

Transcription of Germany's Galileo Television documentary on the Blessing 2016

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[Galileo's 20 minute feature about the Blessing -- first broadcast on the German TV channel, ProSieben, on Sunday 13 March 2016 <https://vimeopro.com/europeanoffice/german-tv-channel-prosieben-featured-within-the-galileo-programme-the-blessing-2016>]

Could you imagine getting married like this?

And like this to bring about world peace as well?

What exactly is the meaning of it all?

We wanted to find out by coming to the place itself.

The mass wedding of three thousand couples is the highlight of a religious movement in South Korea.

Its members travel here from all over the world with one goal in mind – to get married in a joint wedding ceremony.

But many couples hardly know each other.

"That is like a different world"

Stephanie and Jason from England have only known each other for eight months.

"I'm Speechless" "The happiest person on the planet."

The mass wedding is a logistical masterpiece.

Six thousand young people get married simultaneously.

Their future spouses have been chosen for them by their parents.

"We thought the two of them would fit well together"

What motivates couples to be part of this mass wedding and what has it got to do with world peace? We are the first German television crew to gain access to what must be the most unusual wedding ceremony on earth.

Our journey began two days earlier in Seoul, the capital of South Korea.

From here the Galileo production team travelled two hours to Yong Pyong... to the hotel where all of the couples were staying.

The mass weddings, held each year, are already well-known.

"Always at this time of year the couples come to stay at that hotel. I've also driven some couples from the hotel to the wedding venue itself."



We arrived at the hotel resort where we have arranged to meet up with Jason and Stephanie.

Both of them are twenty years old and have travelled all the way from England to South Korea to marry.

They met each other for the first time eight months ago.

Even at the hotel check-in their adventurous wedding starts in a completely different way than one might have expected.

"I'm here to collect the rings. We haven't paid for them yet"

Collecting wedding rings from the hotel reception?! Here it's perfectly normal.

As normal as the fact that the wedding rings for the three thousand couples are all of the same design.

Jason and Stephanie have pre-ordered their rings. The cost for two eighteen-carat gold rings is nine hundred Euros.

"I'm really excited. I can't wait to try the ring on."

For couples who didn't order their rings in advance there's an opportunity to buy them in the next room.

Here too, the rings are of the same design – with the symbol of their religious movement.

This young couple go ahead and purchase their rings.

Johannes comes from Holland and Jarelle is from Israel.

Both have met only twice so far. Yet now they are already choosing their wedding rings.

"This doesn't come off easy... but it's not supposed to come off, right?"

"We arrived here quite relaxed because we knew that we could buy the rings here."

"Yes, that's true so we didn't have the stress of organizing them beforehand."

"We did think about getting them at home but like this we had one problem less before the wedding."

We will meet both of them again later.

Jason and Stephanie are on their way to their separate rooms.

Both have never so much as kissed each other. Their faith doesn't permit intimacy until after marriage.

"Should I visit you in your room?"

"Better not."

"OK. Let's meet up later."



Jason and Stephanie both were raised in the tradition of their faith.

Their day to day life in London is quite normal. Jason studies Mechanical Engineering and she studies Physics.

But their understanding of love is different. Why did they decide to take part in such a wedding?

"Our movement was founded in Korea. That's why the wedding is here.

It's a tradition that we participate in such a mass wedding. My parents did too.

The wedding takes place together with many couples. For us that symbolizes the community and the family -- values that our movement promotes."

Jason is a member of the Family Federation.

It is a religious movement whose goals are nothing less than world peace – and this shall be brought about through love.

For that reason people marry others of different nationalities and different cultures and, through their committed love, help to create a peaceful world.

It is their belief that all such marriages are God-given.

According to their faith parents represent God here on earth. It is therefore meaningful if they help to choose the future spouse.

On a special matching website parents can search for a suitable partner for their son or daughter.

"I put a profile of myself on that website – much like on a dating website, I suppose.

There is a photo of me and a bit about my life and my hobbies.

Parents have access to details of all the candidates and they look for someone that would make a good match.

When they think they have found someone suitable they contact that person's parents.

It's the parents that arrange all of this. I can't just say 'Oh, she looks pretty, I want her.'"

After Jason's father suggested Stephanie for him, they met each other twice for lunch and went on Skype several times.

After that they both decided that they would like to be married to each other.

It is their first love relationship.



"He took me to the famous Hampton Court Palace. I had visited there as a child with my parents and he knew that.

So when he proposed and got down on his knee, even though I wanted to say 'yes' straightaway... I was momentarily speechless. But then I said 'yes.'"

We ask ourselves, can such arranged marriages work?

Most of the three thousand couples gathered here met each other in that way.

It's now less than twenty-four hours before the mega-wedding.

But for the couples there is first a presentation of six different talks to explain the value of marriage and family.

"One of the most meaningful commitments you make in front of God, True Parents and your own parents is to love and respect and to devote yourself to that one person – your spouse. And to build a loving relationship with that person -- look at them now -- until all eternity.

Most international couples don't speak Korean.

But one specific expression is very familiar to them: "Mansei".

It's like the 'Amen' of their faith.

Translated, it means 'ten thousand years full of peace and happiness.'

The wedding day moves ever closer.

The return air fare to Korea and one thousand Euros for their stay is paid for by each participant.

It's a reason why only a few couples bring their families along with them.

"This is the first time I am so far away from home. My brothers already got married here. It would be nice if they were here too."

Jason has to take care of everything by himself. He even brought an iron with him from home.

"What does it look? What do you think?"

"It looks perfect"

We can feel Jason's excitement.

No wonder. Jason never had a girlfriend before Stephanie -- and until now had skillfully avoided romantic activity.



"I am a virgin. It wasn't always easy, especially during adolescence.

Many of my friends didn't understand. Some of them wrongly assumed that I was gay."

It is two-thirty in the morning.

Until the wedding ceremony the girls won't be able to get any sleep.

Make-up and hairstyles still need to be done.

As the couples are going to be driven to the wedding at five-thirty in the morning, hairstyling goes on throughout the entire night.

Stephanie knows exactly what she wants.

"I brought my own hair brooch and a photo of how I would like my hair done.

The queue is quite long -- but there's still time before five-thirty. So it's all right!"

Hundreds of make-up artists and hairdressers take care of the three thousand brides.

The hair stylists have to work through the night.

The Family Federation believes that it is possible to learn to love any other person.

But not every member of the faith group shares that view.

We meet up again with Jarelle. She tells us that Johannes was not the first man that her parents introduced her to.

"My parents believed that if you try really hard you can live together with anyone at all.

But that was too much a challenge for me. I told my parents that it doesn't work like that."

"OK, ready! Is it nice like that?"

"Yes! Thank you very much!"

Jarelle is glad that her parents didn't insist on her accepting the first man they had suggested.

She could decide as well. The fourth suggestion was her future husband, Johannes.

At least the men could get a bit of sleep that night.



The tailor-made suit worn by Johannes has some special features.

"Here are our initials and the date of the wedding ceremony... and tucked behind the collar are the embroidered words 'Beautiful Love'.

I always call her 'Beautiful' and she calls me 'Love'. This was a suggestion from my tailor."

Johannes grew up in the tradition of the Family Federation. His father is also part of the movement.

He is one of the few parents to accompany their sons and daughters to South Korea.

He and Jarelle's parents arranged their introduction.

"Her parents contacted us and said they would complement each other very well.

They then came to visit us and we all thought that they suited each other.

Since then they have only met on one further occasion.

That couples hardly know each other and come from different countries is an intended part of the marriage process.

According to the movement, the more that people marry in order to overcome boundaries, the faster world peace can be achieved.

Very soon Johannes will see his bride in her wedding dress for the first time.

Jason too is in the midst of preparation for the big day.

Because of his excitement he hardly got any sleep.

"It is now ten past four in the morning."

"How many hours did you sleep?"

"Ahhhh, three..."

"Because you are nervous"

"I am not nervous"

Stephanie is wearing the same dress her sister wore six years ago at a mass wedding.

She too was born into the faith. Despite that doesn't she feel that as a twenty-year-old she is a bit too young for marriage?



"I've often heard that question but many other couples already have serious relationships at my age... and if I were to wait another five years or marry now it makes no difference.

I would always be with Jason anyway.

Now, I can't wait to see Jason.

The big moment has arrived.

"Best of Luck"

"Thank You!"

Jason now sees his future wife for the first time in her wedding dress.

"Wow – I'm speechless!"

"I'm the happiest man on the planet!"

Just to recap. Both are only twenty years old. They have known each other just eight months.

They were introduced to each other by their parents – and after two meetings they had already decided to get married.

And now the wedding is almost upon them.

Also Johannes and Jarelle are ready.

"Hey, you look beautiful!"

"So nice to see you again"

Only two hours until the wedding and the couples begin to gather in the lobby.

For the first time we get a sense of the sheer number of couples.

From the hotel they are driven to the wedding venue in a fleet of coaches.

Just from this hotel alone there will be fifty busloads of brides and grooms.

It is a one hour journey to the Cheongshim World Peace Center where the mass wedding will take place.

With a seating capacity for twenty-five thousand people it is one of the biggest cultural centres in the country.

Altogether three hundred buses full with brides and grooms arrive today.

Thousands of couples are now entering the hall.



The faith movement built the center to use for exhibitions and performances as well as for the weddings.

And in the midst of it all are Jason and Stephanie.

And now for the first time they enter the hall where they will be getting married.

They are clearly overwhelmed by its size.

"Rather a lot of chairs"

"... and lots of people"

"Quite overwhelming"

All couples are seated in the center area of the hall on around six thousand white chairs.

But two throne-like chairs stick out from the others.

This is where the so-called True Mother, Mrs. Doctor Moon, who currently leads the Unification Movement, will be seated.

More about that later.

"That is big and wonderful. I love it."

"It's like a different world – great."

"I never thought it would be like this. I had certain imagination – but this?"

According to the movement they have two million members worldwide.

This year, people from fifty-six different countries will be participating.

The whole ceremony is conducted in Korean.

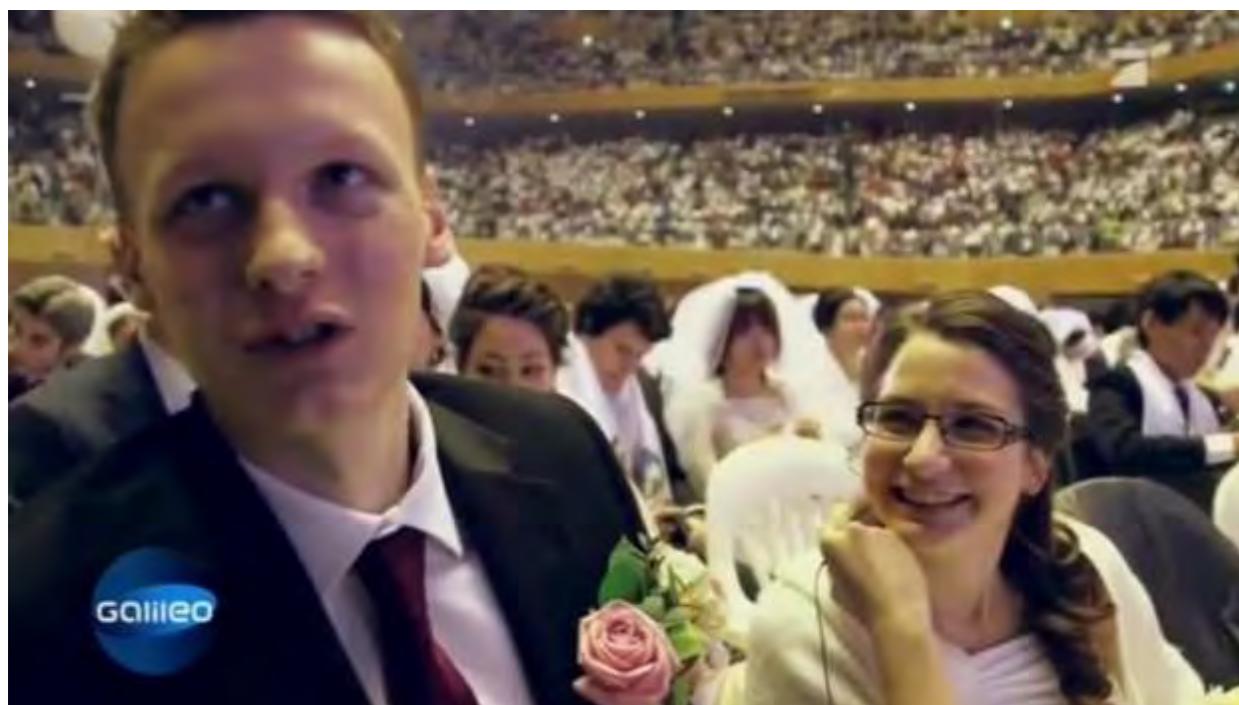
All foreign couples are given headphones from which they can hear a simultaneous translation of everything.

"Isn't it strange to have to use a translator at your own wedding?"

"No. I think it's great"

"It is nice to be together in this hall with so many different languages and cultures."

And the spectacle with about three thousand couples begins.



But they didn't only dress beautifully for their partners... but also for the so-called True Mother, the leader of the movement... who now appears on the stage as the central person for whom so many have travelled thousands of kilometers.

The wedding starts but so far doesn't seem to contain much in the way of romance.

Selected couples stand on the stage whilst all others exchange their rings at their seats.

A recording of a prayer of the late Reverend Moon, the founder of the Family Federation, can be heard in the background: "All couples present are now entitled to become children of God, our Heavenly Parent. They have waited for so long to receive Your blessing for their marriage."

The wedding is beamed out to members throughout the world via the internet. That enables Jason's parents, who chose Stephanie for him, to be able to view the event live.

Saying "Yes" to each other individually is not quite possible considering the large setting.

A voice instructs everyone as to what to do next.

"The brides and grooms should now face each other!"

"Brought together by God, bride and groom shall now exchange rings"

"With this I declare them husband and wife"

Three thousand couples exchange rings at the same time.

To us it looks like something resembling a massive pop concert.

Jason and Stephanie travelled ten thousand kilometers to get married here today. For them their dream became a reality.

"I am very happy – elated. Yes, that's the right word – elated"

"Sometimes there seemed to be a lot of things going on all at once... but when we spoke the marriage vows and exchanged rings -- those were moments which I shall never forget."

"When it was all about our commitment to each other... that was what I will remember the most."

"Most people marry in normal churches but this is like a dream for me. I am really happy."



"Yeah, a lot of couples are here... so you don't expect it to be very calm. It was exciting, right? I'm very happy!"

They still don't kiss each other yet. The movement suggests waiting a further forty days before consummating their marriage... so that their relationship doesn't become too physical at an early stage.

According to the movement their divorce rate is five percent.

That compares with a national divorce rate in Germany of fifty percent.

Because the wedding ceremony is not legally acknowledge... it means that after returning to Europe our couples will also have a civil wedding at their local registry office... to obtain their marriage certificate.

And that was the story of what was probably the most extraordinary wedding in the world -- held in South Korea.

