew transliterates as *chathan*, a primitive root which means "to become a son-in-law and to make oneself a daughter's husband (BLB, emphasis mine). Let's consider the last half of that definition for a moment, "to make oneself a daughter's husband." Jesus is the bridegroom; we are the bride of Christ that means we are the *daughter* of Someone.

Whose daughter are we?

Because of our position in Christ, we are daughters of the King!

According to the last phrase in verse 5, how does God feel about this relationship?

The word for *rejoice* used in this verse refers to a type of rejoicing that is physical; such as leaping or jumping for joy! It is wonderful to imagine that God is physically rejoicing because we belong to Him!

How does a bridegroom rejoice over his bride? I think he would want to tell everyone he knows all about his bride; how wonderful and

beautiful she is, how he intends to make her happy, the plans he has made for her life, etc.

What else would a bridegroom say about his bride?

What does all this information from the Old Testament about bridegrooms and brides mean to a New Testament believer? Let's see if we can make a few applications!

- ② **You shall take on a new name (verse 2).** "You shall be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord shall name." Traditionally when a man and a woman marry, the woman takes on the last name of her husband. He covers her with his name signifying that he will care for her all of his life, until his death. Jesus our bridegroom cares for us beyond His death, into eternity! Please read Revelation 2:17 and 3:12 and answer the following question.

What does God give to us when become Christians?

He gives us a new name and He gives us His Name! Does this give anybody any hope today? Perhaps you've been longing for a new name because like me, your own name has been marred by sin. Lift your head up and take hope! God is offering you His name and a new name! I don't know what your new name will be, but I believe it will have significant meaning that you and God will understand.

- ② **There will be a grand wedding feast!** In the Old Testament the wedding feast lasted one week (Judges 14:17 and Genesis 29:27). In modern times, a wedding celebration usually lasts for one evening but can cost thousands of dollars! How does this affect Christians? Let's see what the NT has to say.

Please read Revelation 19:9 and record what event is mentioned in this verse.

I don't know about you, but I'm looking forward to this feast! I'm sure all the food will be fat-free!

- ☺ **We will be provided with wedding clothes!** In Biblical times as well as modern times, brides spent weeks even months preparing their wedding dresses. What bride doesn't look beautiful in a stunning white dress adorned with fabulous jewels? Most brides do not have to buy their own wedding gowns however; their fathers provide for the dress. How like our Heavenly Father!

Please read Isaiah 61:10 and Zechariah 3:1-5. What type of garment does our Father provide for us?

Why are we unable to provide our own wedding clothes (Isaiah 64:6)?

- ☺ **We will be given gifts!** I remember how excited I was to register at our local jewelry and china shop for bridal gifts before our wedding! It was fun to select the gifts I wished to be given as my husband and I set up housekeeping! In Biblical times, the bride and her family received gifts as well—only they were from the groom (Genesis 24)! We receive gifts from our bridegroom also—gifts that are of His choosing.

Please scan 1 Corinthians 12:1-10 and Romans 6:23 and record the gifts we receive from our Bridegroom.

We all know that a wedding day does not make for a strong lasting marriage. In order to have a lasting satisfying marriage relationship, the bride and groom must give sacrificially of themselves to their spouse. (He has already given sacrificially of Himself; He gave His life for us). How does this apply to our relationship with Jesus?

In order to have a strong relationship with our Savior we must:

1. **Spend time together.** My marriage with my husband is at its best when we are spending time together talking, having fun and fellowshiping with others. The same concept applies to our relationship with Jesus. We cannot have a strong relationship with Him if we never spend time with Him.
2. **Communicate with each other.** I love it when my husband takes a moment to unexpectedly call me during the work day. I feel loved and cherished when he calls "out of the blue." Jesus also loves it when we check in with Him throughout the day in addition to our scheduled Quite Time.
3. **Make a date!** Just as we look forward to dates with our husbands or other loved ones, it is fun to make a date with God! Set aside a couple of hours in your schedule and take your favorite devotional book, worship music or Bible study materials and spend some uninterrupted time with God. My favorite date spot with God is on the beautiful campus of the University of Notre Dame. I love to sit by the Grotto or the lakes and spend time praying and reading His Word.
4. **Celebrate special anniversaries!** Take yourself out to lunch or go with your husband or friends to celebrate the day you were baptized or the day you were saved!

Do you have any other ideas on how to keep your relationship with God vibrant and healthy?

Which of the ideas above will you commit to doing as soon as possible?

Appropriately, as I am writing this, my friend Jenna is preparing to marry her bridegroom Kyle on the beautiful shores of Lake Michigan. We will be attending their wedding this evening. From a recent post on FaceBook, I know that she is eagerly awaiting her bridegroom. Kyle, in

return has waited many years to win his beautiful bride. Tonight they will join their lives together before many friends and loved ones. May we be as eager for our Bridegrooms return!

*"And behold, I am coming quickly,
And my reward is with Me,
To give to everyone according to his work...
And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!"
And let him who thirsts come...
Surely I am coming quickly!"
Revelation 22: 12, 17 and 20*