

THE BRIDE of CHRIST

Precious Gift for the Precious Son of God

Written by: Velma Jean Sanders

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready!" (Revelation 19:7)

INTRODUCTION

Certainly, we have all seen things in life and nature that causes our emotions to swell in awe and wonder. We have observed scenes so beautiful that we can sense glory and the finger and stamp of the Almighty God upon it. *Oh, What Wonders!* The rising of the sun, "Rejoicing as a strong man to run a race." The crashing of the waves, "As if they are being ushered out of the womb." The majesty of the clouds, "Stretched forth as garments in the sky!" The whole earth is full of the splendid glories of God!

But, nothing compares to the sight of a bride! She is a living wonder! Her glory is witnessed all over the world; in every nation and in every tribe. Often, the very sight of her brings forth a spontaneous and glorious syllable of exclamation from her observers. There are many brides who have been themselves that vision of wonder and splendor. Oh, yes, it is the beauty of the bride adorned for her husband!

When Solomon saw the beauty of his bride, he asked, "*Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?*" (Song of Solomon 6:10.)

It is for the groom that she has spent countless hours dreaming, planning and preparing. She has not gone through all of the preparations merely for herself or guests. The intensity of her efforts is solely for him; the one she loves. If there were no groom, all else would be in vain. But, because there is both bride and groom, happy hearts and expressions of jubilance spring forth!

"The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the Lord of hosts: for the Lord is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the Lord. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the Lord." (Jeremiah 33:11)

In this coming together, at a wedding, a marriage of a man and a woman, as husband and wife, we see that which has occurred from the beginning of human history. A stretched forth shining ray of glory; a reflection of that which is spiritual and of that which is some day destined to happen between God, the Son, and His Bride, the Church!

To some, the words "The Bride of Christ" are full of meaning. They are sure and certain words. But, to others, Christian and non-Christian alike, the words are foreign and very

strange. They ask, “*What do you mean the Bride of Christ? Who is His Bride?! When was the wedding?!*” “*Where was it held?*”

Most certainly, the answers to those questions are found only in the Word of God; the Bible. There is indeed a degree of mysteriousness to human marriage and, of course, to the spiritual marriage of Christ and the Church. It is stated in Ephesians 5:31 and 32. “*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.*”

Although we cannot know the fullness of these words, God, by His Spirit does make known to us allotted portions. From the opening book of Genesis, the Bible begins revealing and unfolding the great mystery of the Bride of Christ.

THE BIBLE BEGINS and ENDS WITH MARRIAGE

The first marriage was between Adam and Eve; the most famous and influential couple who has ever lived.

“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet (fit) for him. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet (fit) for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof: And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.” (Genesis 2:18 – 25)

Marriage is the first earthly institution, and, therefore, the oldest institution created by God. This is where human history began, in the Garden of Eden, with Adam and Eve joined together, by God, as husband and wife.

And, from these opening words until the end of the Bible a thread of marriage is woven throughout; until its final book and chapters.

Revelation 21:9. “And there came unto me one of the seven angels who had the seven vials (bowls) full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come here, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”

And, then in, Revelation 22:17, it is stated, “*And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.*”

The first marriage of Adam and Eve was a human earthly marriage. That which it foreshadowed was something spiritual, invisible and heavenly. It heralded forth a future marriage between Jesus Christ and His Bride, the Church; both initiated, created and ordained by God, the Father.

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

There is a body of people that have heard the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They have repented of their sins and have placed faith in His sacrificial work on Calvary's cross. These people, individually and collectively form the Body of Christ, and they are, also, The Bride of Christ. The imagery and execution of earthly marriage is applied to Christ and this Body of Believers; the Church.

Now, the church has two aspects to it:

- There is the physical, visible body of professing believers collectively called "the church." These local churches are usually joined by membership and have their own particular denominations and doctrines. Within the local churches exists the true Church; the Body of Christ.
- There is the spiritual and invisible: the true Church. The only way to be in the true Church is by being born again. As Jesus told Nicodemus, in John 3:3–7. "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*"

The new birth is the only way of entrance into the true Church and it is the only way to become a member of the Body of Christ; the Bride of Christ. It is comprised of both men and women; children and adults; people of every race and every class. To be a member of the true Church is a privilege of grace and an honor beyond imagination that transcends gender and class.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28)

The Church has many names. A few of them are: *The Flock of God; The Household of God; The Temple of God; New Jerusalem; The Body of Christ; Golden Candlesticks, and The Bride of Christ*. Each of these names reflects a particular brilliance of God, and is a witness as to who the Church is now and what the Church is destined to become. (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; 12:27; Ephesians 2:19; 1 Peter 5:2; Revelation 1:20; 21:2)

Marriage is one of many figures used in Scripture to emphasize the relationship of God to men. This illustration is used in both the Old Testament and New Testament to picture love, intimacy, privilege, and responsibility. In the Old Testament, Israel is described as the wife of the Lord, though now disowned because of disobedience. Nevertheless, eventually, upon repentance, Israel will be restored. This relationship is not to be confounded with that of the Church of Christ. (John 3:29). In the mystery of the divine Trinity both are true. (Reference: New Scofield Study Bible).

In natural human earthly marriage, the two are to become one flesh.

“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.” (Ephesians 5:31)

In the spiritual marriage of Christ and the Church, the two become one spirit.

“But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.” (1 Corinthians 6:17)

Clearer vision of the Bride of Christ is revealed in the New Testament. But, she is foreshadowed often times in the Old Testament. For example, we see glimpses of the relationship between Christ and His Bride in the following marriages:

Adam and Eve
Isaac and Rebekah
King Solomon and the Shulamite
Boaz and Ruth
Hosea and Gomer

As the Old Testament opens with a marriage, so, also, early in the first book of the New Testament, Matthew, marriage is mentioned a significant number of times. The Gospel writer, John, has something to say, too, in regards to weddings, marriage, Christ and the Church.

- Jesus' first miracle, of turning water into wine, was performed at a wedding ceremony. (*John 2:1 – 11*)
- Jesus' ministry was introduced by John the Baptist who was a friend of the bridegroom. (*John 3:29*)
- Jesus calls himself the bridegroom. (*Matthew 9:15*)
- Jesus teaches about the king who made a marriage for his son. (*Matthew 22:1 – 14*)
- Jesus' parable of those who went to meet the bridegroom. (*Matthew 25:1 – 13*)

In the New Testament epistles, the theme of Christ and the Church continues:

Romans 7:1 - 4. “*Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.* *Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ: that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead,* that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”

Ephesians 5:25–32. “*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*”

The New Scofield Reference Bible says that this passage of scripture (Ephesians 5:25–32) shows Christ's labor of love on behalf of the Church is threefold: Past, Present and Future:

- PAST – In love, He gave Himself to redeem the Church (verse 25): "*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.*"
- PRESENT – In love, He is sanctifying the church (verse 26): "*That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.*"
- FUTURE – For the reward of His sacrifice and labor of love He will present the Church to Himself in flawless perfection (verse 27): "*That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*"

THE BRIDE; PRECIOUS GIFT for the PRECIOUS SON OF GOD

Before the foundations of the world, God had purposed that His Son would have a people that were bound to Him by love.

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him, in love." (Ephesians 1:4)

God, the Father has perfect and eternal love for His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. He is: One with the Father; The Delight of the Father and in the Bosom of the Father

Twice it is recorded in scripture that God vocally and publicly proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And, as a reward God has given to His Son a Bride, the Church; and, so much more. (Matthew 3:17; 17:5)

CHRIST'S LOVE FOR HIS BRIDE; THE CHURCH

Jesus' love for His Bride, the Church is perfect, passionate and everlasting. It is expressed in many, many ways. Jesus Christ's love for His Bride began before the foundations of the world. He came into the world to cleanse, redeem and deliver His Bride from sin, the devil and eternal death. He loved her and paid the ultimate sacrifice for her; His own blood. His sacrifice paid in full the price for sin, and God raised Him from the dead. Jesus loves His Bride so much that He sent the Holy Spirit to be her Helper until that day when we shall see Him face-to-face. Jesus is interceding for His Bride; walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks and continually cleansing and sanctifying her through His Word; that He might present her unto Himself a glorious church.

Living, He loved me; Dying, He saved me
Buried, He carried my sins far away
Rising, He justified freely forever
One day He's coming, Oh, glorious day
Oh, glorious day!

(Songwriters: Michael Bleecker, Mark Hall)

THE BRIDE of CHRIST'S LOVE for JESUS

Although the Bride's love for Jesus is sometimes weak and faltering, she loves Him nonetheless. It is her heart's desire to please Him. She has heard His voice and listens for it still; seeking diligently to respond to Him daily, immediately and wholeheartedly. She knows of His love for her. She is bound to Him with cords of thanksgiving and praise. Anticipating His arrival for her, she prepares, as the earthly bride, to meet Him face-to-face someday.

In this day of grace, the Church age, the Bride of Christ is still being formed. For, those who know Him as the Beloved, we are inviting others to come and share in the glory of the Bride of Christ.

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.
And let him that heareth say, Come.
And let him that is athirst Come.
And whosoever will,
let him take the water of life freely.”

(Revelation 22:17)



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