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Where Did Wedding Customs Originate?

Why June is such a popular month for weddings? Why is a wedding called “tying the knot”? Some wedding customs come from the Bible and some from mythology and superstitions.

by Gregory Dullum

Marriage is an honorable institution created by God when He made the first man and woman.

“And Adam said: ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man.’

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed” (Gen. 2:23-25).

Although the word “marriage” is not used in these verses, God united this man and woman in holy matrimony. At the end of verse 25 she is called “his WIFE.”

The First Wedding Ceremony

What a SIMPLE ceremony that first wedding was! No church building or reception hall to rent. No maid of honor or best man to ask. No bridesmaids in matching dresses or groomsmen in rented tuxedos. No fancy white wedding dress with lace and pearls costing hundreds or thousands of dollars. In fact, there were no clothes at all! There was no pianist or organist. There were no ushers, no invitations to mail and no guests to invite. If there was a minister officiating, it was God (the being who became Jesus Christ).

This first wedding had no veil hiding Eve’s face, no sparkling diamond ring or shiny gold bands; no sweet wedding cake thick with frosting, no flickering unity candles, no two tall glasses of bubbling champagne and no pyramid of gaily wrapped presents.

In what month did this first wedding occur? It may have taken place in September! According to Jewish tradition, the six days of creation began on the



Photo by Gregory Dullum

A modern wedding includes customs of ancient origins.

first day of the seventh month (Tishri 1)—the Feast of Trumpets—which falls in our month of September. God created Adam and Eve on the sixth day, so their wedding may have been on Tishri 6.

Today, June is the most popular month for weddings. So let’s take some time this month to examine the origin of many of our wedding customs.

Where did all our customs come from? Some go all the way back to Adam or Abraham. Others originated with the pagan Egyptians or Romans. Many are superstitious and were supposed to bring luck to the young couple.

God gives no COMMANDS regarding how a wedding is to be conducted. There is no scripture stating, “Thou shalt have a wedding cake” or “The bride shall wear white if she be a virgin” or “Weddings shall take place in June.” Mankind was free to create his own customs and ceremony regarding the wedding. So he did. Customs developed over time.

One Man and One Woman

From the beginning, marriages were intended to be between ONE MAN AND ONE WOMAN, and was expected to last until one of them died. Divorce was not part of the picture when God created marriages (Mat. 19:4-6).

However, almost from the beginning, man corrupted this institution. Adam and Eve’s first son, Cain, married one of his sisters. (It wasn’t wrong back then to marry such a close relative. Whom else could he marry?) Cain and his wife had a son named Enoch. “To Enoch was born Irad; and Irad begot Mehujael, and Mehujael begot Methusael, and Methusael begot Lamech.

“Then Lamech took for himself two wives: the name of one was Adah, and the name of the second was Zillah” (Gen. 4:17-19). It was not the case that one wife died and Lamech married a second. No! He had two wives at the same time (v. 23)!

Within just a few generations, men began having more than one wife; a situation that was *not intended* from the beginning, but it was *allowed by God*. He gave NO COMMAND forbidding it (“Thou shalt not take two wives”). Some of God’s closest servants in the Old Testament had two or more wives, including Abraham, Jacob, David and Solomon. In every case, polygamy brought problems—headaches and heartaches that could have been avoided had these men married just one woman.

The Bible does not give details about these earliest wedding ceremonies or their customs. The wedding ceremonies are not described at all in the Bible.

WEDDING CUSTOMS

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Wedding Customs

Continued from Page 1

Giving the Bride Away

The first wedding to have any description in the Bible after Adam and Eve's is that of Abram and Hagar.

Abram was already married to Sarai, but she could have no children. "So Sarai said to Abram, 'See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing children. Please go into my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her.' And Abraham heeded the voice of Sarai. Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife" (Gen. 16:2-3).

An AGREEMENT was made between the bride's "boss" and her future husband. In this *arranged marriage*, the bride is "GIVEN" to her husband by her mistress, Sarai. *Hagar had no choice in the matter.*

Arranged marriages have existed at least since this time. They still exist today. However, in Western society, it is usually left up to the young people themselves to choose their mates. And yet it is still a common custom for the bride to be "GIVEN AWAY"—usually by her father.

Consummating a Marriage

Abram's marriage to Hagar was consummated by sexual intercourse (Gen. 16:4).

This is still a custom today, in spite of the fact that many couples live together (and have had sex) before marriage. Many married couples still make a big deal out of their "wedding night" by planning a romantic get-away to start their honeymoon.

Praying for a Mate

Years later, after their names were changed, Abraham and Sarah had a son named Isaac. When Isaac was 37, Sarah died.

It came time for Isaac to marry, and Abraham did not want him marrying a Canaanite woman. He wanted Isaac to marry a girl from his home territory. He made an agreement with his servant to go back to the land of Mesopotamia and find a wife for Isaac.

The servant PRAYED for God's help in *finding the right woman for Isaac* (Gen. 24:12-14). Many young people today still pray for God's guidance in finding a mate.

Woman Has a Choice

Hagar had no choice when her mistress gave her to Abraham as his wife. This was not the case with Isaac. Even though this was still an *arranged marriage* (between Isaac's father, Abraham, and the bride's father and brother), *the bride had a choice in the matter.* She could REFUSE to go with the servant back to Canaan (Gen. 24:5, 8, 24, 29, 50-51, 57-58).

A Wedding (Nose) Ring

For the first time recorded in the Bible, we see a GOLD RING given to the future bride. This was not a diamond ring to be worn on the fourth finger as it is today; it was a golden nose ring weighing half a shekel (1/5 of an ounce) and was accompanied by two golden bracelets weighing 10 shekels (four ounces) (Gen. 24:22).

A Dowry

Once she agreed to be married, the future bride was given more gold and silver jewelry and clothing. Precious things also were given to the bride's brother and mother (v. 54). Of course, Abraham was a rich man and could afford to give precious gifts (Gen. 13:2). If POOR people followed this custom when they married, their gifts may not have been as valuable.

It does seem to be the custom in the Old Testament for the bridegroom to pay a dowry or bride-price to the bride's family (Gen. 34:12). When Israel became a nation, God instructed men to pay this dowry (Ex. 22:16-17).

'Taking' a Wife

Little is recorded of the actual wedding ceremony of Isaac and Rebekah. The Bible says, "Then Isaac took her into his mother's tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death" (Gen. 24:67).

In the next verse, Abraham marries again, and we are told simply, "Abraham again took a wife, and her name was Keturah" (Gen. 25:1).

Although it is not mentioned in these early chapters of the Bible, "taking a wife" involved more than just taking a woman to bed. There were pledges or wedding vows that were made. God mentions this when describing his love for the Israelites by comparing Israel to a young maiden: "When I passed by you again and looked

upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread my wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine' says the LORD God" (Ezek. 16:8).

The Betrothal or Engagement

"When the marriage had been arranged, the couple entered the betrothal period, usually lasting a year and much more binding than the engagement of today. During that year the man prepared the home for his bride. The betrothal was established in one of two ways: a pledge in the presence of witnesses together with a sum of money or a written statement and a ceremony with a concluding benediction. Before Israel's exile [to Babylon] the betrothal was ratified by a verbal promise (Ezek. 16:8); after the exile the bride and groom's parents signed a covenant binding the couple together. In NT [New Testament] times the parents of the bride and groom met, along with others as witnesses, while the groom gave the bride a gold ring or other valuable item. To the bride he spoke this promise: 'See by this ring you are set apart for me, according to the law of Moses and of Israel.' ...

"The wedding was largely a social event during which a blessing was pronounced on the bride The marriage itself was secured by the formalizing of a marriage contract" ("Weddings," *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Chad Brand, Charles Draper and Archie England, general editors, 2003, p.1664).

Most Wedding Customs Are Pagan

Although the Bible gives some instructions regarding whom to marry and not marry, it does NOT give *specific* instruc-

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Smile Awhile

"A merry heart does good, like medicine" (Prov. 17:22). Here is this month's dose:

Remember: Love is grand; divorce is at least a hundred grand.

tions regarding *all of the customs* that have become attached to weddings. Those were left up to mankind to invent. Because most of mankind were pagans, most of the customs in today's wedding ceremonies come from pagan beliefs.

Does God care if wedding customs were originated by pagans? He finds pagan customs offensive if they are used in the WORSHIP of *their false gods* or if his people adopt pagan methods of worship *to worship of Him* (Deut. 12:30-32). Most marriage customs don't fall under the realm of WORSHIP.

Why June Is Popular

Let's examine the origins of many of our wedding customs. Let's start with the month of June. It's the most popular month for marriages. Why?

"Yes, June is the month when most schools break for vacation and when weather is appropriate for outdoor weddings, but these don't explain why June has been, since ancient times, a popular month for weddings. Like many contemporary customs, the popularity of June has mythological origins.

"The month of June is named after Juno, the Roman goddess of marriage and young people. Juno was reputed to take a proprietary interest in couples married during 'her' month. An ancient Roman proverb counseled 'Prosperity to the man and happiness to the maid when married in June' " (*Imponderables: The Solution to the Mysteries of Everyday Life* by David Feldman, 1987, p. 94.)

Nigel Pennick, in his book, *The Pagan Book of Days*, agrees: "June is named after the Roman Great Mother goddess Juno, the Greek Hera. ... Because Juno is the divine watcher over the female sex, the month of June is held to be the most favorable for marrying" (1992, p. 75).

According to *The Ancient Book of Days* by Kay and Marshall Lee add: "The Romans considered June the most auspicious month for weddings, especially at a full moon or conjunction of the sun and moon" (1979, p. 75).

Another reason that June is so popular is that the month of May was considered by pagans to be an UNLUCKY month in which to marry.

"There is a more compelling reason why so many weddings are performed in June: May has long been considered the unluckiest month in which to marry. The sentiments expressed in the superstitious couplet, 'Marry in May, and rue the day' probably date back to Roman times. The month of May honors Maia, a Roman Earth goddess, the consort of Vulcan and, most damaging to her month's wedding public relations, the patroness of old people" (Feldman, p. 94).

Feldman believes some people may choose NOT to marry in May for superstitious reasons and put off their nuptials until June, adding to an already crowded wedding month.

As for these superstitions holding any water, Feldman punctures a hole in that theory: "June brides and grooms have the same divorce rate as those poor unfortunates who marry in the month of Maia" (p. 94).

Does this mean we should not marry in the month of June? It depends upon WHY we are marrying in June.

If we are getting married in June because of superstitious beliefs that somehow the gods will favor our union, then that's wrong. But if we marry in June because it fits our schedule or we want an outdoor wedding before the heat and humidity get unbearable, or any number of reasons, one month is as good as the next.

Tying the Knot

Other wedding customs have some interesting origins too. "An old Danish custom required the actual tying of a knot at a wedding, with two pieces of string or ribbon. This tradition spread to England and other parts of Europe and is the origin of the expression 'to tie the knot' " (Lee, p. 75).

Taking Home Cake

Another ancient custom is for guests to take home pieces of the wedding cake. "The custom of giving guests pieces of the wedding cake to take home comes from an ancient Roman practice of breaking a cake over the bride's head for luck. People picked up the pieces for their own good luck" (Lee, p. 75).

The Fourth Finger

Wedding rings date all the way back to Isaac and Rebekah (albeit hers was a nose ring). Gold wedding rings became a common tradition among the Israelites. But why are they worn on the finger that we wear them today? "Wedding rings go on the fourth finger because the ancients believed it contained a nerve going straight to the heart" (Lee, p. 79).

Bridesmaids Dressed Alike

Why do bridesmaids often dress alike? "Bridesmaids are usually dressed alike. The ancient custom required the bride and several attendants to dress alike to confuse the evil spirits which had come to spoil the wedding" ("Marriage," *The World Book Encyclopedia*, 1957, Vol. 11, p. 4820).

The Best Man

"The term 'best man' is derived from old Scandinavian marriage customs. It was considered beneath a warrior's dignity to court a lady, so he would kidnap a bride on her way to her wedding. To guard against this, the groom sent his 'best man' as an escort" (Lee, p. 83).

Good & Bad Luck Superstitions

Some customs come from old superstitions that are supposed to bring good or bad luck. "Other customs are old superstitions that are supposed to bring luck to the marriage. Some persons believe that the bride will insure her luck if she wears 'something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue.' It is supposed to be bad luck for a bride and bridegroom to see each other before the ceremony on their wedding day" ("Marriage," *The World Book Encyclopedia*).

Tossing Rice

Tossing rice at the newlyweds as they leave church has ancient origins. "Rice was an emblem of fruitfulness among many early peoples, and it was thrown after weddings to symbolize the wish for children. Or it may have been thrown as an offering to the evil spirits, asking them to stay away from the newlywed couple" ("Marriage," *World Book Encyclopedia*).

Tying Old Shoes to Cars

Why are old shoes tied to the back of the car of the newlyweds as they drive off to

Know Your Bible

by Charles Nenner

1. Which two people said "All of my bones are out of joint"?
2. Who said, "A spirit has not flesh and bones as you see me have"?
3. When Christ healed 10 lepers, how many returned to thank Him?
4. Whose bones did the Israelites carry out of Egypt?
5. The Israelites were told not to break a bone of a lamb on what Feast?

(Answers on page 5)

THE SAYINGS OF THOMAS

Often dubbed “Doubting Thomas,” what do the four quotes of this man reveal about his character?

What lessons can we learn from Thomas?

by Gregory Dullum

If you were to have four of your quotes recorded in the Bible, what would you say? Something BOLD and ENCOURAGING? Something noble like, “Be you strong and of good courage” or “We ought to obey God rather than man”?

Quotes of Thomas

One man was quoted four times in the Bible and his first three quotes are not very flattering. His first three quotes are:

1. “Let us also go, that we may die with Him.” (Why would someone say, let’s all go and be killed? This not a very positive-sounding statement.)

2. “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” (Was this person lost? He seems clueless.)

3. Speaking of the resurrected Jesus, he said: “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” (This person seems stubborn and lacking in faith.)

Of course, these saying belong to one of the 12 disciples—the one named Thomas. He has often been dubbed “Doubting Thomas” but there is much more to his character than this one phrase. Let’s see if we can understand his character a little better.

Calling of Thomas

Thomas was one of 12 people in the whole world called to be a close disciple of Jesus when He walked the earth (Mat. 10:1a, 2-4). Jesus must have seen something in him that He liked.

Thomas was not completely helpless. He was *given* POWER as were all the other disciples. “He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease” (Mat. 10:1b). Instead of “Doubting Thomas” he could well have been called “Healing Thomas.”

Thomas was given the same instruction as the other disciples; to preach to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. He was to preach “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” and was to “heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons” (vv. 6-8). He, like the others, was warned, “Behold I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and

harmless as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. ... And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved” (vv. 16-17, 22).

Thomas seems to have taken *special note* of what Christ said in vv. 24-25: “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they call those of his household!”

Why do I say Thomas took special note of these instructions? Because of what is recorded next.

Thomas’ First Recorded Words

After his calling, the next mention of Thomas is in John 11. His first recorded words are here. Jesus’ friend, Lazarus had died, and Jesus wanted to go to Judea where he was buried. He prepared to go back to Judea, where the Jews wanted to kill Him (vv. 4, 6-8). What did Thomas think of this plan? “Then Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, ‘Let us also go, that we may die with Him.’ (v. 16). Why did Thomas say that?”

We might think negatively that Thomas was being sarcastic, saying, “You know the Jews want to kill you, Jesus, and yet You insist on going; so why don’t we all just go so we can ALL BE KILLED?”

Most authors and commentators have cast this statement in a POSITIVE light. Frank S. Mead, in *Who’s Who in the Bible*, writes, “‘Let us all go that we may die with him,’ bade Thomas when danger threatened Christ. Jesus liked that, rewarded it...” (1980, p. 202).

The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary (Paul J. Achtemeier, general editor, 1996) says, “He alone appears to be a tower of strength when he encourages the disciples to accompany Jesus into a hostile Judea even if it means death” (“Thomas,” p. 1144)

Jamieson Fausset & Brown’s *Commentary* (1967) says Thomas so loved Christ that he could not contemplate life without Him. If Christ were going to die, he might as well die with Him, for life was not worth living without Him (vol. V, p. 417). Have we ever heard Thomas called “Brave Thomas?”

I’m not sure Thomas was as BRAVE and NOBLE as these authors thought he was.

I think Thomas may have been a REALIST who *based his beliefs on physical facts*. He was a *logical thinker*. You could compare him to a scientist, an engineer, a mathematician. In his mind, 2+2 always = 4. Thomas based his reasoning upon *physical facts*, not on *fancy*, not on *faith*, and not on *wishful thinking*. Thomas’ way of thinking could be considered by some to be negative, moody, or gloomy, because physical facts often point in that direction. I’m not sure Thomas was *always negative*. He just based his beliefs upon physical facts.

In John 11:16, Thomas stated the facts as he saw them, but he did not have *all the facts*, so his *conclusion* was WRONG.

Jesus had told him, if they hate Me, they will hate you. If they kill Me, they will kill you. The servant is not greater than the Master. Now, Jesus was hated by the Jews in Judea, and they wanted to kill Him. Jesus wanted to go to Judea to see Lazarus. In Thomas’ mind, 2+2=4. Jews in Judea wanted to kill Jesus. Jesus wanted to go there. Therefore, the Jews would kill Him. The disciples were not greater than their Master, so they would be killed too.

What Thomas did not understand was that it was not yet time for Jesus to die. It was not time for any of them to die. If Thomas had known that, he might have said, “Let us also go, that we may see him raise Lazarus from the dead” instead of “Let us also go that we may die with Him.”

Thomas’ Second Quote

Let’s now consider Thomas’ second quote. On Jesus’ last Passover, before his crucifixion, Jesus told his disciples the following:

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s House are many mansions; 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. And where I go you know, and the way you know” (John 14:1-4).

Notice Thomas’ reply: “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” (v. 5).

Jesus was talking about his crucifixion.

He was going to DIE and be RESURRECTED, and become a SPIRIT BEING again. He was *going back to heaven*. Someday, He would return to this earth and bring his kingdom here. In his 3-1/2 year ministry, He had taught his disciples *the right way to live*. If they modeled their lives after Him, *they, too, would be resurrected* into SPIRIT BEINGS and would rule under Christ in his kingdom. Jesus was talking about SPIRITUAL things.

Thomas was *not on the same page* as Jesus. He was thinking on the PHYSICAL level. Thomas was thinking: Here we are in the Garden of Gethsemane. Which direction is Jesus going to walk next? North? South? East? West? Where are we going tomorrow? Back to Jerusalem? Back to Galilee? If this happened today, Thomas might have said, "How can I plan your trip on Mapquest or on my Garmen Nuvii if you don't tell me where you're going?"

Thomas was stuck on a physical plane. He was thinking very logically, very technically. He had not yet grasped the big picture. But he was not alone. None of the disciples fully grasped the situation. They had not yet received the holy spirit.

Thomas' Third & Fourth Quotes

We now come to Thomas' third quote—his most famous quote. After Jesus was crucified, He appeared to the apostles but Thomas was not there with them.

"But Thomas, called Didymus, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.'

And after eight days his disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, and the doors being shut, stood in the midst, and said, 'Peace to you!' Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving but believing.' And Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and My God!' Jesus said to him, 'Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed' " (John 20:24-29).

Did Thomas REFUSE to believe? No. THOMAS BELIEVED, but *only after he saw the evidence*. Thomas' fourth quote contains the powerful words, "My Lord and My God!"

Jesus said, "Because you have seen Me, you have believed."

Why Did Thomas Need Proof?

Why did Thomas need physical proof in order to believe? Verse 24 could hold a clue. Thomas was called Didymus. Didymus means "Twin." If Thomas were a twin, then he was very closely connected to his twin brother or sister. Twins have a special bond. And yet, there is no mention of Thomas' twin ever being called. If his closest relation was not called to be part of Jesus' work, do you think Thomas had to defend his beliefs to his twin brother or sister? Perhaps his twin constantly poked fun at Thomas' beliefs. Thomas had to prove everything, so he could explain his beliefs to his twin. This is speculation on my part, but it is a possible explanation.

Thomas Did a Work

Thomas was not perfect. He did not have a great amount of faith. He could not see the big picture. And yet, *Christ used him for a great work*. He was one of the foundation stones upon which this church was built. He became one of 12 apostles!

According to Greek historical records, Thomas later preached to Israelites who had settled in Parthia, near the Caspian Sea, 400 miles east of the Black Sea. He preached in the area that is today called Iran, Afghanistan and western India. He apparently died in India. While preaching the Gospel there, he excited the rage of pagan priests and was thrust through with a spear.

A Great Future

Although martyred in this life, Thomas has a GREAT FUTURE in God's kingdom. He will sit on a throne ruling one of the 12 tribes of Israel (Mat. 19:27-29).

We all might like to be big, strong leaders, like Peter, James or John. The fact is, *we are not all like Peter, James or John, and we don't need to be* to rule in the World Tomorrow. Thomas, with all of his weaknesses and flaws, was used by Christ as an apostle in his church. Christ has placed each one of us in the church where He sees fit.

Thomas grew spiritually, was strengthened by the holy spirit, and will rule from one of 12 thrones over a tribe of Israel in the World Tomorrow. We, too, must grow spiritually, and we, too, are promised leadership positions in the kingdom of God.

Know Your Bible Answers

1) David. 2) Christ. 3) One. 4) Joseph's. 5) Passover.

Fun Fact

of creation, history, holidays & the Bible



Drawing and Fun Fact are courtesy of NAPS

The words ketchup and catsup are both English equivalents of the Chinese word ke-tsiap, meaning taste.

Witerature

Wit and wisdom to complement the truths of the Holy Bible can be found in secular writings.

Wild Men, Wild Alaska by Rocky McElveen, Thomas Nelson, 2006, pp. 65-66.

Giving 100%

"Mike Moore is one of the men I admire most, a man who played professional baseball for a living from 1982 to 1995. He has been the MVP of the World Series for the Oakland A's and was the only American League pitcher to get a hit in World Series play. One time he struck out sixteen New York Yankees, and on another occasion he took a no-hitter into the ninth inning against the Milwaukee Brewers. Yet with all his moments and publicity, he is just down-to-earth, roll-up-your-sleeves, hardworking farm boy. Mike told me he gives 100 percent every time he goes to the pitcher's mound. He says, 'When I give 100 percent, I'm always happy with my performance, whether my team wins or loses.'"

Eccles. 9:10, Rom. 12:11, Col. 3:23-24

Quotable Quotes

"Many folks want to serve God, but only as advisors."

—Monique Rysavy

Memory Scripture

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

—Gen. 2:24

Wedding Customs

Continued from Page 3

their honeymoon?

“Before the wide use of the automobile, members of the wedding party threw shoes at the departing bride and groom, but the meaning of the ritual is the same.

“Although Egyptians may have started the practice, the answer to this Imponderable was first recorded as a custom of the Israelites in the Bible. Jews used a shoe as a symbol of ownership, signifying possession or authority over property or persons. Instead of attaching a seal or signature to a contract, a Jewish seller would remove a shoe before witnesses to signify the closing of a business deal and hand it over to the buyer. ...

“According to the Bible, when Ruth’s first husband’s brother refused her, he delivered his shoe to Boaz as a renunciation of his claim over her. This ritual enabled Ruth to marry Boaz and retain her sterling reputation. ...

“Europeans eventually changed these shoe rituals and added new meanings. At first, parents threw shoes at the bride as a renunciation of their authority over her. Soon, other attendees at weddings threw shoes as well, and the practice became a good-luck ritual rather than a consummation of a business transaction. ...

“Today, we seldom see shoes being thrown at newlyweds, but the custom of tying shoes to the car is clearly a step-child of these antecedents” (Feldman, pp. 235-237).

Carrying Bride Over Threshold

Why does the groom carry his bride over the threshold of their first home? “The custom of carrying a bride over the threshold is probably left over from the days when men got their brides by capturing them” (Lee, p. 82).

Conclusion

Marriage is an honorable institution created by God when He made the first man and woman. He is *all for marriage!* He gives some instructions regarding marriage, but He gives no commands regarding how a ceremony should be conducted.

We probably never knew the origins of some of the customs in our weddings. Now WE DO. Some are biblical in origin and others are quaint old customs from other lands. Some involve superstitions which pagans thought would bring good or bad luck. Others can be traced to pagan mythology. Before we include a custom in our wedding, we should consider why we want it, and how God would view it.



10 Dead, 10 Hurt in Texas School Shooting

“A nation plagued by a wrenching loop of mass school shootings watched the latest horror play out in this small Southeast Texas town [Santa Fe] Friday morning [May 18], as a young man armed with a shotgun and a .38 revolver smuggled under his coat opened fire on his high school campus, killing 10 people, many of them his fellow students, and wounding 10 more, the authorities said.

“By the end of the day, a 17-year-old suspect, Dimitrios Pagourtzis—an introvert who had given off few warning signs—had surrendered and been taken into custody. Law enforcement officials said they found two homemade explosive devices left at the school during the rampage” (“In Texas School Shooting, 10 Dead, 10 Hurt and Many Unsurprised” by Manny Fernandez, Richard Fausset and Jess Bidgood, *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com, May 18, 2018, p. 1).

When asked what would be the signs of his coming and the end of this age, part of Jesus’ response was, “And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ... And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold” (Mat. 24:3, 10, 12).

The apostle Paul aptly describes the “last days” this way: “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:1-4). Many of these attitudes are exhibited by school shooters. We can expect such acts of violence to increase as we near Christ’s second coming.

Europe Struggles to Defend Its Interests

“It is by now a familiar, humiliating

pattern. European leaders cajole, argue and beg, trying to persuade [U.S.] President Trump to change his mind on a vital issue for the trans-Atlantic alliance. Mr. Trump appears to enjoy the show, dangling them, before ultimately choosing not to listen. ...

“And with each breach, it becomes clearer that trans-Atlantic relations are in trouble, and the options are not good for the United States’ closest European allies.

“However angry and humiliated, those allies do not seem ready to confront Mr. Trump, wishing to believe that he can be influenced over time. ...

“But there are signs that patience is wearing thin, and many are searching for solutions as Mr. Trump, in the name of ‘America First’ creates a vacuum of trans-Atlantic leadership that the Europeans have so far seemed incapable or unwilling to fill.

“There are increasing voices for rupture within the European Union. In a reflection of the mood, Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission, the bloc’s bureaucracy, said that under Mr. Trump, the United States is turning its back on multilateral relations and friendly cooperation ‘with a ferocity that can only surprise us.’ ...

“Ivo H. Daalder, a former American Ambassador to NATO, sees such a break as inevitable. ‘At some point—after having pushed the Europeans on NATO, Paris, the Jerusalem embassy move, trade and now Iran—the Europeans will come to the conclusion that they’re better off going their own way,’ he said. ‘And that point is rapidly approaching’ ” (“Europe, Again Humiliated by Trump, Struggles to Defend Its Interests” by Steven Erlanger, *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com, May 9, 2018, pp. 1-2).

Bible prophecies indicate that a final resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire consisting of 10 kings is coming in Europe before Christ returns (Dan. 2:40-45, Rev. 17:9-14). Perhaps the actions of the United States will be an impetus to the formation of the end-time Beast power, as Europe moves away from partnering with the U.S. and seeks to defend its own interests.