

THIS IS MY BLOOD



A look at the Jewish marriage tradition

-From a transcript of "Stones from the Holy Land," aired on Focus on the Family radio program, October 3rd, 2001. An interview with Rev. Ray Vander Laan, expert on ancient Hebrew tradition, and how it fit in with the teachings of Jesus.

Ray Vander Laan: I remember very clearly sitting in an Orthodox Jewish classroom, listening to a lecture given by a brilliant individual. He was Jewish, not a Christian, and he was describing the Hebrew marriage customs of the first century Jewish people in the land of Israel.

I listened to this man tell about the traditional marriage. He described how, when a young man reached marrying age, he and his father would choose a godly family who had a daughter who would be an appropriate wife. In many cases, the son had never even met the girl, but the young man and his father would go to the girl's house, and they would sit and negotiate what was called the bride price, because the loss of the daughter was an enormous loss.

When they finally arrived at the price that was to be paid for this young girl--a girl of probably 14, 15 or 16 years of age--the young man would then ask the girl to marry him, but he did it in a very Jewish way, according to Hebrew custom.

The young man's father would take a flask of wine. He would pour a cup of wine and hand it to his son. The son would then turn to face the young woman, and with all the solemnity of an oath before the Almighty God Himself, the young man would take that cup of wine and say to the young woman, "***This cup is a new covenant in my blood which I offer to you.***" In other words, he was saying, "***I love you. I pledge to be your faithful husband. Will you be my bride?***"

Tears came to my eyes, as I recognized what Jesus was really saying to His collection of Jewish disciples that day at the Last Supper. These men were all very familiar with the Passover liturgy, having heard it since they were old enough to think. But suddenly, right in the middle of the ceremony, after the third cup, completely out of place, Jesus, who was on His way to pay the bride price, turned to His disciples, and said to them in the language of their culture, "***This cup is a new covenant of My blood, which I offer to you. I love you. I pledge to be your faithful Husband. Will you be My bride?***"

Every single time when you sit and participate in a communion ceremony, and the cup is offered to you, Jesus is saying to you, "***I love you. And the only way that I can describe the depths and the passion of that love is to say, "Will you be My wife?"***"

Jesus has asked us to be His bride.