

Bible and the Headlines: Fake Weddings

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When the company that makes Listerine coined the phrase, “Always a bridesmaid but never a bride,” for their 1925 advertising campaign, it was a recognition that many women in America were willing to consider unusual means to remedy the lack of a marriage proposal. A hundred years later, another solution to a famine in proposals has germinated in Asia.

On December 7, Australia's multicultural public service broadcaster SBS News featured, “The Fake Indian Wedding Tying the Knot Between Trend and Tradition.” The article announced, “The global, growing and glamorous trend of South Asian weddings – sans bride and groom – has landed on Australian soil.” Instead of a couple’s families shelling out 50,000 to 100,000 Australian dollars (AUD) for the shindig, the fake wedding charges guests around 100 AUD to experience the gala.

German news agency DW on December 12th looked at this trend in, “Fake Weddings in Pakistan Signal a Cultural Shift.” Writing from Islamabad the author explained, “Henna nights, bold fashion and zero family drama: Pakistan's fake weddings give young people the excuse to have stylish, stress-free parties free from social pressure.” ‘Social pressure’ might explain why this Islamabad article was published on a German platform.

The Indian news network WION looked at another fake wedding trend happening to one of India’s neighbors. The December 14th edition carried, “Fake and Coerced Marriages Rising in Nepal: Women Forced into Sham Weddings with Chinese Men.” The ‘bait’ used to entice Nepali women to accept a fake proposal over the internet is the opportunity of a glamorous life outside Nepal. For the men seeking brides through deception, “This trend is linked to trafficking networks and demographic pressures from China’s one-child policy, which has created a gender imbalance and pushed men to seek brides abroad.”

Strictly speaking, there are no fake weddings in the Bible. However, there is one young woman who knew she would never be a bride so she asked her dad to throw her a party to acknowledge this. The woman was the only daughter of Jephthah, the military leader of Israel at that time (Jdg 11:34). Jephthah had rashly promised God to sacrifice the first person who came out of his house if God let Jephthah defeat the Ammonites (Jdg 11:31). God’s response to Jephthah’s attempt at Divine manipulation is not in the Bible. It was the Ammonite god Molech who required devotees to kill their children. The prophet Jeremiah revealed “The Ammonites have built the high places . . . to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire. I (Yahweh) did not command this practice and it never entered My heart” (Jer 7:31).

Jephthah’s daughter accepted her fate with one condition: “Grant me this one request. Give me two months to roam the hills and weep with my friends, because I will never marry” (Jdg 11:37). For two months she and her non-bridesmaids, “. . . went into the hills and wept because she would never marry” (Jdg 11:38). To outsiders it must have looked like a fake wedding.

The Bible ends with a much happier wedding, and it is not fake. In the penultimate chapter, God reveals to the Apostle John, “I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband” (Rev 21:2). Her husband is the Lamb of God (Rev 21:9). Thankfully, we will not need to smell like Listerine to get a proposal.