THE QUESTION

What do the Bible and the early Christians say about wedding rings?

Asked by a THF member on May 18, 2026 · published November 9, 2026, updated November 11, 2026 · 7 numbered quotations · the 16 early Christian passages and 87 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/what-do-the-bible-and-the-early-christians-say-about-wedding-rings

The short answer *Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words*

These passages quote no Bible verse about wedding rings, so they give no Bible rule for or against them. Tertullian mentions the wedding ring as an old Roman sign of modesty, and Clement of Alexandria allowed one gold ring for sealing, not show. Quoting Paul and Peter, Cyprian warned against gold adornment and pointed to the heart instead.

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POINT 1 OF 5

Tertullian names the wedding ring as Roman custom

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Tertullian scolds Romans for dropping the modest customs of their ancestors. He recalls a time when a married woman wore no gold except on her finger, where her husband had pledged himself with the wedding ring. He sets this against women of his own day, loaded down with gold.

1

> "As for women, those laws of your fathers that once gave such strong support to modesty and sobriety have also fallen out of use. There was a time when a woman knew no gold upon her except on her finger, where her husband had solemnly pledged himself with the wedding ring."
>
> *later in the same passage*
>
> "Now women have every part of their bodies loaded down with gold."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *Apology* 6 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 8, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 5

Clement allowed one ring for sealing, not show

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Clement of Alexandria says the Word allows women a gold finger ring, not as decoration but for sealing things kept safe in the house. Men may use a signet only to seal things when away on business. Other rings are to be set aside, because, as Scripture says (Sirach 21:21), instruction is a wise man's golden ornament.

2

> "So, the Word permits them to wear a gold finger ring. This is not for decoration, but for sealing things that should be kept safe in the house while they carry out their duty of managing the household."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Instructor* 3.11 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 3, page 5** **Read it in the library ›**
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3 “And if it is necessary for us, while we are engaged in public business, or doing other work in the countryside, and are often away from our wives, to seal something for the sake of safety, He, the Word (Logos), allows us to use a signet for this purpose only. Other finger rings are to be cast off, since, according to Scripture, instruction is a golden ornament for a wise man.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Instructor* 3.11 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 4, page 5** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 3 OF 5

Paul and Peter warn against gold adornment

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Cyprian quotes Paul (1 Timothy 2:9-10) telling women to adorn themselves with modesty, not gold or pearls, and Peter (1 Peter 3:3-4) pointing to the adornment of the heart. Clement says the same: the soul, not the outward person, should be adorned. These verses speak of gold jewelry in general, not wedding rings by name.

4 “You call yourself wealthy and rich, but Paul answers your riches. In his own words, he sets a proper limit for your clothing and ornaments. He said, "Let women adorn themselves with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or expensive clothing, but as is fitting for women who profess chastity, with a good way of life."”

later in the same passage

“Peter also agrees with these same teachings and says, "Let a woman's adornment not be outward, in clothing, or gold, or fine dress, but the adornment of the heart."”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Treatises* (c. 248–258 AD) **Source 11, page 6** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

5 “So, it is not the appearance of the outward person that should be adorned, but the soul should be adorned with the ornament of goodness.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Clement of Alexandria,** *Instructor* 3.2 (c. 190–215 AD) **Source 7, page 6** Read it in the library ›
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POINT 4 OF 5

A ring could picture a sealed pledge

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

Explaining the parable of the returning son, Tertullian says the ring the son receives is the one with which he publicly seals the agreement of faith. Later, arguing against applying the parable to a fallen Christian, he still calls the ring the sign and seal of baptism. This is a picture of faith, not a wedding rule, but it shows a ring was read as a pledge.

6

"The ring also he then receives for the first time, with which, after being questioned, he publicly seals the agreement of faith, and thus from then on feeds on the fatness of the Lord's body — the Eucharist, that is."

later in the same passage

"Therefore the apostate too will recover his former garment, the robe of the Holy Spirit, and a renewal of the ring, the sign and seal of baptism."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On Modesty* 9 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 9, page 6** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

POINT 5 OF 5

Tertullian names betrothal's kiss and right hands

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

When Tertullian describes betrothal, he says even among the heathens the betrothed are led veiled to the husband. He names the kiss and the joining of right hands as the signs of their shared pledge. He does not mention a ring here.

7

"No, even among the heathens the betrothed are led veiled to the husband. But if they are veiled at betrothal because then, both in body and in spirit, they have mingled with a male, through the kiss and the right hands, by which means they first in spirit unsealed their modesty, through the common pledge of conscience by which they mutually pledged their whole confusion, how much more will time veil them?"

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On the Veiling of Virgins* 11 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 10, page 6** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

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THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- None of these passages quotes a Bible verse about wedding rings, so they give no Bible command to wear or to refuse one.
- They do not show that Christian weddings in this period always included a ring, or that a ring was needed for a valid marriage.
- Tertullian's wedding ring describes an old Roman custom, not a church ceremony.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 16 early Christian passages and 87 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–16, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 17–86, in Bible order), then 17 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF’s updated English unless marked “1885 English” (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). “… [continues online]” marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *16 passages from 5 writers*

Tatian, *c. 150–180 AD · source 1*

1 *Diatessaron* 26 (1885 English; on point 4) “put a ring on his hand, and put on him shoes on his feet: and bring and 25 slay a fatted ox, that we may eat and make merry: Luke… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 2–7*

2 *Instructor* 2.11 (on point 3) about love of ornament, dyeing wool, a variety of colors, fussiness about gems, delicate work in gold, and still more, artificial hair and curled arrangements? And furthermore, what should be… [continues online] **read ›**

3 *Instructor* 3.11 (1885 English) **Quote 2, page 2** “Word, then, permits them a finger-ring of gold… [continues online] **read ›**

4 *Instructor* 3.11 (1885 English) **Quote 3, page 3** “finger-rings are to be cast off, since, according to the Scripture, instruction is a golden ornament for a wise man. Sirach 21:21… [continues online] **read ›**

5 *Instructor* 2.13 (1885 English; on point 3) “pendants, jewelry, ear-rings; Mallow-colored cluster-shaped anklets; Buckles, clasps, necklets, Fetters, seals, chains, rings, powders, Bosses, bands, olisbi, Sardian stones, Fans, helicters” **read ›**

6 *Instructor* 3.11 (on point 2) “our whole way of life, we must be as worthy as possible of free people. But men should not wear a ring on the middle joint of the finger, because… [continues online] **read ›**

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7 *Instructor* 3.2 **Quote 5, page 3** it is not the appearance of the outward person that should be adorned, but the soul should be adorned with the ornament of goodness. We may also say that the… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 8–10*

8 *Apology* 6 (1885 English) **Quote 1, page 2** "laws, too, your fathers in their wisdom had enacted concerning the very gods themselves, you their most loyal children have rescinded… [continues online] **read ›**

9 *On Modesty* 9 **Quote 6, page 4** "a renewal of the ring, the sign and seal of baptism… [continues online] **read ›**

10 *On the Veiling of Virgins* 11 **Quote 7, page 4** "No, even among the heathens the betrothed are led veiled to the husband. But if they are veiled at betrothal because then, both in body and in spirit, they have mingled with a male, through the kiss and the right hands, by which means they first in spirit unsealed their modesty, through the common pledge of conscience by which they mutually pledged their whole confusion, how much more will time veil them?" **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 11–14*

11 *Treatises* **Quote 4, page 3** "but Paul answers your riches. In his own words, he sets a proper limit for your clothing and ornaments. He said, "Let women adorn themselves with modesty and self-control… [continues online] **read ›**

12 *Treatises* (on point 3) The features of ornaments, of clothing, and of beauty meant to attract are fitting for no one except prostitutes and immodest women. No clothing is more costly than the clothing… [continues online] **read ›**

13 *Treatises* (1885 English; on point 3) "you clothe yourself in foreign garments and silken robes, you are naked… [continues online] **read ›**

14 *Treatises* (on point 3) "full of the Holy Spirit, cries out and rebukes the daughters of Zion. They were corrupted by gold, silver, and clothing. He rebukes them because they were rich in harmful… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 15–16*

15 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 3) "innocent. You are not guilty of the act itself, but you are guilty in this way: through your adornment, you led the woman to desire you. For you are the… [continues online] **read ›**

16 *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 3) "hands are fetters." Ecclesiastes 7:26. And in another passage: "As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is beauty in a wicked woman… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *70 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

17 **Genesis 24:22** When all the camels had finished drinking, the man took gold earrings weighing a drachma each, and two bracelets for her hands weighing ten gold pieces. **read ›**

18 **Genesis 24:30** When he saw the earrings, and the bracelets on his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, "This is what the man said to me," he went to the man, who was standing by the camels at the spring. **read ›**

19 **Genesis 24:47** I asked her and said, 'Whose daughter are you? Tell me.' She said, 'I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Nahor, whom Milcah bore to him.' Then I put the earrings on her, and the bracelets on her hands. **read ›**

20 **Genesis 24:53** Then the servant brought out articles of silver and gold, and clothing, and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave gifts to her brother and to her mother. **read ›**

21 **Genesis 38:18** He said, "What pledge shall I give you?" She said, "Your ring, your necklace, and the rod in your hand." He gave them to her and went in to her, and she conceived by him. **read ›**

22 **Genesis 38:25** As she was being brought out, she sent to her father-in-law, saying, "I am with child by the man to whom these things belong." And she said, "Recognize whose ring, necklace, and rod these are." **read ›**

23 **Genesis 41:42** Then Pharaoh took the ring off his hand and put it on Joseph's hand. He clothed him in a robe of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. **read ›**

24 **Exodus 22:15** But if its owner is with it, he shall not pay for the loss; and if it was hired, it shall be his in place of his hire. (Septuagint Exodus 22:14) **read ›**

25 **Exodus 28:11** It shall be the work of the stone engraver's craft: with the engraving of a seal you shall engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel. **read ›**

26 **Exodus 28:13** You shall make settings of pure gold, **read ›**

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27 **Exodus 28:14** and you shall make two tassels of pure gold, interwoven with flowers, braided work; and you shall put the braided tassels on the settings, at their shoulder straps in front. **read ›**

28 **Exodus 28:20** and the fourth row, a chrysolite, a beryl, and an onyx, set round with gold and bound in gold. Let them be according to their rows. **read ›**

29 **Exodus 28:26** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

30 **Exodus 28:27** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

31 **Exodus 35:22** The men brought from the women: everyone to whom it seemed good in his mind brought seals, earrings, rings, braided ornaments, and bracelets, every article of gold. **read ›**

32 **Exodus 36:13** They made the two emerald stones, clasped together and set round with gold, engraved and carved as a seal is carved, with the names of the sons of Israel. **read ›**

33 **Exodus 36:20** and the fourth row, a chrysolite, a beryl, and an onyx, set all around with gold and bound with gold. **read ›**

34 **Exodus 36:22** On the oracle they made twisted tassels, braided work, of pure gold. **read ›**

35 **Exodus 36:23** They made two gold settings and two gold rings, and they put the two gold rings on both ends of the oracle. **read ›**

36 **Exodus 36:24** They put the braided pieces of gold on the rings, on both sides of the oracle, **read ›**

37 **Exodus 36:25** and the two braided pieces into the two couplings. They put them on the two settings, and they put them on the shoulders of the shoulder piece, facing each other in front. **read ›**

38 **Exodus 36:26** They made two gold rings and put them on the two flaps at the top of the oracle, and on the top of the back part of the shoulder piece, on the inside. **read ›**

39 **Exodus 36:27** They made two gold rings and put them on both shoulders of the shoulder piece, below it, in front, at the coupling above the woven joining of the shoulder piece. **read ›**

40 **Exodus 38:3** He made all the furnishings of the altar, its fire pan, the base, the bowls, and the bronze flesh hooks. (Septuagint Exodus 38:23) **read ›**

41 **Numbers 5:15** then the man shall bring his wife to the priest, and he shall bring the gift for her, a tenth of an ephah of barley meal. He shall not pour oil on it or put frankincense on it, for it is a sacrifice of jealousy, a sacrifice of memorial, bringing sin to remembrance. **read ›**

42 **Numbers 30:14** But if he keeps entirely silent toward her from day to day, then he confirms for her all her vows; and the obligations that are on her he confirms for her, because he kept silent toward her on the day he heard. (Septuagint Numbers 30:15) **read ›**

43 **Numbers 31:50** So we have brought the Lord’s gift, each man what he found: an article of gold, anklets, bracelets, rings, armlets, and hair clasps, to make atonement for us before the Lord.” **read ›**

44 **Deuteronomy 6:8** You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and it shall be immovable before your eyes. **read ›**

45 **Ruth 4:7** Now this was the ordinance in former times in Israel concerning redemption and concerning exchange, to confirm every matter: a man would take off his sandal and give it to his neighbor who was redeeming his right of redemption. And this was a testimony in Israel. **read ›**

46 **Nehemiah 10:19** Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai, (Septuagint 2 Esdras 20:20) **read ›**

47 **Esther 3:10** And the king took off his ring and gave it into the hands of Haman, to seal what was written against the Jews. **read ›**

48 **Esther 8:2** And the king took the ring that he had taken away from Haman and gave it to Mordecai; and Esther appointed Mordecai over all that had been Haman’s. **read ›**

49 **Esther 8:8** Write also in my name, as it seems good to you, and seal it with my ring; for whatever is written at the king’s command and sealed with my ring cannot be contradicted.” **read ›**

50 **Job 10:4** Or do you see as a mortal sees? Or will you look as a man looks? **read ›**

51 **Psalms 7:14** Behold, he has been in labor with unrighteousness; he has conceived trouble and brought forth iniquity. (Septuagint Psalms 7:15) **read ›**

52 **Proverbs 1:9** For you will receive a crown of graces for your head, and a gold chain around your neck. **read ›**

53 **Proverbs 1:27** and when sudden alarm comes upon you, and your overthrow is upon you like a storm, and when trouble and siege come upon you, or when ruin comes upon you. **read ›**

54 **Proverbs 2:11** good counsel will guard you, and holy insight will keep you, **read ›**

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55 **Song of Solomon 1:10** How lovely your cheeks have become, like a turtledove's, your neck like chains! **read ›**

56 **Song of Solomon 1:11** We will make you likenesses of gold with studs of silver. **read ›**

57 **Song of Solomon 3:11** Go out, O daughters of Zion, and look upon King Solomon, with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, and on the day of the gladness of his heart. **read ›**

58 **Song of Solomon 4:6** until the day breathes and the shadows move. I will go my way to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense. **read ›**

59 **Song of Solomon 4:8** Come from Lebanon, O bride, come from Lebanon; you shall come and pass on from the top of Faith, from the top of Senir and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of leopards. **read ›**

60 **Isaiah 3:21** and the earrings, and the garments bordered with purple, and the garments with purple in the middle, **read ›**

61 **Isaiah 49:18** Lift up your eyes all around and see them all: behold, they have gathered together and come to you. As I live, says the Lord, you shall put them all on like an ornament, and put them on as a bride does her ornament. **read ›**

62 **Ezekiel 16:11** and I adorned you with ornaments, and put bracelets on your hands and a necklace around your neck. **read ›**

63 **Ezekiel 16:12** And I put a ring in your nose, and earrings in your ears, and a crown of boasting on your head. **read ›**

64 **Ezekiel 38:6** Gomer and all who are with him, the house of Togarmah from the far north, and all who are with him, and many nations with you. **read ›**

65 **Ezekiel 40:26** and it had seven steps, and porches inside, and it had palm trees, one on this side and one on that, on the posts. **read ›**

66 **Daniel 1:9** And God caused Daniel to find mercy and compassion before the chief eunuch. **read ›**

67 **Hosea 2:19** And I will pledge you to myself in marriage forever; and I will pledge you to myself in righteousness and in judgment and in mercy and in compassion; (Septuagint Hosea 2:21) **read ›**

68 **1 Esdras 9:20** They pledged themselves to put away their wives, and to offer rams in atonement for their ignorance. **read ›**

69 **Tobit 6:12** And the young woman is beautiful and sensible. And now listen to me, and I will speak to her father; and when we return from Rages, we will hold the wedding. For I know that Raguel will by no means give her to another man according to the law of Moses; otherwise he will be liable to death, because it is right for you to take the inheritance rather than any other man." **read ›**

70 **Tobit 7:14** And he called Edna his wife; and taking a scroll, he wrote a contract and sealed it. **read ›**

71 **Tobit 8:20** And before the days of the wedding were completed, Raguel told him under oath that he should not leave unless the fourteen days of the wedding were fulfilled, **read ›**

72 **Judith 10:4** She put sandals on her feet, and put on her anklets, her bracelets, her rings, her earrings, and all her ornaments; and she made herself very beautiful, to deceive the eyes of all the men who might see her. **read ›**

73 **Wisdom of Sirach 36:29** He who acquires a wife begins a possession, a helper suited to him and a pillar of rest. **read ›**

74 **Wisdom of Sirach 45:12** a golden crown upon the turban, an engraved seal of holiness, a glory of honor, a work of strength, the desires of the eyes, beautifully adorned. **read ›**

75 **Wisdom of Sirach 49:11** How shall we magnify Zerubbabel? He too was like a signet ring on the right hand; **read ›**

76 **Letter of Jeremiah 1:9** And as if for a maiden who loves ornaments, they take gold and make crowns for the heads of their gods. **read ›**

77 **1 Maccabees 1:27** Every bridegroom took up a lament, and she who sat in the bridal chamber was in mourning. **read ›**

78 **1 Maccabees 2:11** All her adornment has been taken away; instead of a free woman she has become a slave. **read ›**

79 **1 Maccabees 9:41** So the wedding was turned into mourning, and the sound of their musicians into a song of lament. **read ›**

80 **1 Maccabees 10:54** now therefore let us establish friendship with each other. Give me now your daughter as my wife, and I will make a marriage alliance with you, and I will give you and her gifts worthy of you." **read ›**

81 **3 Maccabees 4:6** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

82 **3 Maccabees 4:8** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

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83 **Acts 3:19** Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, **read ›**

84 **Acts 3:20** and he may send Jesus Christ, who was appointed for you beforehand, **read ›**

85 **Acts 3:21** whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things which God spoke of long ago through the mouth of all his holy prophets. **read ›**

86 **Galatians 1:9** As we have said before, so I now say again: if anyone preaches to you a gospel other than what you received, let him be cursed. **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *17 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Matthew 8:30 · 9:12 · 12:36 · 18:7 · 18:11 · 22:11

Mark 5:11 · 9:17

Luke 5:21 · 8:32 · 15:23

1 Corinthians 1:21 · 2:8 · 11:3

2 Corinthians 4:4

Hebrews 6:6

1 Peter 3:21

Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “What do the Bible and the early Christians say about wedding rings?” on May 18, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY