

Chapter Three - Part Three

Bride of Christ

The Holy Spirit is presently in the world seeking a bride for God's Son, Christ, as the Head, and His bride (those who are judged as *overcomers*, who have been *called out* from the Church [all Christians] at the Judgment seat of Christ) who will occupy various positions of power and authority in the kingdom of the heavens, will replace the present rulers of the earth, Satan and his angels.

This mystery is presently being made known to Christians by the Holy Spirit, the One who dwells in them (**John 14:16, 17; 16:7-15**); and this mystery is also being made known to Satan and his angels by the Church (**Ephesians 3:9-11**). A "mystery" in Scripture always relates to something made known in the Old Testament but not fully opened up and revealed until the matter had been handled and manifested at a later time in the New Testament. There is *nothing* in the New Testament that is not seen in the Old Testament.

And because Satan is aware of this "mystery" concerning the Church replacing him as ruler, we are warned in the Scriptures of the spiritual warfare that surrounds us. For this reason, we must constantly utilize the whole armor of God so that we are able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

The manner in which God has put matters together in His Word, making His plans and purposes known to man, is through the use of people and events from the Old Testament as examples to point to events that will occur in the age to come.

Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. (1 Corinthians 10:11)

The Old Testament has numerous types, examples that present the bride of Christ. The Old Testament types parallel antitypes, which are found in the

New Testament; both being in perfect agreement and forming a pictorial representation of the bride of Christ.

One of the Old Testament types is Abraham. Following the word-picture of his willful offering of his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice to the Lord (a type of God's future sacrificial offering of Christ at Calvary), and after the death of his previously unfruitful wife, Sarah (a type of Israel's unfruitful condition due to their unbelief concerning the offer of the kingdom, being set aside as a nation, considered "dead" because of the people's hardened hearts), Abraham sent his oldest servant into Mesopotamia to procure a bride for his son from among Abraham's family (**Genesis 22-24**).

The events that occurred between Abraham, his servant, and his son mirror the New Testament antitype of God sending the Holy Spirit into the world to procure a bride from among His family for His Son, Jesus Christ, a search that will last two thousand years, from Pentecost to the rapture.

So Abraham said to the eldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, "Please put your hand under my thigh,

and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom you dwell, but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac."

And the servant said to him, "Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I take your son back to the land from which you came?"

But Abraham said to him, "Beware that you do not take my son back there.

The Lord God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my family, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying,

'To your descendant I give this land.' He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there.

And if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be released from this oath; only do not take my son back there."
(Genesis 24:2-8)

God placed the Holy Spirit in charge of all His possessions prior to sending Him to earth. And for the same reason as Abraham, God sent the Holy Spirit with specific instructions to procure a bride for His Son from among those within the family of God -- saved individuals. Only from among Christians can the Holy Spirit select those who are qualified to become the bride of Christ. Those so elected will be chosen out from the Church, the body of Christ. To be clear, not all of the Church will be elected, but only those who are faithful and obedient to God's Word.

Once in Mesopotamia, the servant of Abraham found the person who met the requirements to be Isaac's bride, who was Rebekah. After he found Rebekah, he told her the purpose of his journey (to procure a bride for his master's son, who would inherit with the son) and gave her some of Abraham's goods. Then, the following was asked of Rebekah:

"Will you go with this man? And she said, "I will go." **(Genesis 24:58)**

The search for and the selection of the bride is being performed by the Holy Spirit today. The Holy Spirit reveals God's possessions contained within His Word to those Christians who are willing to receive them. During the soon-coming Messianic Era, the possessions of ruling and reigning in the kingdom will be the staple of Christ and His bride. In order to qualify for participation as part of the bride, a Christian must accept the invitation, be determined to make the journey to meet her Bridegroom, and demonstrate this by faithful obedience to God's Word during his lifetime.

In the type, Abraham's servant was to remain in Mesopotamia only until he had procured a wife for Isaac. Once he had found the bride, he was to leave in order to present the bride to the son. Then his mission would be completed. This, in turn, would bring the whole matter to a full end of that which is in view — *the son possessing a bride who would inherit with him; and the father possessing a wife again who, unlike his former wife,*

would be fruitful. After the marriage of his son, Abraham remarries a Jewish woman, Keturah. After the bride has been chosen at the Judgment seat of Christ, God's wife Israel will be restored to her land.

The order in which the type presents the whole matter — beginning with the offering of the son, then the death of the father's wife, then the search for a bride for his son, and ending with the son's marriage and the father's remarriage — is the same that must be seen in the antitype.

In the antitype, corresponding events can be seen with the offering of the Son on the Cross at Calvary. Israel's rejection of Christ and the offer of the kingdom resulted in the nation being set aside, which typifies their present condition as God's wife being in a state of death. The Holy Spirit then executes the search for a bride for God's Son from among the Church (the family of God). At the allotted time, the bride will be chosen and the marriage will be consummated bringing in the Sabbath. And it will be at this time that God the Father will again be the husband of Israel, and she will be fruitful by preaching God's word to the ends of the earth in the age to come.

Why such an emphasis on searching for a bride? There is an emphasis of this nature in the type (with Isaac and Rebekah) because of that which was revealed and willed by God to the first Adam, who had been created to rule and reign. Man was not to rule alone. He was given a bride to rule with him so that he would be able to rule as a complete being — as man and wife are "*one flesh*" (**Genesis 2:24**). In the beginning, God said of Adam and his wife together, "...*let them have dominion*" (**Genesis 1:26-28**).

The exercise of rulership must be fulfilled by a husband in conjunction with his wife. They must rule together as one complete person, with the man as the head of the wife. In the Old Testament, this is the reason why God chose Israel as His wife to rule with Him in the kingdom of men. He was setting the example of the very thing He Himself established when he created man. And the same thing must hold true for God's Son. Christ must also have a wife to rule with Him for exactly the same reason; the principle set forth in **Genesis 1:26-28** "...*let them have dominion.*"

Another example set forth in the New Testament concerning the bride of Christ is revealed in the Parable of the Wedding Feast, seen in both **Matthew 22:1-14** and **Luke 14:15-24**.

As previously stated, a parable is a *truth* presented in story form that explains a previously revealed truth. When Jesus walked the earth, His central message was the offer of the heavenly kingdom. He begins the parable by saying, " *The kingdom of heaven is like...* " Therefore, He is about to reveal a truth concerning the kingdom of heaven (lit: the kingdom of the heavens).

The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son,

and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come.

(Matthew 22:2, 3)

The "certain king" is God the Father who is looking for a bride for his son, Jesus Christ. He sent out His servants (the apostles) to invite Israel to the wedding feast (entrance into the kingdom of heaven as the bride), but they refused the invitation, which typified Israel's rejection of Christ and the kingdom, their unfaithfulness to God, and their refusal of God's inheritance.

Again, he sent out other servants, saying, "Tell those who are invited, 'See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.'"

*But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. **(Matthew 22:4, 5)***

The kingdom of heaven was offered to Israel a second time by the apostles, but again Israel refused and "*made light of it*" meaning it was of little importance to them.

And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them.

But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. (Matthew 22:6, 7)

Thirty years following Pentecost, the apostles continued to offer the message of the kingdom to Israel. Yet Israel and their leaders not only rejected the message, but treated the apostles unjustly, sent them to prison, and forbade them to speak of Jesus and the kingdom. Many were persecuted, as was Stephen, who was falsely accused of blaspheming God. He was cast out of the city and stoned to death.

When they [Israel's religious leaders] heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him (Stephen) with their teeth.

But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God,

and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"

Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord;

and they cast him out of the city and stoned him...

And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep [died]. (Acts 7:54-60)

As a result, God became angry at Israel and sent His armies to destroy them and burn their city. In 63 A.D., the offer of the kingdom of the heavens was no longer offered to Israel but was given to another nation (the Church) who would receive the message and bear fruit (**Acts 15:14-17; 28:28**). In 70 A.D., the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem, causing the nation of Israel to be scattered throughout the world. A picture of

Israel's rejection of the offer of the heavenly aspect of the kingdom can be seen in **Matthew 22:8**:

Then he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy.

Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding."

So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. (Matthew 22:8-10)

Israel had refused the invitation, therefore the offer was given to the Church and they had accepted His call (the same invitation to come to the wedding feast is being sent to all Christians today). So the servants went out into the highways, meaning out of Israel and into the Gentiles nations, and gathered together (raptured) all whom they found (all who were saved). In reference to "both bad and good," this denotes all of the saved, whether they had good works or bad works. All Christians were gathered to the Judgment seat of Christ. Following decisions and determinations at the Judgment seat of Christ and prior to Christ's return at the end of the Tribulation, the wedding is consummated and the hall is filled with participating guests, i.e. the bride.

But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment.

So he said to him, "Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?" And he was speechless.

Then the king said to the servants, "Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

For many are called, but few are chosen.
(Matthew 22:11-14)

The saved man was invited to the wedding, but he failed to prepare himself for it. He did not have on a wedding garment, which is the righteous acts of the saints [good works worthy of entering the kingdom]. The fact that he was in heaven and God called him “*friend*” clearly shows that he was spiritually saved, but he was judged and cast out into outer darkness. He had not lived a life comprised of good works and therefore his soul was not saved. This meant that he could not participate in the wedding feast nor be included as part of the bride of Christ.

For many are called, but few are chosen. (Matthew 22:14)

All Christians are called to the wedding, but few will heed the call. Those who fail to prepare for the wedding will not be chosen as part of the bride of Christ. The “*called*” in Strong’s #2822 is the Greek word “*kletos*” and is defined as “*invited – a saint,*” referring to all of the Church, all Christians. And following determinations at the Judgment seat of Christ yet future, only a selected few will be “*chosen*” or “*called out*” to enter the kingdom in glory during the Millennium.

The Greek compound word, *ekklesia*, from *ek* and *kaleo* (Strong’s #G1577) is translated “church” and means “*called out.*” The word is used in the New Testament to refer to “a calling out or chosen” from the Church; a special or particular assembly of believers.

This denotes a future division amongst Christians. This event will occur when Christ deals with all Christians at His judgment seat. “*The called*” (the entire Church from Pentecost until the end of this age) will be present in that future day of the Lord. Following determinations at His judgment seat, “*the called out*” from “*the called*” will be the bride, overcomers who will be taken out of the Church and will be revealed as qualified participants to rule with Christ in the age to come.

The Old Testament type can be seen in **Genesis** chapter **two**, where the bride (Eve) for Adam (type of the New Testament antitype, i.e., Christ, the “Last Adam” [**Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:45**]) is formed from a removed part of Adam’s body, a rib. The New Testament antitype will take place in that coming Day of Judgment when the bride of Christ will be taken from Christ’s body (the Church, all believers). All Christians form the body of Christ, but not all Christians will form the bride of

Christ. Only those *resurrected out* or *called out* from the body of Christ can form the bride. Only those who compose the bride of Christ will be called first-born sons, referred to in **Hebrews 12:23** as the “*church of the firstborn.*”

The word “resurrection” in the New Testament, in all but one case, is the Greek translation for *anastasis*, meaning “to rise up; to stand up.” It means “to rise up from the place of death” and constitutes a bodily rise of all of the dead in Christ — both the overcomers and the non-overcomers. This resurrection is spoken of in **1 Corinthians 15:51-57** and **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**.

But one exception to the word “*resurrection*” relative to the Greek language is found in **Philippians 3:11**, where the Apostle Paul uses the Greek word *exanastasis* [ex-ana-stasis; *ex* (from *ek*)] meaning “out of.” And this combination changes the definition to mean “to stand up out of” [lit., the out-resurrection from the (resurrected) dead], thereby denoting a further division within, and a further separation of, the resurrected dead in Christ.

This “out-resurrection” is connected with the “*prize of the upward call of God*” mentioned in **Philippians 3:14**. For a Christian to qualify for this out-resurrection he must be victorious in his race of faith during his mortal life. Achieving this will insure him the prize of the upward call. Non-overcomers will not be included in this out-resurrection. At the resurrection [*anastasis*], all who have believed in Christ, the body of Christ, will be separated from the unsaved. However, at the out-resurrection [*exanastasis*], which will follow determinations made at the Judgment seat of Christ, only Christians who qualify as overcomers will be chosen out from the body of Christ.

Christ paid the penalty for the sins of the *whole world* and because of His resurrection, every man who has died (saved or unsaved) will, at some point in the future, be raised from the dead to be judged according to their works. Everyone will be raised in his own order. Christians will be raised and judged in one order on the basis of works at a certain time before the Tribulation (**1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10, 11; 1 Peter 1:7; Revelation 1-4**); Israel will be raised and judged in another order on the basis of works at a certain time following the Tribulation (**Ezekiel 20:34-**

38; 44:9-31; Daniel 12:1, 2); saved Gentiles coming out of the Tribulation (Tribulation saints) will be raised and judged in another order on the basis of works at a certain time following the Tribulation (**Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 20:4-6**); and unsaved man, both from Man's Day and the Lord's Day, will be raised and judged in another order on the basis of works at a certain time following the Millennial reign of Christ (**Revelation 20:11-15**). And this perfect order is the way God has established the resurrection of the dead.

The present dispensation, which began on the day of Pentecost with the descent of the Holy Spirit, beginning with God's work of searching for a bride through the Spirit, will last for a period of two thousand years. It is clear that we are very near the end of the allotted time for the Spirit to complete the procurement of a bride for God's Son. And, at the conclusion of this period of time, all Christians will be raised to appear before the Judgment seat of Christ. Then those who are found to be qualified to be part of the bride of Christ will be out-resurrected from the remaining body of Christ.

The work of the Spirit in procuring a bride for Christ, a unique work in this present dispensation, has nothing to do with His work in providing eternal salvation to those who believe in Christ. The Spirit has *always* been in the world performing the work of salvation by grace through faith. Since the fall of man, this has never changed. Eternal salvation was established from the beginning on the basis of *death and shed blood*.

Subsequent to imparting spiritual life in a person, the Spirit's work is to bring the believer to a state of being qualified as part of the bride of Christ. Yet, this can only be completed when the believer wills it to be done. When the believer is willing, the Spirit is then allowed to produce righteous acts through him, bringing him from immaturity to maturity so that he may realize the purpose for his salvation.

The following are some definite conclusions pertaining to the Church and the bride of Christ:

1. The bride of Christ will be composed of a specific number of chosen ones from the Church. This group will be small in number compared to the total number of Christians.

2. Christians who make up the bride of Christ will be those chosen on the basis of their works, works done from a position of faithfulness and obedience to God and thereby achieving the salvation of their souls.
3. The bride of Christ will be co-heirs with Christ, ruling and reigning with Him from a heavenly position in His Millennial kingdom.
4. The terms “bride of Christ,” “God's firstborn sons,” “co-heirs with Christ,” “Church of the firstborn,” “a royal priesthood,” all refer to the same group who will rule and reign with Christ Jesus during the Messianic Era. The governing body will be composed of Old Testament and New Testament saints who will have been found qualified to inherit the promise to exercise power with Christ Jesus from His heavenly throne.
5. The bride of Christ will be able to enter the kingdom and rule with Christ for one thousand years. The remaining body of Christ (Church) will not be permitted to enter the kingdom, but will be cast out during this time.

JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

