

THE MYSTERY OF THE BRIDE

A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church (Eph. 5:31-32).

Paul calls himself a steward of “*the mysteries of God*” (1 Cor. 4:1). There at least 14 topics labeled “mystery” in the NT. Two of which are called “great mysteries.” The word “mystery” in the New Testament does not denote something mysterious; it does not denote something you cannot understand. It merely means it has been a secret up to now: it has been one of God’s concealed secrets that He is now disclosing.

God’s ultimate purpose is to provide a Bride for His Son as His eternal companion to reign with Him forever (Eph. 5:31-32; Rev. 19:7-9). However, the identity of the bride, the wife of the Lamb (Rev. 21:9), has been a matter of much debate. To draw conclusion as to the identity, it is wise to examine the overall teaching of Scripture regarding the calling and position of both Israel and the Church.

Israel – Wife of Jehovah

In the Old Testament, Israel is regarded as the wife of Jehovah (Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3; Ezek. 16; Hos. 2; etc.). But that precious relationship was spoiled by spiritual adultery on Israel’s part.

I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery (Jer. 3:8).

She is now regarded as estranged and separated from her Husband (Isa. 50:1). But there will be a glorious future restoration to her Husband (Hos. 2:14-20).

She will chase after her lovers but not catch them; she will look for them but not find them. Then she will say, I will go back to my husband as at first, for then I was better off than now (Hos. 2:7).

Unalterably, Israel will be reinstated in Jehovah’s favor. But a divorced wife can never again be a virgin, but the one the Lord Jesus marries is not a divorced wife, but a virgin (Lev. 21:14).

John the Baptist, in referring to our Lord in John 3:29, said: ***“The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.”*** He as the precursor of the Messiah, and the last of the law and the prophets, did not consider himself as a part of the bride.

The Church—The Bride of Christ

Paul, in addressing the Corinthians, says: ***“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ”*** (2 Cor. 11:2).

Clearly, speech like this could not be used of Israel. Israel will be forgiven and restored as the repentant wife of Jehovah, but not as the chaste virgin bride of the Lamb.

The relationship between Israel and Jehovah is dramatically different than that of Christ and His bride. The most significant difference is that the marriage of Jehovah to Israel occurred in time past, whereas the marriage of Christ with His bride is still future (*David Levy*).

The great doctrinal passage of the bride in NT is Ephesians 5:25-33. The teaching in chapter 5 is based on the relationship between husband and wife.

In the analogy, Christ is the head of the Church and the Savior of the body. In this loving relationship, 7 ministries are outlined which He performs for His bride: 2 in the past, 4 in the present, and 1 in the future.

- *In the past.* He loved the Church and gave Himself for it. This reaches from eternity past, up to the cross (v25).
- *In the present.* He sanctifies, cleanses, nourishes, and cherishes it (v. 29).
- *In the future.* Christ presents the Church to Himself (v27).

The Bride in Triumph in the Book of Revelation

In chapter 19 of Revelation, once the great harlot (the false bride) is destroyed, the chaste virgin bride is displayed.

Revelation 19:7-9 *–Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*

Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.”

The marriage and the marriage supper of the Lamb are described in 19:7-9. The fact that she is called the Lamb’s wife shows that the marriage day has arrived. The marriage ceremony occurs subsequent to the Bema Seat judgment of the believer’s works (1 Cor. 3:10-15; Rev.19:7-8).

The marriage takes place in heaven; the supper will take place on earth at the Lord’s second coming. *Many will come from the east and the west to take their places at the banquet* (Matt.8).

The Bride in a Fine Linen Gown

There is a difference between the *garment of salvation*, which are exchanged for the filthy rags of self-righteousness when we become Christians, and this *wedding gown*. The first is called “the righteousness of God” (Rom. 3:22). The latter is literally called “the righteousnesses” of saints.

The bride has nothing to do with the spotless robe of righteousness or the garment of salvation; but she everything to do with the pure and white wedding gown. During our earthly pilgrimage, we are weaving the wedding dress that will adorn us on the day of the marriage (*David Levy*).

The Bride in the Eternal State

The word “bride” is used three times in Revelation 21 and 22. The first 2 occurrences refer to her as the Holy City.

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, prepared as a bride beautifully adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:2).

Come here, I will show you the Bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away in the Spirit...and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven... (Rev. 21:9-10).

Then in Rev.22:17 we told of the present longing on the part of the bride for her bridegroom—the love of her life. The Spirit and the bride say, **“Come!”**

To the dearest object of His heart and eye, Jesus replies in verse 20 and says, **“Yes, I am coming soon.”**

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