

**THE ORIGIN OF THE ESCHATOLOGICAL FEAST AS  
A WEDDING BANQUET IN THE SYNOPTIC  
GOSPELS: AN INTERTEXTUAL STUDY**

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*Problem*

The problem this dissertation seeks to address is the origins of the wedding banquet imagery in the teaching of Jesus. Frequently, scholars will state that the image of a wedding banquet was a common messianic image in the first century. However, other than Isa 25:6-8, sources for the image of a banquet for the messianic age in the Hebrew Bible are sparse. Yet the image of a banquet clearly appears in the Synoptic Gospels in both the actions of Jesus and his teaching. Because the metaphor of a wedding banquet is not found in the literatures of the Second Temple Period, scholars frequently assume that this sort of language was created by the Gospel writers and that Jesus himself did not claim to be a bridegroom.

*Method*

In this study I propose an intertextuality method which seeks to give full weight to the rhetorical value of an author's use of earlier texts or traditions. First, the reader must "hear an echo" within the text. By this, I mean one recognizes something in the words or deeds of Jesus that sounds like a text or tradition from the Hebrew Bible. Second, having heard the echo of an earlier text or tradition, one must then determine which texts and traditions may have been used by the author. Since allusions to tradition are not direct citations, a wide range of texts must be gathered with linguistic and thematic links to the later text. Third, these observations drawn from the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Period literature must be applied to the texts in the Synoptic Gospels which contain banquet or wedding imagery. This third step can be used as a test of the authenticity of the sayings of Jesus. I propose a "criterion of tradition congruence": if it is shown that a saying of Jesus stands within well-known traditions from the Hebrew Bible, then that saying is more likely to be authentic.

*Conclusion*

Jesus did indeed claim to be a bridegroom, and his ministry was an anticipation of the eschatological banquet. While there is no single text in the Hebrew Bible or the literature of the Second Temple Period which states the "messiah is like

a bridegroom,” the elements for such a claim are present in several traditions found in this literature. Jesus created this unique image by clustering three traditions drawn from the Hebrew Bible and applying them to his ministry. First, the eschatological age is inaugurated by a banquet eaten in the presence of God (Isa 25:6-8). Second, the end of the exile is often described as a new Exodus and a new journey through the wilderness (Isa 40-55). Third, the relationship of God and his people is often described as a marriage (Hosea, Jer 2-4).

Jesus claimed that his ministry was an ongoing wedding celebration which signals the end of the Exile and the restoration of Israel to her position as the Lord’s beloved wife. Jesus himself combined the tradition of an eschatological banquet with a marriage metaphor in order to describe the end of the Exile as a wedding banquet.