

Greetings!

Do you enjoy going to weddings? As a minister, I've performed countless wedding ceremonies and have a confession to make, I really dislike wedding rehearsals. Depending on the wedding party the ceremony can be a delight, and the reception is usually a blast, but the rehearsal – I'd rather stay home, thank you! And, that leads me to this week's part 4 of *The Fourth Cup*.

If you'd like to read parts one through three of *The Fourth Cup* again to refresh your memory, click here: <http://www.newwine2go.com/jat/jat.htm>

The Fourth Cup (4), The Wedding Feast

As they gathered into the sanctuary everyone was cordial, but that would soon change. The bride and groom introduced their friends and families as I jotted down the names of those in the wedding party. After a short prayer (should've been much longer), we began the task of getting everyone into their respective positions for the ceremony.

Now, when it comes to a wedding ceremony, it amazes me how many different opinions arise based on someone's cousin's wedding, or the marriage of the person to their first, or second spouse! It didn't take long. As I began instructing the young couple on etiquette and procedure, hands were going up. First, it was a friend of the couple who shared their funny story at which each mother cringed, and then another friend as they tried to top the first story.

I soon regained control, but not before each mother decided from that point forward, they needed to be in charge. Being the nice guy that I am, I allowed them to give their input. Big mistake! Soon, I was facing a young bride who, with tears running down her cheeks, was staring at the floor. I quickly detected that there were deeper issues at work between the families and brought everything to an abrupt halt.

With each mother staring me down, I turned toward the bride and asked as it pertained to their current difference of opinions, "What do you want to do?" Then it broke. Through her tears, and a tone of voice that I still remember to this day, she cried out. "I just want everyone to leave me alone and let me get married!" That was all I needed to hear. Asking everyone who was not in the ceremony to take a seat, I informed them that I wasn't allowing anymore suggestions and was in charge of the ceremony. Later an appreciative bride, who confided her dread at having to face her mother, thanked me.

The following day the sanctuary filled with excitement as a nervous bride and groom prepared for their entrance. Each mother cried as I lead the couple through their vows; the crowd cheered through a passionate kiss; and upon their exit everyone was smiling. I don't think anyone even noticed the short prayer of gratitude I offered to the Lord.

Now, there is very little that can compare to the homemade dinner prepared by a community of country folks for a wedding in the south! Oh, by the way did I mention that I like wedding

receptions! From the strain of their differences the night before, to laughter and hugs now, you would have thought these folks had never had a cross word between them.

Suddenly, everyone was on a first name basis as the in-laws made plans for future “get-togethers”. I’ve joked at church dinners that the first thing we’re going to do when Jesus returns is eat! Think about it. If we’re in “rehearsal” mode now, what better way to start eternity than a wedding dinner to settle everyone down after a tough rehearsal?

In Jesus’ day, they did not conduct weddings as in our culture today; with a ceremony. After the young man’s visit to the house of his lover, she was “betrothed”, which is far more serious than our “engagement”. From the time she became betrothed, she covered herself with a veil indicating she belonged to someone else and the only thing remaining was his return for her, the feast and the consummation of the marriage.

We may have our *opinions* now as to how things should be done in church, but when He returns we’ll get caught up in the excitement of *our* wedding feast and, before you know it, we’ll be hugging and making plans for *get-togethers!*

And that’s just a thought . . .

My Final Word

There has been so much discussion on when and how Jesus will return that I believe we’ve lost our sense of joy over His coming to get His bride. Unfortunately, as to His return, it has become more about who is theologically correct, than the event itself.

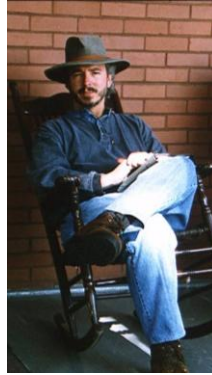
I love this parable from Matthew 22:1-10:

“Jesus also told them other parables. He said, ² “The Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a king who prepared a great wedding feast for his son. ³ When the banquet was ready, he sent his servants to notify those who were invited. But they all refused to come! ⁴ “So he sent other servants to tell them, ‘The feast has been prepared. The bulls and fattened cattle have been killed, and everything is ready. Come to the banquet!’ ⁵ But the guests he had invited ignored them and went their own way, one to his farm, another to his business. ⁶ Others seized his messengers and insulted them and killed them. ⁷ “The king was furious, and he sent out his army to destroy the murderers and burn their town. ⁸ And he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, and the guests I invited aren’t worthy of the honor. ⁹ Now go out to the street corners and invite everyone you see.’ ¹⁰ So the servants brought in everyone they could find, good and bad alike, and the banquet hall was filled with guests.” (NLT)

For myself, this puts it into perspective. Being the person that I was, I didn’t qualify for the guest list! And yet today, I’m not only invited, I am a part of the Bride!

Can't wait for the reception dinner!

Chris



And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! ⁷ Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." ⁸ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. ⁹ Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed *are* those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' " And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God." Revelation 19:6-9 (NKJV)