

Wedding imagery permeates the bible from beginning to end. We should expect no less from the author of marriage, our loving God. The Book of Genesis speaks of the first marriage, a bond of love and trust between God and Adam and Eve.

That trust was broken when Adam failed to protect his wife from the serpent. The two ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They broke their bond of trust by original sin. They covered themselves with fig leaves for they were naked and ashamed. God immediately recognized they were no longer wearing their wedding garments of innocence and purity.

One might liken the guest thrown out of the wedding banquet with the expulsion from paradise. The Lord banished them from the Garden of Eden. “He expelled the man, stationing the cherubim and the fiery revolving sword east of the garden of Eden, to guard the way to the tree of life” (Gn 3:24).

Wedding imagery permeates the bible from beginning to end. The Old Testament’s portrayal of final salvation under the image of a banquet appears in the prophecy of Isaiah: “On this mountain the LORD of hosts will provide for all peoples, a feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines. He will destroy death forever. The Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces” (Is 25:6, 8a). Isaiah’s message was for the Jews who lived in exile in Babylon, cast out from the wedding banquet in the Promised Land. To a people who had lost their homes due to infidelity to the Covenant, Isaiah “constantly called his people back to a reliance on God’s promises and away from vain attempts to find security in human plans and intrigues” (Intro to Is).

Wedding imagery permeates the bible from beginning to end. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells the parable of a king who wants to throw a lavish wedding banquet for his son. Many ignore the invitation; others attack his servants. The invitation then goes out to whomever can be found in the streets. One of these last-minute guests is found without a wedding garment and cast out into the darkness. The wedding garment that is absent is “the repentance, the change of heart and mind, that is the condition for entrance into the kingdom” (Note Mt 22:11).

Matthew presents the kingdom both in the present and in the future (Note Mt 22). In Baptism, we are given a new wedding garment. When we have sinned, we must beseech the Lord for his forgiveness. Through sacramental confession and repentance our sins are forgiven, and the purity of our wedding garment is restored. In the present we are called to live holy lives forgiving others for their trespasses as the Lord has forgiven us.

In its future dimension, “the kingdom is something that will be possessed only by those present members who can stand the scrutiny of the final judgment” (Note Mt 22). Since wedding imagery permeates the bible from beginning to end, we look to the Book of Revelation for a glimpse into the future. “Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory. For the wedding day of the Lamb has come, his bride has made herself ready. She was allowed to wear a bright, clean linen garment” (Rev 19:7-8). The Lamb of God is Jesus Christ who offered his life for us on the cross and who will judge at the end of our lives and at the end of time. His bride is the church.

We live in the present in hope for the future. As Christ suffered and died for his bride, authentic love in marriage calls for true sacrifice. “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:25-27).