



The Cud...a little something to chew on.

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Easter is Over: Now What?

Easter is over. The tomb is empty. Now what?

We wait. And wait. And we wait some more. The Church remains a bride-to-be in what has to be the longest engagement in history.

We should have guessed this wouldn't be a typical marriage given the Groom's family and His unconventional courtship. Jesus Christ not only declared His love and intent, He demonstrated it in what turned out to be a fatal display. And then He proved that not even death could separate Him from His beloved.

Following the dramatic proposal on Calvary and His death defying triumph three days later, our Husband-to-be abruptly disappeared. It wasn't cold feet. He went ahead to prepare His Father's house ([John 14:1-3](#)). He assured us He'd be back, and, to seal the deal, left an engagement ring¹ with the promise of a big wedding and a reception that would be out of this world.

But two millenniums later, our Fiancé is still a no-show. The champagne is flat, the flowers are wilted, the band has gone home and His Father's explanation that "a day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day" ([2 Peter 3:3-9](#)) is, for some, wearing a little thin. He hasn't called, He doesn't write, and yet He expects His bride to be faithful, prepare, and watch vigilantly for His return.

It feels like an endurance test of loyalty. Of course, considering the merits of the family we're marrying into, it's not really a lot to ask. And it's what people who are engaged do. They look forward. And they prepare. Jesus intended to leave us in a state of hope and anticipation. We are a people of promise not possession.

¹ The Holy Spirit is given to believers as a "pledge" – a word in the Greek language that originally meant "down payment" and later came to mean "engagement ring". [Ephesians 1:14](#); [2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5](#).

Yet some Christians think the honeymoon has already begun, and so they expect marital bliss on earth. They want more than just the "first fruits of the Spirit" (Romans 8:23ff) - they want the whole harvest. They don't want to groan with creation in the hoping; they want to celebrate with one another in the having (Romans 8:19-23). And this "honeymoon Christianity" perpetuates unfounded and unrealistic expectations for life on this side of the grave. And unrealistic expectations of God lead to disappointment and doubt, which can lead to anger and bitterness, and in the worst cases, end in unbelief.

Other Christians have a post-honeymoon mentality, and are already busy setting up house. These "homebuilders" spend their energies trying to decorate a world that's passing away. Rather than laying up treasures in heaven and decorating eternity, they're running an extreme home makeover on a property doomed to foreclosure and demolition (2 Peter 3:9-12).

But the Bible is clear: When a person says "yes" to the Lord's proposal, the relationship is sealed but not consummated. We enter a relationship of promise more than possession. A relationship of expectation more than experience. "For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we eagerly wait for it." (Romans 8:24-25)

Our intended is out of the country, and we dishonor Him when we act like honeymooners and homebuilders. We should be riveted on His return, not preoccupied with building a nest.

And it's not as though we're left to ourselves with nothing to do while we wait. Our engagement ring, the Holy Spirit, adds His assuring presence, His leading and power (Romans 8:1-39). The fellowship of believers (on their better days), encourage and edify us (Ephesians 4:15-16). And we've been given the mission of inviting more guests to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 22:17; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21).

And while some of us have enjoyed more than our fair share of prenuptial gifts, no self-respecting bride would want to postpone her wedding so she can have more showers. We're in this for the marriage and the inheritance (Revelation 22:12-17), not the engagement. Aren't we?

The proof of a proper prenuptial perspective is in the hoping and the planning. Living as the bride of Christ demands patient anticipation and persistent preparation (Matthew 25:1-13). We should be getting ready and

staying ready for Christ's return. Seeing into the future, the apostle John wrote, "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." (Revelation 19:7-8)

According to John, the threads of the bridal gown are made from our righteous acts. I hate to say it, but this could be one skimpy dress. Of course Jesus had to clothe us in *His* righteousness before we could weave our own. But now, as we wait and watch for the Groom - the Church is obligated to "try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord", "being diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless" and "doing good, rich in good works" (Ephesians 5:10; 2 Peter 3:14; 1 Timothy 6:18)

Oddly enough, as far as brides go, the Church of Jesus Christ can seem remarkably uninterested in her dress. I really can't speak for the whole Church, so it's better to say this: I'm afraid I may be neglecting *my* threads. I'm afraid I may be more interested in being blessed than in being holy. I'm afraid I may be slipping into a half-hearted approach to "cleansing myself from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Part of my problem is that I stop thinking about, looking to, and planning for the return of Jesus Christ. It's alarming how quickly I become shortsighted and nearsighted (2 Peter 1:9).

But on those days I imagine Him at the door, ready to come back at any moment - I get serious. I get afraid (1 Peter 1:17). I get busy. On a good day, I might even get it right. That's the purifying effect of our hope. John wrote: "We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies Himself, just as He is pure." (1 John 3:2-3)

When we fail, it's usually in the basics. And nothing is more basic than "looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God." (2 Peter 3:12)

Easter is over. The Groom is returning. There's a wedding to plan.

Jesus won't leave us at the altar. The question is, will we be dressed and ready when He arrives?

For that day,

David