

THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

The Bride of Christ is clearly identified in scripture as New Jerusalem, the City of God (CP Rev 19:7-9 with 21:2, 9-10). New Jerusalem is the Lamb's wife that "made herself ready" in Rev 19:7 (CP Rev 19:7), and was "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" in 21:2 (CP 21:2). She will be adorned as a bride for her husband with the jewels of 21:18-21 (CP 21:18-21). It is granted to her that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints because she will be the eternal home of all the saints of God – Old Testament and New Testament alike – from Abel to the very last soul saved in the Great Tribulation (CP 19:8 with 21:24-27). New Jerusalem is the City of God which God promised to the Old Testament saints and Jesus promised to the New Testament saints. They will all go to live in New Jerusalem together (CP Isa 2:1-4 (also Mic 4:1-3); Jn 14:1-3; He 11:1-2, 13-16; 12:22-23; 13:14; Rev 3:12; 14:1-5; 15:2-4; 20:4-6; 22:1-5).

New Jerusalem is not called *new* because it is new in existence – it has always existed in Heaven – but to distinguish between it and earthly Jerusalem. It is called the *Father's House* in Jn 14 (CP Jn 14:1-3); the *Mother of us All* (allegorically the progenitor – mother – of all Christians) in Gal 4 (CP Gal 4:25-27); the *Heavenly Jerusalem* in He 12 (CP He 12:22); the *Tabernacle of God* in Rev 13, 15 and 21 (CP Rev 13:6; 15:5; 21:3); the *Beloved City* in Rev 20 (CP Rev 20:9); the *Bride*, the *Lamb's Wife* in Rev 21 (CP 21:2, 9); the *Holy City* in Rev 21 and 22 (CP 21:2; 22:19), the *Holy Jerusalem* also in Rev 21 (CP 21:10). New Jerusalem will be moved from Heaven to earth after the Great White Throne Judgement to be among men forever as the capital of God in the new earth (CP 21:1-7, 24-27).

In the light of scriptures so clearly identifying New Jerusalem as the Bride of Christ it seems incongruous that a teaching persists in the church that the church itself is the Bride of Christ, yet nowhere in scripture is the church ever referred to by a feminine pronoun. In fact, the church is only ever referred to as a man in scripture. (Some modern translations and paraphrased versions of the Bible refer to the church by feminine pronouns in Eph 5:25-27, but this is a contradiction in terms because these same translations and paraphrased versions refer to the church as a man in Eph 2:15 and 4:13. How can the church be a man in one teaching in scripture, and a woman in another (CP Eph 2:15-16; 4:11-13; 5:25-27).

God's word does not contradict itself – it is the translators and interpreters of those versions who are responsible for this contradiction.

In Eph 2:15 *man* is from the Greek word **anthropos**, which refers to a human being, without reference to sex, whereas in 4:13 it is from **aner**, which refers specifically to a male. **Aner** is used metaphorically here of the church being brought to maturity – a *man* of mature understanding in Christ. It goes without saying that if God refers to the church specifically as a man in one part of scripture, then the translators and interpreters of God's word have no authority to refer to it as a woman somewhere else in scripture. Here is the English rendering of Eph 5:25-27 from the original Greek

according to **Kenneth Wuest's Word Studies in the Greek New Testament**,

"The husbands, be loving your wives in the manner in which Christ also loved the church and gave Himself on behalf of it, in order that He might sanctify it, cleansing it by the bath of water in the sphere of the word, in order that He might Himself present to Himself the church glorious, not having spot nor wrinkle nor any of such things, but in order that it might be holy and unblameable."

In Eph 5:25-27 Paul is teaching us of Christ's infinite love for the church. He compares the relationship of Christ and the church to that of a man and his wife. He is not teaching that the wife symbolizes the church or that the husband symbolizes Christ. He simply teaches that the relationship of Christ and the church is more easily understood through the dynamics of the marriage relationship between a husband and wife (CP Eph 5:22-32). The *great mystery* Paul refers to in V32 is that marriage is a sacred reflection of the magnificent and beautiful mystery of union between Christ and the church, which was completely unknown in the New Testament. Other scriptures which are also used to teach that the church is the Bride of Christ are Isa 62:5; Ro 7:4 and 2Cor 11:2, but it is soon apparent on examining them too, that they do not teach that either (CP Isa 62:5; Ro 7:4; 2Cor 11:2). There is nothing whatever in Isa 62:5 that can be used to teach that the church is the Bride of Christ. Isa 62:5 is simply a record of two comparisons God made of Judah and Jerusalem: as a young man marries a virgin, so will the sons of Israel come back to and marry, (be united with), the rest of Israel and their land Palestine, and as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so too God will rejoice over His people and their land when they are married – eternally united (CP V1-4). The Lord here expresses His determination to make Jerusalem a lighthouse for the world. *Hephzibah* and *Beulah* are symbolic names for Jerusalem, and *marry* in V5 is used in the sense of being united with.

In Ro 7:4 Paul simply illustrates the Christian's freedom from the law with the analogy of marriage showing how the death of one partner frees the other from life-long obligation. He compares it to Christians who, having died to the law, are now free to follow Christ – to become one with Him (CP Ro 7:1-6).

2Cor 11:2 is used to teach that the virgin referred to symbolizes the church, but here again that is not what Paul is teaching. He is simply addressing his converts in the Corinthian church, telling them that he is anxious for them with the deep concern of God Himself – anxious that their love should be for Christ alone, just as a virgin saves her love for one man only – for the one who will be her husband. But Paul feared that in some way they would be led astray from their simple love and devotion for Christ, just as Eve was deceived by Satan in the Garden of Eden (CP V2-4). When kept in its proper perspective, it soon becomes clear that V2 is not alluding to the church as the Bride of Christ at all. Furthermore, Paul is only addressing his own converts in Corinth not

the whole church, which extends far beyond Corinth in the earth. It is not his job to present the whole church to Christ anyway, only his own converts. Every Christian will have rejoicing in their own converts (CP Dan 12:3; 1Cor 3:11-14; 2Cor 1:14; Php 4:1; 1Th 2:19-20). Finally, the church is also referred to as a man in 2Th 2:7.

The *he* who is presently restraining Antichrist from revealing himself is the church (CP 2Th 2:1-9). This refers to the *rapture* of the church – when the church will be “caught up” in the air with Jesus when He comes to

take all the saints of God back to Heaven with Him at the First Resurrection (CP Jn 14:1-3; 1Cor 15:12-23, 32, 42-44, 50-58; 1Th 4:13-18; Rev 20:4-6). Many Christians believe that the *he* of 2Th 2:7 is the Holy Spirit but that is not correct as all these scriptures clearly show. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit will still be on earth after the First Resurrection to convict the multitudes of their sins who get saved during Antichrist’s reign, because nobody can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit (CP 1Cor 12:3).