

Dressed
for
Eternity

Dressed for Eternity

by Marilyn Dawson

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my two grown children, Ashley and Isaiah Dawson, as they seek to enter the adult world in a manner that announces them as members of the Bride of Christ.

SHOUT OUT

Shout-out to my two faithful proofers/editors, Shannon and Michele. You guys have been with me since “the beginning” and I value your friendship, sisterhood, and pickiness!

THANK YOU

I'd also like to thank Rik Hall, Nat Davis, and the friends we have over in the Indie Christian Authors Group on Facebook, for all your encouragement and support.

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Food Fit for the Bride of Christ

Ezekiel 16:9-13 Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. ¹⁰I clothed thee also with brodered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. ¹¹I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. ¹²And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. ¹³Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and brodered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom.

As seen above, we have covered all but the last three items in the list. Flour, honey and oil don't fit too well in clothing or jewellery, so we'll cover them separately in this section instead.

Researching these foods listed here was a fascinating trip through history and archaeology! Just like learning about the pre-dating of Egypt's silk imports, the research on honey also proved to be an eye-opener. So without further adieu, let us begin with Fine Flour.

Fine Flour - Food fit for the Bride of Christ

When we think of flour in ancient times, images of mortars and pestles come to mind. Research into ancient peoples of the times when Ezekiel lived, reveal varying levels of technology that went into flour and bread making. Because it was so labour-intensive back then to create flour, most civilizations only made enough for that day's use, unless they were able to buy it from a baker who



employed slaves or servants to make the flour for him. Due to this, most ground flour was coarse, and sometimes referred to in Scripture as "meal".

1 Kings 17:12 And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

Fine flour then, was much more rare to come by, and typically expensive when found. In order to get fine flour, two things had to happen, first, the bran coat of the flour had to be removed, along with the wheat germ. Once that was done, the flour went through a much more rigorous grinding to produce fine white flour. Then as now, fine white flour produced a much nicer leavened loaf of bread. Yeast wasn't always used, and to this day certain kinds of ancient Middle Eastern flat breads are now sold around the world. Pita bread is one example, Indian Naan is another. But the ancients did use yeast as well, typically known as leaven at that time.

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"The Staff of Life"

Whether "dark" or "white" bread, as the Romans used to call it, or "whole-wheat" or "white bread" as we call it now, bread has been termed "The Staff of Life". Throughout the ages, it has been, and continues to be a staple food in most societies around the world. Even Scripture refers to bread at various times throughout its pages. The only reason people are starting to worry about bread in today's society, is the fact that technological advances now allow us to genetically modify our food. Wheat has been bred and spliced and enhanced over the years so many times that to find original grain is now referred to as either Legacy grain, or Ancient grain. Enhancements that cause it to grow faster, resist pests and other dangers, increase the level of gluten higher than what was naturally found, etc., have resulted in people's intestinal systems rejecting it or reacting in an allergic manner to it. The "Staff of Life" has been broken, and there is now a scramble to maintain the needed grains in modern diets.

Such scientific and technological tampering had not happened yet when Scripture was written, and must be kept in mind when discussing Biblical references to the beneficial and sometimes opulent nature of flour and bread.

What does this means for the Bride of Christ?

The reference to God giving Jerusalem fine flour to eat, is yet another reference to the royalty and nobility granted to the Bride of Christ as heir to the Throne and Joint Heir with Jesus Christ. Truly as we examine these verses in Ezekiel, we see that God spared no expense to dress, bedeck and provide nourishment for the chosen Bride of Christ.

But what should make every Christian stop and ponder with gratitude, is just Who this fine flour is and from whence it comes.

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Our first reference to bread from heaven comes when God fed Manna to the Hebrew people as they travelled in the desert.

Exodus 16:14-15 And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. ¹⁵And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.

The very word for Manna means "What is it?" It was described as tasting like Coriander seed and sweet like honey. Then in the New Testament, we hear Christ telling His disciples:

John 6:32-35 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. ³⁴Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. ³⁵And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

Later, as Christ engaged the disciples in a ritual they should have understood but completely missed, known as the betrothal ceremony, He once again referred to Himself in this manner:

Luke 22:19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

They were blinded momentarily as to what this would mean, but in the hours to come, Christ would be betrayed, whipped, beaten, and hung on a cruel cross. This death on the Cross was necessary to pay the death penalty for sin, and through the shedding of His blood, to achieve the remission of sins for all mankind once and for all. The sacrificial system that had been set up at the time of Moses was now complete. Christ, the sacrificial Lamb of God, would be slain for the world. Of course three days later He rose again, conquering

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both sin and death, and offering eternal life to all who would come to Him seeking forgiveness. Those who would make Him Lord of their lives would become the Bride of Christ. In Matthew it says:

Matthew 4:1-4 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. ²And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. ³And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. ⁴But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

John 1:1-5 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²The same was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴In him was life; and the life was the light of men. ⁵And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

We know from John 1:1-5 that the Word is none-other than Jesus Christ Himself, and that it was He who sustained the Israelites in the desert and it is He who sustains the life of the Christian now. We feast on His Words every time we open the pages of Scripture in daily personal devotions. Our soul and our spirit are given new energy and new stamina to continue to resist the wiles of the enemy and his continual attacks. There is a saying, "Seven days without prayer makes one weak". This is true because it is in communication with God that His Word is made alive to us in the Scriptures.

God has not given the Bride of Christ the coarse, dark flour of sin that eats away at her teeth and insides until she eternally dies. No, God has given the Bride of Christ fine flour to eat, the very best furnished her at the very hands of Christ Himself.

Honey - Food Fit for the Bride of Christ



Honey has been extolled and written about since records have ever been kept, the oldest of which come from ancient Egypt and ancient China. These records are not so much about the gathering of wild honey, but the care and keeping of the honey bees themselves. Wild honey was gathered as well, but it is an interesting discovery to learn that beekeeping is at least 5,000 years old in some places around the globe.

The composition, breakdown, and benefits of honey receive contradictory treatment depending on who you go to for such information. There are those who say it is no different than sugar and a potential health hazard. There are those who say it is a complete food due to its amino acids, vitamin profile and complexity of its sugar content. However there are more voices in scientific circles promoting the benefits of honey than those who aren't. It is known however, that pasteurization can remove the benefits otherwise available in raw honey. So it may be that the detractors are looking at pasteurized as opposed to unpasteurized honey in their assessments. These same people claim no difference to man-made syrups using similar sugar breakdowns in their composition. Once again, nothing beats what God created nature to manufacture on its own.

It is an interesting observation that then as now, honey in ancient times was both plentiful as it was costly. While it appears to have been available for the average middle-class on up to the wealthy, there is archaeological and historical evidence that not everyone had access to it, and it was called by at least one ancient poet, Homer, as "liquid gold".

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Honey's Apparent Historical Controversy

This observation then, of honey being gathered both in the wild and through the keeping of bees, would contradict or perhaps call into a question a relatively new assessment that when God called the land of Canaan, "a land flowing with milk and honey", that honey itself was not meant, but date syrup was meant instead. Now it is highly possible that date syrup was indeed created from the dates that grow there, and it is possible that the people of that day may have given it the same label as real honey itself. But God is not One to confuse or betray His own people, nor lie to anyone that something is other than it is. To use the term "honey", was to use a term the Hebrews were already aware of having come from Egypt, and they'd know what to expect when the spies entered the land for the first time. There is no indication that the honey in Egypt was made by crushing dates, so the Hebrews would understand God's terminology to literally mean "honey", and not date syrup. This author has yet to dig up certifiable evidence of this apparently new claim about this phrase in Scripture. For the purposes of this discussion, we are using the literal definition of honey as it is prepared by and gathered from bees in their honey combs. Elsewhere in Scripture, King Saul's son is accused of eating honey from a honeycomb against his father's wishes, and references to honey and the honeycomb are made elsewhere in Scripture as well.

1 Samuel 14:27 But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dipped it in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened.

What does this mean for the Bride of Christ?

The sweetness, healing properties, and value of this naturally-created syrup known as honey down through the ages of time, carry a fair depth of meaning for the Bride of Christ. First off is the value, once again we see that God will spare nothing for to meet the needs of the joint heir to the throne with His Son, Jesus Christ. She is nobility after all, having been grafted into the vine and as far as God is concerned, deserves nothing but the best.

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Secondly, the healing properties of honey must be stressed. The Bride of Christ has been through much and not always come out the other side unscathed. To the contrary, the Bride of Christ both within and without, has been the subject of much pain, consequences of choices gone wrong, and attacks from in and outside the church. She is in need of healing, of cleansing, and of restoring.

Lastly is the sweetness and general nutritional benefit of the honey. We are told in the Scriptures:

Psalm 34:8 O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

Psalm 19:7-10 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. ⁸The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. ⁹The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. ¹⁰More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

We are also told that to dwell on God's Word is sweet to the soul, and as we know, man cannot live on bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

Psalm 119:103 How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Matthew 4:4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

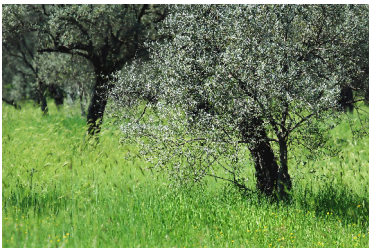
Olive Oil - Food Fit for the Bride of Christ



Olive oil has a long, ancient and rich history down through the millenia of time. Archaeological historians date the connection between olive oil and Israel to at least 1200 BC if not even as far back as 1400 BC for not only Israel, but the ancient Canaanites as well.

Olive presses and storage vats have been uncovered all over the land of Israel, and most notably along the sea coast. By the time Ezekiel was prophet in Israel, the production of olive oil had become a national export to surrounding lands and entire villages had been built around the industry. However, the way Ezekiel mentions the oil in chapter 16 coincides with historical observations that such presses were not everywhere in Israel. Nor was the oil necessarily available to all classes of society, either due to lack of an olive press in the home, or lack of ability to buy it from other villages. It wouldn't be until after the Romans took over Israel that the plenteous nature of the oil would reach to every home no matter their class.

But in spite of whether or not the common Hebrew could access the oil or not, it was common to the nation of Israel and featured highly during festivals, ceremonies, and at the King's table. It is even listed among the "Species of Seven" as scholars have come to term the seven major crops that have existed in Israel from antiquity to present day.



Characteristics

The olive tree itself is one that grows well in rocky, desolate, and often arid or drought-like conditions. To this day the Italians, now the ones famous for olive oil around the world, have sayings about this very ability.

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It is almost impossible to kill an olive tree by natural means as a result, and the oldest known olive tree in Israel is over 2200 years of age. The leaves of the olive branch have graced many garlands and diadems around the Middle East, being the leaf of choice for the Greeks when creating winners' crowns in their yearly celebrations. It was an olive branch that the dove brought back to Noah when God finally gave permission to rest the ark and disembark.

Genesis 8:11 And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.

Consequently, the olive branch has come to mean peace and prosperity.

What does this mean for the Bride of Christ?

The symbolism here is deep. Offering olive oil to the Bride of Christ as part of her daily food suggests many things.

First, it says she has persevered. No matter what has been thrown at her, she has stood the test of time and flourished even under the harshest circumstances.

Mark 13:12-13 Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. ¹³And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Governments and other religions down through time have tried to stamp out Christianity and Judaism wherever it's been found. But instead of wiping out those of the Faith in the One True God, the Church has gone underground and flourished. In fact, it was by such persecution that the Early Church spread out from Jerusalem into every corner of the Roman Empire. The church has gone through many changes, many iterations, and found itself struggling not merely with outside attacks but with internal divisions as well. Indeed, the Church has suffered much over the centuries, but it will remain, and Christ will be returning for those who have stood fast through it all.

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Second, the Bride of Christ is of the highest nobility, a royalty whose Provider owns the cattle on a thousand hills, and for whom nothing is lacking. She is given the best provision money both can and can't buy by Her Lord and King, Jesus Christ.

Third, the Bride of Christ will live in peace and prosperity in her new life at the right hand of the Heavenly Bridegroom. Her earthly life may have been full of trials and struggles, but hers is a life of peace and abundance. This is not necessarily speaking of material abundance as some would have the reader to believe. But judging from the description of the New Jerusalem, it will one day appear to translate into that on the other side of time.

Fourth, just as olive oil has been used down through the centuries in hygiene, health, and medicinal uses, so God says that He will offer a balm in Gilead.

Jeremiah 8:22 Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

1 Samuel 16:13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

Healing only comes from God, and oil is symbolically representative of the Holy Spirit. The Bride of Christ has access to the oil of the Spirit poured out on Pentecost. Christ gives the parable of the 10 virgins:

Matthew 25:1-9 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. ²And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. ³They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: ⁴But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. ⁵While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. ⁶And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. ⁷Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. ⁸ And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

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⁹But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

They are shut out from the feast because you cannot buy the Holy Spirit.

The call is going out. The Bridegroom is coming. But only those who have surrendered to the Lordship of the Holy Spirit in their lives and allowed Him to prune them and cleanse sin away from their lives will be able to enter into the Marriage supper of the Lamb.

This glance at oil concludes Ezekiel's list of food that God deems fit for the Bride of Christ. Fine flour, honey, and oil. She does not feast on coarse dry meal, but dines on the Word of God brought to life by the Holy Spirit and meditated on to receive the sweet, filling and long-lasting revelation intended to bring nourishment, cleansing and healing to our lives.