

# Becoming a Bride of Jesus

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One of the great mysteries in Christian writings is the depiction of Jesus as the bridegroom and his follower as the potential bride.<sup>1</sup> This model for the seeker of Jesus is very powerful and rich with teachings, but its understanding requires putting a little effort into pulling a number of pieces together. Jesus was aware of the importance of the concept of the bride when he, for instance, in describing the kingdom of Heaven, compared it to virgins awaiting their bridegroom.<sup>2</sup> Saint Paul further reinforced the concept when he stated that, “I have espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”<sup>3</sup> What this relationship might be as a bride was symbolized by the Catholic mystic and poet, St. John of the Cross, who wrote the beautiful short poem entitled, *Dark Night of the Soul*, describing the climbing of a hidden inner ladder to experience love as the bride of Jesus.

As will be discussed in the following text, this teaching of the early Christians of becoming a bride represented quite a step forward in the history of religion that is little understood even at this date. In order to introduce this powerful yet forgotten precept in this modern age, it is important to take a quick review of Western religion, but in, perhaps, a somewhat unique manner. The discussion starts with the consideration of ancient human sacrifices that eventually leads to the sacrifice of the self in marriage to Jesus as Truth. Most historians approach the early sacrificial rites as being only superstitious practices to bribe some imaginary god, but there is also a science and practical consideration involved.

Before beginning the discussion of sacrifice it is important to discuss an underlying wisdom that the ancients had which certainly contributed to their concept of religious sacrifice. This elemental wisdom was that if a farmer does not sacrifice seed during planting, the resulting crop will be sparse. This is because five seeds can be placed together in the freshly prepared soil, yet only one seed might germinate. To ensure an abundant crop, the farmer must therefore give to the earth far more seeds than will be expected to germinate. The same knowledge was known about impregnating a woman. In this case, a number of plantings with an abundant number of seeds may be required before one seed will germinate.

Since no fault could be perceived with seeds or with the soil or womb, there had to be a mystical higher power that somehow determined the germination and outcome. This higher power could apparently be appeased with the sacrifice of extra seed.

The existence of such a power is recognized today even in our non-agrarian societies although seldom discussed. Although the majority of people use this power, it is difficult to give exact examples and so the following ones require some thought. A good starting example is with the discovery of some salespeople or gamblers that if they give away all of their available cash their chances of selling more or winning more are increased. Beggars know that they have to “seed” their begging bowl with their own money. No doubt you have sacrificed yourself on a new job, giving more than required and giving up some of your own interests to increase your chances of promotion. Runners keep talking about sacrificing themselves and undergoing pain in order to gain. Good students attempt to go beyond the requirements of the teacher and give more in order

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 9:15, Matthew 25:1, Mark 2:19, Luke 5:34

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 25:1

<sup>3</sup> II Corinthians 11:2

to gain more. Another example of this unusual psychology is within the *Parable of the Talents*<sup>4</sup> in which Jesus lauds the individual who invests his money and condemns the individual who safeguards his money. Success therefore can only come to the one who is willing to “seed” or sacrifice part of what one has in order to obtain more.<sup>5</sup>

There is a corresponding physiological and psychological reaction to sacrifice. One very odd aspect of humans is that if they are challenged, they will do more. In the case of the salespeople and gamblers, their need becomes a strong challenge and they will then apply themselves more diligently, but another oddity occurs and that is the enhancement of their normal capabilities. For instance, they may find that they are more sensitive to the gestures and reactions of the people they are facing. They might say that their gut feelings and subtle powers increase under the increased demand. Superhuman powers are likewise evidenced by individuals encountering a severe demand or trauma. In such cases they can do superhuman feats with their minds, bodies and senses. Most people have found that necessity is, in fact, the mother of invention, and would agree at least that making an effort and placing yourself in need by sacrificing can increase your future success or attainment.

Those people who place themselves in need, trusting that the outcome (whatever it might be) will be beneficial, are exhibiting a fundamental trust that becomes a backbone for a true Religious faith. They are, in fact, trusting a power higher than themselves, even if they do not identify it as such.

With this understanding about sacrifice and its experience, the ancient custom of sacrifice can now be elaborated upon. As we stated earlier, every farmer knew about sacrificing seed to ensure a good crop. Then some farmers, no doubt, assumed that other offerings could be even more effective or that the results could go beyond bountiful crops to success in battles or in the market place. This type of thinking certainly led to the early sacrifice of such great things as powerful rulers, hated enemies, or beautiful virgins.

This type of sacrifice probably did not last long because the results did not seem to increase with the power of the person being sacrificed. However, the sacrifice of seed was still effective.

With the advent of animal husbandry, the seeds of the male animals seemed to behave as did the plant seed except that it had to be planted within a womb of a female animal. Accordingly, the early Jews sacrificed a male lamb without blemish<sup>6</sup> for the same reason that plant seed had been sacrificed, since the choice male lamb would contain future seed for breeding and increasing the flock. This sacrifice was obviously considered to be effective since it was maintained for centuries.

This then led to another step in sacrifice. Instead of sacrificing future seeds through killing male lambs, the lamb could be castrated with even better results for the herd. In addition to serving as offerings of future seeds, castrated animals had many superior qualities such as increased gentleness, stamina, and longer life. The fertilization of the herd was seemingly increased by maintaining only a few un-castrated males. The experience of the farmers of sacrificing seed, therefore, was found to be applicable to breeders.

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew 25:14-29

<sup>5</sup> *Power for Change*

<sup>6</sup> Exodus 12:5

It seems obvious that the experience of the breeders should then be applied to humans. In fact, a few societies did castrate their kings in order to increase the fertility of the society. Similarly, eunuchs or castrated males were found to have even more superior qualities than the castrated male animals. Specifically, eunuchs were found to have superior qualities of judgment, trust, mental acuity, and stamina. At the time of Jesus, castrated males were preferred for many positions of trust.<sup>7</sup> One common ritual in many of the religions at the time of Jesus consisted of the priest sacrificing his own powers of fertility to the higher powers such that others would gain more fertility. This sacrifice was also deemed to bring higher powers to the priest.<sup>8</sup>

To understand the more advanced teachings of becoming a bride of Jesus, the question as to the status of women or the feminine nature needs to be explored next. The early people probably did not see any difference in the planting of seed in the soil and in a woman. They did not perceive the complex interaction of a sperm and egg, but rather thought in terms of a nurturing soil or environment. The soil had to be fertile and likewise the womb of a woman had to be fertile. Both planting sites required a power of germination that was not predictable, since many seeds needed to be planted to ensure that at least one would germinate. The womb of a woman was, therefore, considered to be the equivalent of fertile soil where the seed could be germinated, with and only with, the presence of this holistic ruling force. This germinating ruling power that could enter into the soil or into a womb was finally described as a Spirit.<sup>9</sup> This concept of a germinating or vitalizing power is illustrated by the many stories of barren women, some far beyond menopause, who conceived through the power of the Spirit. Women were, therefore, considered to be both the receptors of seed and Spirit, while men were the distributors of the seed only.

The seed was obviously considered to be masculine, while the soil and womb were feminine. The Spirit, however, was neither and hence had no sexual identity. Rather, it was considered as a mystical energizing and vitalizing source or a form of energy that could initiate change.

The power of the Spirit was also used later by Jesus to explain the initiation of creative powers within individuals of both sexes, such as ideas, insights, prophecies, inventions, super physical or mental feats as well as power over others. These manifested powers were perceived to have come from a mental seed that became vitalized by the Spirit. The sages, heroes, and miracle workers were, therefore, described as being filled with the Spirit.<sup>10</sup> Before the Spirit can inhabit an individual, the individual must become receptive or as we would say today, become more feminine and open (as will be discussed).

In the Old Testament, the Spirit was the power of vitalizing, manifesting or bringing forth the Will of God. The “Will” was separate from the Spirit and was the creative concepts or desires. The Will of the creator of the universe was, therefore, the source of all creation including the creations of the prophets, sages and holy people, while the Spirit made them manifest. The New Testament, however, uses the more evolved concept of mental or spiritual creation as springing forth from seeds<sup>11</sup> in the presence of Spirit, whereas the older Old Testament uses the concept of seed only with sperm or procreation.

To understand what it means to be the bride of Jesus also requires the consideration of another usage of the word “Jesus.” At the time of Jesus, a name was more of an attribute than an identity.

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<sup>7</sup> Acts 8:27

<sup>8</sup> *The Golden Bough*

<sup>9</sup> Greek: *pneuma*: “to breathe or to be vitalized”

<sup>10</sup> For examples, Exodus 11:25, Acts 2:4

<sup>11</sup> As for instance, Matthew 13:22, Luke 8:11

As an example, to be given the name of “Grace” meant that grace would be an attribute of that person which would be greater than its use to identify an individual. In this vein, we still speak of people “living up to their name.” The inner person, the attribute, and the name were to become one. The name of an individual was of more importance than their physical body. This explains why it used to be very important to know the meaning of a name that was given to a child, since the name played a role in determining the future nature of the child. Jesus uses this concept in receiving people because of their name.<sup>12</sup> When you took upon yourself someone’s name, you took upon yourself their inner attributes. Jesus was so well known as being a source of Truth who so astounded his listeners that his name likewise became synonymous with “Truth.” As for instance, “Jesus,” Truth (or the Truth that Jesus could evidence) shall set you free (from ignorance or bondage).<sup>13</sup> The Gospel of Thomas,<sup>14</sup> written before the canonical Gospels, uses Jesus as meaning Truth, and the word “Truth” can generally be interchanged with “Jesus” to obtain a clearer meaning of some statements that otherwise become confusing if Jesus means the physical identity of someone.

It is now necessary to consider different types of seeds. Jesus or Truth became symbolized as seeds that take root in a receptive fertile body and mind.<sup>15</sup> Jesus identified himself (Truth) as good seed, but also discussed that the bad seed (false knowledge) are of the devil.<sup>16</sup> Therefore both good and bad seeds can be “planted” in individuals. The bad seed is likened to tares or weeds which can take root anywhere and grow to perpetuate ignorance and bondage (false ideas, beliefs, or concepts). Bad seed further weakens the soil for the reception of good seeds. Bad individuals can become similar to weeds in that they spread and propagate their seed in all available spaces. This is exemplified by how fast gossip and rumors fly, take root, and propagate. Once a particular weed takes root in an individual, other seeds are unable to take root and the individual becomes close-minded, hardened, and dogmatic. Jesus even gives the solution to an individual who first opens to Truth and then finds weed seeds planted surreptitiously within the mind<sup>17</sup> (do not attempt to remove them until the harvest time of the good seed).

It is now possible to approach the concept of becoming a bride to Jesus. A general view of the meaning at this time is that the bride is open only to the seeds of Truth. She has sacrificed a great deal to make herself closed to bad seed and yet fertile to the good seed. She is therefore monogamous, virtuous, open, submissive and fruitful. She is unable to receive, germinate or propagate bad seed and is pure or unadulterated with false wisdom, beliefs or desires. If the bride to be is not dedicated, pure, and vitalized, she becomes lost as described in the parable of the ten virgins.<sup>18</sup> If she remains true, then she enters the bridal chamber and the kingdom of Heaven.

Obviously attaining such a state of purity is more than a matter of believing or acting. It requires a full response of the mind, body, emotions, and senses. Jesus certainly was aware of the difficulty in obtaining this perfection and he gave several hints as to its attainment. He stated for instance that, “Except you become converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>19</sup> (It is interesting that the word “converted” comes from the Greek word *strepho* that means “to revert back to.”) The pre-sexual state of the child must be re-found, or the acquired aggression, dominance, desire to control, and self-importance must be removed.

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<sup>12</sup> Matthew 10:41

<sup>13</sup> John 8:32, John 14:6, John 18:37, II Corinthians 11:10

<sup>14</sup> *The Nag Hammadi Library*

<sup>15</sup> Matthew 13:4

<sup>16</sup> Matthew 13:37-39

<sup>17</sup> Matthew 13:24-30

<sup>18</sup> Matthew 25:1

<sup>19</sup> Matthew 18:3

This state must constitute an actual physiological change and not just a mental desire. This pre-sexual state is also the state of maximum growth, learning, and response to the outer world.<sup>20</sup>

In order to eliminate aggression and other strongly masculine traits, the hormones themselves must become changed. Jesus suggested to his followers that they become (as?) eunuchs (for those who were ready)<sup>21</sup> in order to find the Kingdom of Heaven. This is further amplified by the advice of Jesus to cut off offending parts of the body.<sup>22</sup> Saint Paul states this teaching as presenting your body as a living sacrifice.<sup>23</sup> Today's science knows that severe demands upon the body and mind shift and change the hormones as well as other biochemicals. As for instance, it is known that people working in a competitive atmosphere will increase their male hormones, while working in a nurturing environment would increase their female hormones.

In addition to removing the excess masculine traits, it is also necessary to become receptive to the seeds of Truth, to nurture them, and then to assist them to germinate and develop. The receptivity and nurturing aspects are feminine and require the increase in female responses typically supplied with excess female hormones. The germination of the seeds requires the presence of the Spirit as discussed before.

Becoming receptive to Truth and only Truth is not sufficient, since the bride must also have a love that goes beyond the love of romantics, parents, or spouse. It is a love that is described in the old Jewish requirement of loving God with all of your heart, mind and soul and loving your neighbor as yourself.<sup>24</sup> This constitutes living your life for others without concern of the self.<sup>25</sup>

Jesus pointed the Way, but is generally not credited with telling the How. To understand the How of changing the self, the first steps of sacrificing yourself to Truth must be taken and the tares or weeds of false knowledge then need to be gathered up and destroyed. When you seek and become open, receptive, and fertile, then other writings, insights, interpretations or Truths will be found as Jesus promised.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Power for Change*

<sup>21</sup> Matthew 19:12

<sup>22</sup> Matthew 5:30 & 18:8

<sup>23</sup> Romans 12:1

<sup>24</sup> Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37, Mark 12: 29-33

<sup>25</sup> *Power for Change*

<sup>26</sup> Matthew 7:7