

The Church

The Bride of Christ - Part I

The relationship of the church and Christ is compared about six times in the Scripture to the that of bridegroom and bride. Today, we'll look at the significance of that analogy and the role it plays in the future of the believer.

I. The Bride in the New Testament

A. John 3:29

1. John the Baptist compares himself to being a part of the wedding party but not the groom.

B. Romans 7:4

1. Here Paul is illustrating the freedom from the Law that we have through Christ by illustration. That illustration is that since the Law is dead through Christ's sacrifice, we are now free from that obligation to be Christ's alone.

C. II Corinthians 11:2

1. Here Paul makes another illustration regarding the purity of the church and its doctrine by comparing its purity from evil to that of an bride-to-be.

D. Ephesians 5:25-33

1. Here Paul combines two truths, one practical (marriage) and one spiritual (Christ and His church). Here we really begin to dig into the truths alluded to in previous passages.

E. Revelation 19:6-9

1. Here John records the wedding celebration of Christ and His bride. The only detail given as to the identity of the bride is the last phrase of verse 8.

F. Revelation 21:2

1. I see this as illustrative through comparing the beauty of a bride to the coming of the New Jerusalem. As we'll see next it is an apt description.

G. Revelation 21:9

1. Here the angel tells John that he will reveal the bride of Christ, then shows him the New Jerusalem. I think it is reasonable to say that the city *contains* the bride and is not the bride herself.

H. Revelation 22:17

1. Here the bride compels, with the Spirit, for man to accept salvation.

II. Identifying the Bride

A. Analysis of the previous passages

1. Paul relates the church to the Bride in three passages.
 - a) I think the clearest of these is Ephesians 5.
2. The passages in Revelation do little to identify

B. Not Israel

1. We can exclude Israel from being the Bride of Christ as Israel is alluded to being the wife of God - Hosea 2:19-20, Jeremiah 3:14
2. Also, it would be impossible for Israel to fit the fulfill the details given in Revelation.

3. John 3:29 could be taken to mean that Old Testament saints are not part of the Bride.
- C. The Bride as the Church
1. Proven by the repeated use of imagery
 2. Pretty clear in Ephesians 5.
- D. Who is the “church” that is the bride?
1. Some hold all the saints of all ages, but that doesn’t fit the prerequisites.
 2. Some hold only their particular denomination (Catholics, etc.)
 3. Some hold only the members of the faithful and Scriptural congregations
 - a) Among Baptists, this is a key part of the “Landmarker” movement
 4. Based on my study, I believe the Bride is assembled saints from Calvary to the Rapture.
- III. Some Defense of My Position
- A. First, I think the principle of Deuteronomy 29:29 comes into play
- B. Paul and the Corinthians
1. Paul wrote the Corinthians that he and they were baptized by the Spirit into one body (I Corinthians 12:13).
 2. This baptism is not water baptism but Spiritual (such as described in Romans 6:3-7)
 3. Paul then separates himself from the Corinthians and calls their church a “body” (I Corinthians 12:27)
 4. THEREFORE, there are two groups spoken of, one the local assembly and another more inclusive. The latter I believe constitutes the Bride of Christ.
- C. God sees the future as present, or sees positionally
1. Ephesians 2:5-6 have the saved sitting “together with Christ in heavenly places”.
 2. For us this will not happen until death or Rapture, but God speaks of it as being in the present tense
 3. THEREFORE, I contend that God can see believers, assembled in local assemblies now, as already assembled in Christ.
- D. I agree with David Cloud’s analysis:
1. “Taking all of these passages together, I believe all born again New Testament saints will be part of Christ’s bride. Those He redeems in this age by His blood will make up His beloved bride. In this present world, some born again Christians are not very faithful, and some are not even effectual members of a biblical church, and even the best saint is merely an “unprofitable servant” (Luke 17:10), but in Christ’s eyes, viewing everything from His eternal perspective (such as that described in Ephesians 2:18-22 and Hebrews 12:22-24), His bride already exists even though it is growing and taking shape day-by-day in this present time.”
 2. http://www.wayoflife.org/database/are_you_a_baptist_brider.html