

They Mystery of The Bride

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If you speak to Christians and ask them “who is the bride of Christ?” the immediate answer would be “the Church” or “us Christians”. This idea stems from two passages in the New Testament.

2 Corinthians 11:2-3

For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. (NKJV)

The NIV uses the word “promised” for the word “betrothed”. This word describes a lady who has been given to a man for the purpose of marriage. The gospels of Matthew and Luke describe Mary as having been betrothed to Joseph (*Matthew 1:18, Luke 1:27 and Luke 2:5*). Mary was not married to Joseph yet, but was considered to be his wife. In modern terms this would be known as the engagement.

The other passage is in Ephesians 5:25 that says “*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,*” (NKJV). This simply admonishes husbands to love their wives using the example of Christ’s love for the church, in that He laid down His life for her. Paul was telling husbands to love their wives sacrificially; to lay themselves down for her. It does not say that the church is the bride of Christ.

We must ask; where did this idea of “the bride” come from? Most Christians think it is a New Testament idea. It is from the Old Testament. It is there that we find God referring to a specific group of people as His wife or bride and referring to Himself as the husband. First, we must establish what, a marriage is; it is a covenant. In the Bible, God made several covenants; with Abraham, Moses, and David and in the New Testament, Yeshua (Jesus) made a covenant with His disciples which extends to us today. Every covenant God made was with Israel, including the New Covenant. The twelve men that Yeshua gave the bread and wine to at the Last Supper were all Jewish. In fact, this was a fulfilment of the promise given in Jeremiah (*Jeremiah 31:31-33*). In that passage, God promised to write His law (Word) no longer in Stone but in their hearts. This was fulfilled in Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit fell upon the disciples of Yeshua and they began to speak in other tongues and Peter, a fisherman, became a preacher of the word.

Some people teach that God has rejected Israel because of their rejection of Yeshua and that He has broken His covenant with them. The New Covenant was originally made with Jewish disciples. If God broke covenant with the Jews, it would mean He also broke covenant with those Jewish disciples and by extension, us as well. Then, we would not have a leg to stand on. Apostle Paul clearly states that God has not forsaken Israel. In Romans 11:26 to 29 he tells the non-Jewish believers in Rome that the day is coming when Israel as a nation would be saved and he tells them that although Jewish religious leaders were persecuting the believers, God did not revoke the covenant He made with them because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the patriarchs of Israel.



Now let us look at Israel as God's bride.

In Jeremiah 2:1-3 (NIV) The Lord said that Israel had followed Him through the wilderness (for forty years) like a bride following her bridegroom and He said that Israel was holy to Him, meaning He had set her apart for Himself. When did this happen? At Mount Sinai when God gave them the Torah and they accepted it (Exodus 24:3, 7). In fact, Rabbis consider this the Ketubah or marriage contract between God and Israel.

In Jeremiah 3:8 we hear God saying that He gave Israel a letter of divorce, some would point to this and say that it is proof that God has broken covenant with Israel, but wait. If we go down six verses, we Hear God saying this: "Return, faithless people," declares the Lord, "for **I am your husband**. I will choose you — one from a town and two from a clan — and bring you to Zion. (Jeremiah 3:14 NIV)

Notice that God does not call a righteous Israel back to Him, it is faithless Israel that He calls and, He uses the present tense saying, "I am married to you". So even though He divorced her in His anger, He took her back when His anger dissipated.

In Isaiah 54, He speaks comfort to Israel who had sinned against Him and He said:

Isaiah 54:5-7

5 For your Maker is your husband — the Lord Almighty is his name — the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; He is called the God of all the earth. 6 The Lord will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit — a wife who married young, only to be rejected," says your God. 7 "For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back. NIV

He said He is Israel's husband and although He abandoned her for a while, He would bring her back.

In Hosea 2:19 God says that He has betrothed Israel to Himself forever. In fact, the book of Hosea is a story of God's love for His wife where time and time again, she betrayed Him and went after other lovers. Yet time and again, He reached out to her and took her back in spite of her sin. That tells us that He is faithful to His people and even though they may turn away, He is still faithful, and His love is so great that He will go out of His way to bring them back.

So, where does this leave us, non-Jewish believers in the Jewish Messiah? Well, the Apostle Paul gave us the answer, he told us in Ephesians 2 that we were saved out of the control of Satan, the Prince of the Power of the air, and brought into the commonwealth of Israel. Then through the cross of Yeshua we were joined to become one new man. (Ephesians 2:1-16). Thus, we also became descendants of Abraham through Yeshua (Galatians 3:28,29) and share the same spiritual roots and destiny with God's people. Let us be clear, God does not have separate destinies for Israel and the non-Jewish church.

Then in chapter 3 of Ephesians, we are told of a mystery that has been hidden for ages, this mystery is that through Messiah Yeshua, we non-Jews share all the promises and covenants God gave to Israel.



Ephesians 3:6 This mystery is that through the gospel, the Gentiles are **heirs together** with Israel, members together of one body, and **sharers** together in the promise in Christ Jesus. NIV

So, since God called Israel His bride, we too become the bride together with Israel, not replacing them.

But then, can the bride be divided? What I mean is; on the ground today, there are parts of the Church who love and stand with Israel and there are larger parts of the Church who do not care about Israel and some who are completely against Israel and the Jewish people. Can those who are indifferent or hostile towards Israel still be part of the bride? One could say that God will sort it all out in the end, perhaps. However, let's look at the clearest picture of what we call the "marriage supper of the Lamb".

In Revelation 19:7 we find an angel proclaiming that the wedding of the Lamb is about to begin, and he says the bride has made herself ready. Notice that the bride prepares herself, meaning it is her effort, her own work. The angel also says that she was given white clothes, which represent her righteous works. This therefore is not about salvation because scripture clearly says that salvation is not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9). Being the bride is a reward. This is in line with 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 where we are told that God will reward us for the works we do in this life and those whose works are all burned in the fire will enter heaven but without a single reward. That infers that there will be people in heaven without any rewards.

Apostle Paul in his letter to Timothy makes a clear distinction between salvation and becoming the bride:

2 Timothy 2:11-12

11 Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; 12 if we endure, we will also reign with him. NIV

We die with the Lord when we go through baptism; this is salvation but only those who endure will reign with Him. Yeshua is King and the one who reigns with the king is the queen, His bride.

Now look at what Revelation 19:9 says: "Then the angel said to me, "Write: **'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'**" And he added, "These are the true words of God.'" (NIV)

The angel declares that there will be those who are invited to the wedding. No bride is ever invited to her own wedding. This wedding takes place in heaven, and those who did not believe in Yeshua will not be there, thus those guests are believers who have no rewards.

The Bible also gives us two examples of a bride, the first being Esther. She was an Israelite but kept her identity secret when she was taken by the Persians for the selection of a new queen. At the end of the story, she revealed her identity to the king and saved the Israelites from annihilation.



The other example is Ruth, the Moabite (Gentile). She committed herself to taking care of her Israelite mother-in-law after her husband died even though Naomi had released her to return to her own people. This eventually led to her finding favour with Boaz, and she became the great grandmother of King David.

The bride therefore is made up of Israel and the Church which embraces Israel, understanding our connection with her.

Another indication is what will happen after the wedding. Revelation 19:11-21 describes the return of Yeshua to the earth. He does not come to cheering crowds welcoming Him. Instead, He comes as a warrior, to fight against the Anti-Christ and rulers of this world who side with him. The prophet Zechariah also speaks of this event in chapter 14 of Zechariah. There he speaks of a time when the nations will come against Israel and Israel will suffer greatly, similar to the events that took place on 7 October 2023. Zechariah says that then the Lord himself will come to fight against those nations on behalf of Israel. In both these passages we see the Lord does not come alone; Zechariah says:

Zechariah 14:5b Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him. NIV

The New King James Versions uses the word “saints” instead of “holy ones”. The Hebrew word is “kadoshim” meaning separated ones. In Greek, this would be “ekklesia”, the word translated into English as “church”.

Revelation 19:14 says the armies of heaven were following Him (Yeshua), riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. NIV

A few verses earlier, we saw that the bride was dressed in white linen. So, the bride becomes His army that will join Him in the fight against the nations that come to attack Israel. How could anyone who does not love Israel join the Lord’s army to fight for Israel.

Therefore, from these scriptures we understand that the bride will be Christians who embrace God’s heart for Israel and become the one new man.

