

INTRODUCTION

Paradigm: Simply put, a paradigm is like a lens we see life through, a mindset or way of thinking.

While you won't find the explicit phrase "bridal paradigm" in the Scriptures, this way of thinking pertaining to our relationship with God can be found written from Genesis to Revelation. To have a biblical bridal paradigm is to have an understanding that God's creation of marriage, gender, and sexuality in mankind shows forth His glorious character and image, that God Himself is a bridegroom, and his people are His Bride (*Gen. 1:26-28, 2:18-25; Ps. 19:5, Ps. 45; Song 1-8; Hos. 2:16-20; Isa. 54:4-6, 61:10, 62:4-5; Joel 1:8; Matt. 9:14-15, 25:1-13; Mk. 2:18-20; Lk. 5:33-35; John 3:28-30; Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 19:7, 21:2, 21:9, 22:17*).

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..."²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it..."
(Genesis 1:26-28, emphasis added)

³¹ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." (Gen. 2:24) ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:31-32, emphasis added)

⁹ Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb."
(Revelation 21:9, emphasis added)

There is a spiritual war (*Eph. 6:12, 2 Cor. 10:3-5*) raging over the mind of man concerning the topics of marriage, gender, and sexuality in our culture today. While this battle is not new, it is certainly at a unique point of increasing intensity and prominence in today's world.

I. JESUS, THE BRIDEGROOM

A. Jesus is referred to as or refers to Himself as "the bridegroom" in all four Gospel accounts (*Matt. 9:14-15, 25:1-13; Mk. 2:18-20; Lk. 5:33-35; John 3:28-30*).

²⁸ You yourselves bear me witness, that I (John the Baptist) said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.'²⁹ The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete.³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease."
(John 3:28-30, emphasis added)

¹⁴ Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?"¹⁵ And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. (Matthew 9:14-15, emphasis added)

B. In ancient Jewish marriage in the first century there were multiple phases. A man and woman would first be betrothed at which point they would legally be considered in covenant of marriage but would not yet live together or consummate their marriage until it came time for the wedding (Matt. 1:18-25; 1 Cor. 7:25-28). The terms “bridegroom” and “bride” typically refer to a man and woman while they are betrothed leading up to and during their wedding. The time between the betrothal and wedding could be shorter or longer depending on different factors and the preparations being undertaken (Matt. 25:1-13).

C. Role of a bridegroom:

- i. Proposition: When a Jewish man desired to marry a woman, he would first come to where she lived and make a proposition to the woman and her father. Jesus expressed His overwhelming love and desire by leaving His heavenly home and coming to earth to redeem His bride.

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. (Revelation 3:20)

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

- ii. Provision: The man would customarily come bearing gifts or pay a price of value for his bride (Gen. 24:53, 34:12; Ex. 22:16). Jesus came and paid the ultimate price of giving up His own life for bride. Additionally, when she says “yes”, He showers her with His spiritual gifts (Eph 4:7-8).

²⁵ ...Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,...²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor... (Ephesians 5:25b, 27a, emphasis added)

² ...Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, ... for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame... (Hebrews 12:2, emphasis added)

⁶ ...love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the LORD... ⁷ If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised. (Song 8:6b, 7b, emphasis added)

- iii. Promise: The bridegroom would make a covenant promise to his bride in their betrothal and would commit to fulfill his promise to ultimately marry her and be her husband. Jesus has promised that he was going away to prepare a place for his bride, and that He would come again to take her to be with Him where He is, forever.

¹ “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. (John 14:1-3)

¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, emphasis added)

²⁰ "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. ²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. (John 17:20-24, emphasis added)

II. THE CHURCH, THE BRIDE

- A. Both God's people Israel, and those Gentiles grafted into the promises of God are referred to as His Bride throughout the Scriptures (Isa. 49:6, 49:18, 54:5; Hos. 2:16-19). The Apostle Paul makes explicitly clear that God has not abandoned Israel in this New Covenant promise (Rom. 11), but equally clarifies that it is Jesus' Church made up of both Israelites and Gentiles that are His Bride (Eph. 2:11-19, 3:1-6, 5:22-32). Note that Jesus does not have multiple "brides", but just as corporately we are the Church, the Body of Christ, and people of God, so also, we are the Bride of Christ.
- B. In the covenant of marriage, the man initiates the betrothal, but the woman is not a passive bystander in the process. She is an active participant in the home and works with her husband (Prov. 31).
- C. Role of a bride:
 - i. Response: A woman has the free ability to respond to the proposal for marriage that a man brings to her. She can either accept or reject his proposal (Gen. 24:7-8). In the same way, we can choose to accept or reject Jesus' expression and proposal of love towards us.

¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, (John 1:11-12)

- ii. Readiness: Once betrothed, a bride would prepare herself for the wedding to come and for her role as the wife of her husband. As the Bride of Christ, we are to clothe and make ourselves ready for the wedding to come and for eternity with Jesus.

⁷ *Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; ⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”— (Revelation 19:7-8, emphasis added)*

⁸ *I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; ⁹ likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, ¹⁰ but with what is proper for women who profess godliness— with good works. (1 Timothy 2:8-10, emphasis added)*

- iii. Remaining faithful: A bride is expected to uphold the covenant betrothal commitment to remain pure and dedicated to her husband until he finishes his preparations and fulfills his promise and comes to marry her. We are called to have no other God's before Him (Ex. 20:3), and to remain faithful in devotion to Jesus, knowing that He will come again to fulfill His promise to us.

² *For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. ³ But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:2-3)*

²³ *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:23-24, emphasis added)*

² *...you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, ³ knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. ⁴ They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming?...” ⁸ But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. ¹¹ Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, ¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God... ¹³ ... according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Peter 3:2-4, 8-13, emphasis added)*

CONCLUSION

¹⁷ *The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. (Revelation 22:17)*