

The Word's Eye View

The Word's Eye View is a newspaper column written by
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A Traditional Wedding (Article 46)

During these times of societal upheaval when so many excellent traditions are being trampled, one looks for encouragement where it may be found. I encountered one such occasion several months ago when a young couple came to me expressing a desire to get married. They were not looking for an endorsement to shack up or any reason to jump the curb---they simply wanted an old-fashioned Christian wedding in the house of God. What? You mean we are not going to do this hanging from parachutes in mid-air or underwater in scuba suits? Their nuptials will be confirmed not in a pool hall, park or local tavern but in a church---how refreshing! It's not that the location provides any better cement for a relationship but the symbolism of God's endorsement does portray a mind set that yearns for His blessing and recognition that marriage was His idea in the first place. (Genesis 2:24)

Historically, May and June host thousands of weddings across America, many of which will be of the traditional sort. The unfortunate element of the story is most individuals who will participate in these ceremonies do not have a full consciousness of what all the components actually represent. I thought it appropriate to provide a small explanation in keeping with the season. In truth, these conventional customs find their nucleus in the Bible.

The arrival of the guests initiates the whole affair. They are frequently asked by the ushers if they are a friend of the groom or the bride and their response determines which side of the church in which they are seated. The separation of wedding guests is featured in a parable that Jesus told in Matthew 22:1-14. One individual is escorted out because he was not appropriately dressed having refused a wedding garment provided by the king. Evidently, his name was not recorded in the guestbook which is called the book of life in Revelation 20:12-15. The actual beginning of the rite is signaled by the seating of the bride's mother who represents heaven (Galatians 4:26) and suggests a far greater marriage in the future. (Ephesians 5:21-33; Revelation 19:6-9)

The bridegroom, best man and groomsmen are usually located behind a wall (Song of Solomon 2:8-10) in the front of the sanctuary waiting for the cue (I Thessalonians 4:16) to make their appearance. The best man is often referred to as the person who is standing up for the groom. So without coincidence we often point to an honest good man as "a stand up guy." John the Baptist said, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled." (John 3:29) Jesus said that John was the best, but Luke 16:16 suggests that John was simply a representative of all the Old Testament saints who will stand up with Christ at His wedding.

The flower girl appears and is pictured in Song of Solomon 2:12 just prior to verse 13 when the groom says, "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." The bridesmaids show up in Matthew 25:1 where we read "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom."

When the troop is finally assembled, the organist intensifies the volume and the wedding march begins as the bride appears on the arm of her father whose responsibility it is to give his precious daughter away who is attired in a lovely white dress. (Revelation 19:14) The transfer of authority is embodied in Jesus' words, "My father, which gave them me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my father's hand. (John 10:29) The vows exchanged are representative of the believer expressing their faith in the promises of the bridegroom to be followed by a recessional which leads to a feast. (Revelation 19:9)

Even though this has been a very superficial treatment of a wonderful doctrine perhaps enough bread crumbs have been cast on the path of inquiry to incite some to actually ask, "Where did all these traditions originate?"

I trust that the religious right has found this brief explanation instructive. To the non-religious left an apology may be in order. I really didn't mean to wreck any wedding plans that you may be harboring---if you had only known that the ancient practices were so framed in Scripture, you could have made necessary adjustments. Take heart; it may not be too late to import a shaman on a parachute. To all the Daniels and Ninas in this world who want to take the most sacred commitment God's way---we salute!