

# The Bride of Christ

By Michael Clark and George Davis

This is a love story. It is a tale transcending the ages. It encompasses all the love stories with their damsels in distress and knights in shining armor. It contains intrigue, betrayal, unfaithfulness and sacrificial love. This is the story of God bringing forth a woman, a woman hand picked from all of His creation, a bride fit for His Son. David wrote about this epic in the Psalms.

Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness; Therefore God, Thy God, has anointed Thee With the oil of joy above Thy fellows. All Thy garments are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia; Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made Thee glad. Kings' daughters are among Thy noble ladies; At Thy right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir. Listen, O daughter, give attention and incline your ear; Forget your people and your father's house; Then the King will desire your beauty; Because He is your Lord, bow down to Him. And the daughter of Tyre will come with a gift; The rich among the people will entreat your favor. The King's daughter is all glorious within; Her clothing is interwoven with gold. She will be led to the King in embroidered work; The virgins, her companions who follow her, Will be brought to Thee. They will be led forth with gladness and rejoicing; They will enter into the King's palace. (Psalms 45:6-15, NASB).

Thousands of years ago, before time as we know it, God set out to make a bride for Himself. God knew it would be no small task. It was one thing to make the animals male and female, but it was another thing to make a bride for Himself. There was a council in the Godhead and this is what was decided.

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (Genesis 1:26, NASB).

God could have made man in the image of the angels or some animal, but instead He did something altogether different. He made man in His own image and similitude. Why? Because He wanted a counterpart who could relate to Him and have fellowship with Him on His level. He wanted a counterpart who would love Him as He loved, and

not obey Him because she had to. He also wanted a ruling counterpart, a queen, who could rule with Him over His creation.

As the story in Genesis unfolds, we see God talking with the first man, Adam. In effect, heavens had come down to earth in a perfect world called the Garden of Eden. God built a honeymoon palace where he could nurture a relationship with man as His chosen bride. He even gave this man the task of naming all the animals that He had created and tending His great garden.

Then God took an unexpected move. He decided to let man multiply. He created another being like Adam, someone Adam could build a relationship with, just as God had done with Adam. Eventually they would bring forth children who were the fruit of that love. God desired a holy seed. God wanted a bride made up of "many sons (and daughters)." The angels of heaven must have stared in awe. The writer of Hebrews wrote about this.

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory." (Hebrews 2:10, NASB).

## **A Fly in the Ointment**

Now we know that God also made one "flaw" in the garden. It was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God told man not to eat the fruit of it, for the day he did so he would start to die (Hebrew muwth to die prematurely). Yes, until man sinned there was no death, decay, or corruption in the world God created, so any death would definitely be premature.

Man lived in a perfect world with no way to sin and no sin consciousness. Without the opportunity to disobey God, how would God know if man loved Him back with the same love? Without opportunity to do otherwise, how else could man prove his love for God by obedience?

We know now that man failed the test to love, honor and obey his Husband. Adam and Eve succumbed to a temptation of the serpent to become something MORE than God had made them to be. The apostle Paul wrote:

For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.  
(Romans 7:11, NKJV).

Satan told man that God was holding out on him, keeping him from getting every good thing that was available, and that God feared man would become His equal. Satan told him that God had lied to him and that the forbidden fruit would not kill him. If he would just take a bite, he would become like God. With the logic of a child who thinks his Father doesn't want him to have any fun, man chose to believe that God was a liar and that the Serpent was telling the truth.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"

And the woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.'"

And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:1-5, NASB).

To be like God. Wait! Man had already been created in His image and In His likeness. What was this temptation? It is the same temptation that runs in Christian circles today. The Bible tells us that God has put everything in motion that we need to be conformed into the image of His own Son, Jesus Christ. The temptation is to find a short cut to the goal. Many a cult has promised that if you do this or that or follow their great prophet or teacher, you will get to the goal of being like God quicker and more efficiently than by simply submitting to Christ's working in you.

Until eating the forbidden fruit opened their eyes, Adam and Eve had no consciousness of evil in the world, nor could they comprehend what evil was. Only God knew that Satan had attempted to overthrow Him and rule over the universe<'p>

## **The Personal Cross**

Satan could not leave well enough alone in this new world anymore than he could in the heavenly realm. He wanted man for his own bride and the way to do that was to get

man to succumb to the same sin that he had. Once man sinned, he became like Satan and the enemy had his own bride or counterpart.

Beware when someone comes to you with another gospel. A Christianity that offers you the best of both worlds, heaven and earth, a gospel of convenience where you can have your cake and eat it too. Without the inward working of the personal cross that makes you a true follower of Christ by crucifying that old fallen nature within, you cannot reach the goal of being conformed into the image of Christ and becoming Jesus' Bride. As Jesus put it,

And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it -- lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish." (Luke 14:27-30, NKJV).

Unlike today's popular gospel preached from many a pulpit, true Christian life bears a cost. To be conformed into the image of Jesus and become a true son of God, His bride, a believer must allow God to crucify his old nature and give him a new heart that is no longer a servant to the trappings of the world. So doing, He helps us turn to that upward call with all our hearts. God will do what He has to do if we are serious about following Jesus and being conformed into the image of Christ.

There is a cost. For the rich young ruler, Jesus required: "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." With Matthew the tax collector Jesus required: "Follow me." And he left all and followed Him. To Peter and Andrew he said, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." And they immediately left their nets and followed Him. "Then another of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, let me first go and bury my father.' But Jesus said to him, 'Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead.'"

The apostle Paul preached the gospel of Jesus. But he saw another gospel already being preached, and some of those he had betrothed to Jesus were buying into it.

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. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the

simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted--you may well put up with it! (2 Corinthians 11:2-4, NKJV).

The old serpent was busy again even in the infant church.

## **The Fall of Man**

Eve believed the serpent's lies and took the forbidden fruit and then gave it to her husband to eat. The result was death. Not immediate death, no more immediate than your sin and effect here on earth.<'p>

To complete the rebellion, man had one more step to take. In his fallen state he could eat of the tree of life. But would it be the same life God placed Adam and Eve in the beginning? No. It would be eternal life like Satan had, a corrupt heart that lived on and on, creating a living hell wherever it went. Yes, man had become just like ONE of them, Satan himself, carrying out his will as a servant of deception.

Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"--therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned every direction, to guard the way to the tree of life. (Genesis 3:22-24,NASB).

Now man, impregnated with the same wickedness in his heart as Satan, looked for another way to ascend into heaven. He wanted to rule over his fellow man and the saints of God. He would not stop until he had ascended to the very throne of God! Man set out to take by force what he had already been freely given by the Father if he had only obeyed.

## **Man Seeks His Own Glory**

The first manifestation of this evil in man's heart was murder. Cain, the child of Adam and Eve in their fallen state, killed his brother Abel over a matter of religious fervor. Individual rebellion and evil continued to grow until God was forced to wipe the earth

clean with a flood, saving only Noah and his family. Soon after, man set himself up as a ruler over his fellow man and started to exalt himself and build kingdoms:

Now Cush became the father of Nimrod; he became a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD." And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went forth into Assyria, and built Nineveh and Rehoboth-Ir and Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city. (Genesis 10:8-12, NASB)

Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. Then they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." a(Genesis 11:1-4)

The seed of sin had been thoroughly transplanted from the heart of Satan into the hearts of men and it was starting to bare satanic fruit. Just like Lucifer, men were ascending into heaven, exalting their throne above the stars of God, and ascending above the heights of the clouds in an attempt to be like the Most High. God was not impressed.

God did not abandon the whole project. He knew that the most subtle creature would probably infect man with his own rebellion. God took a few stop-gap measures to bring the corruption of man from a fast gallop to a slow walk. He confused their speech to make it harder for them to be of one mind and one accord. There is only one mind and one accord that God wanted, and that is the Mind of Christ. A great plan was in the works.

But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. And the LORD said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech."

So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth. (Genesis 11:1-9, NKJV).

## **Phase Two - A Total Redemption**

God enacted phase two of the plan to redeem man from his own folly. There had to be a perfect Lamb before there could be a perfect blood sacrifice for the sins of mankind

God choose one faithful man to be the father of a nation He could use to bring forth a Godly seed. From the descendants of Abraham He made a way for His own Son to be born on the earth. These people would not obey Him perfectly even with a rule book, the law. Even with the righteous demands of God written in stone man, would not obey, nor could he. Man needed a new heart.

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh. . .He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:3,32, NKJV).

Out of this chosen nation, God brought forth a bloodline, a family in which He could introduce Himself once again into this grand experiment. Man was to see a living example of what he was meant to be. This time God's own Son walked on this earth in the form of a man to lead mankind into all righteousness. The Lamb of God, the Son of Man, not only led man and served as an example. He was also the perfect atonement for the sins of all mankind. His death and resurrection made a "Marvelous Light" shine in the hearts of sinful men. God replaced man's old stony heart with a new heart of flesh and placed His Spirit in it.

Therefore say to the house of Israel, "Thus says the Lord GOD: 'I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD,' says the Lord GOD, 'when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you,

and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them." (Ezekiel 36:22-27, NKJV).

God made it clear from man's first sin that without the shedding of blood, there was no covering for sin. God killed an animal, skinned it and used it as a covering for man's nakedness. Through the sacrifices offered by Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam and Eve, God made it evident that only a blood sacrifice could please Him. After the flood Noah offered a blood sacrifice from the clean animals on the ark. The patriarch Abraham also knew that the shedding of blood in sacrifice would be necessary to please God. He offered his OWN son as a sacrifice in a prophetic act that expressed the very heart and plan of God. At the very last instant an angel of God stayed his hand and spared the child. Abraham even prophesied of God's plan when he said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb. . ."

This passage from the book of Hebrews sums up the whole plan rather nicely:

For it was fitting for Him (God), for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation(Jesus) perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You."

And again: "I will put My trust in Him." And again: "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me." Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. a(Hebrews 2:10-14, NKJV).

These redeemed people are called His sons, His bride, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, and many other terms in the scriptures. God is bringing forth His bride, the Lamb's bride, the bride of Christ, but not without a struggle.

## **But There Are Two Women**



In Revelation, we find two very different women who have come into their fullness. One is like the Son, humble, giving, obedient, worshipful, devoted to Him and living a life of self for others. The other is brash, garish, proud, murderous, living in opulence and rebellious selfishness.

Jesus speaks of the first type of woman in a story of the final judgment,

Then the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me." (Matthew 25:34-36, NKJV).

These know the fellowship of His sufferings. These were not ashamed to be His servants and friends. John saw this holy remnant, this bride of Christ, in his heavenly vision.

And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth." (Revelation 5:6-10, NKJV).

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. (Revelation 21:9,10, NKJV).

In the beginning of Jesus' Revelation to His servants we read:

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must shortly take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near. (Revelation 1:1-3, NAS)

This revelation to John is about something that was in the immediate future and following (see verse 1:19), that we might give heed and be blessed.

John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood, and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 1:4-6, NAS)

This is a love letter from the One who loves us, we who are His kingdom and His priests. Jesus has never taken His eyes off the goal that He might obtain: "...a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9, NKJV).

Isaiah saw this coming bride when he prophesied:

You shall also be a crown of glory In the hand of the LORD, And a royal diadem In the hand of your God. You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, Nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; But you shall be called Hephzibah (Hebrew for "my delight is in her"), and your land Beulah (married); For the LORD delights in you, And your land shall be married (the New Jerusalem coming down adorned as a bride). For as a young man marries a virgin, So shall your sons marry you; And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So shall your God rejoice over you. (Isaiah 62:3-5, NKJV).

## **The Church Becomes Defiled**

As I, Michael, have meditated on the book of Revelation over the last couple of years, the Lord has not drawn my attention to the animal symbols or numerology that so many

modern writers focus on. Instead He has led us to look at the goal--the Bride. In so doing, He has shown us the counterfeit to the bride as well. There is no depth in a picture without shadows, so here we will discuss both the true Bride of Christ and Satan's counterfeit, who is everything that Jesus' Bride is not to be.

John the beloved now saw Jesus in a different form than He had upon the earth, and it scared the life out of him (vs. 1:17). This Jesus was "One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength."  
a(Revelation 1:13-16)No gentle Jesus meek and mild here.

In Jesus' hand were seven stars which were the seven messengers or angels of the seven churches. He is not happy with the Churches as He walks among the "seven golden lamp stands." In His mouth is a two-edged sword He will use to divide the holy from the profane and separate out a chosen people to Himself. "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12, NKJV)

In all seven churches, Jesus finds some who are redeemable, if they will just repent. He also finds those with no repentance. All the way through His description of the seven churches, He finds a mixture. God hates a mixture. He walks among the first six churches, but when he gets to the last one, Laodicea, He finds Himself outside the door, knocking, asking to come in.

He warns the Church of Ephesus that if they do not return to Him, their first love, He will remove their lamp stand. Smyrna fairs better. The One "Who was dead and came to life" warns them of an approaching time of tribulation.

In Pergamos we see the mixture already setting in. Jesus warns them, "because you have those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which

thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth." (verses 2:14-16).

Balaam was a prophet who worked his gift for money. When we look at today's prophetic movement, see this spirit at work. If you don't pre-pay or pay even more at the door, you cannot attend most prophetic conferences. Sometimes if you pay extra, you can have a time of personal prophecy with the prophet. This has become a form of religious prostitution, and if you do not pay, you will not play.

The doctrine of the Nicolaitans (Greek - "to Lord over the people or congregation") is also alive and well. Jesus warned the disciples that they were not to be like the kings of the Gentiles, lording over one another, but that the greatest was to be the least and servant of all. We look at the church today and we see lords ruling over the congregation of God. Gone are the simple servants who wash the feet of the people

The church of Thyatira was also defiled. Jesus warns them, "because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works." a(Revelation 2:20-23)

Jezebel was the bane of Elijah. She haunted all the days of his ministry, threatening to kill him. If she could not seduce she tried to kill. As queen of Israel, her courts were filled with 850 false prophets. She had the innocent murdered to take their possessions, killed the prophets of God and tore down His altars. Along with the rise in the prophetic in these last twenty years has also come a rise in the Jezebel spirit in the churches, causing the same havoc with the same methods. We have seen this spirit at work in almost every Church we have attended. Her children are the false prophets and God will deal with them severely. God has sent many a true prophetic messenger into His churches, and they have been silenced and banished from the assemblies where Jezebel is allowed to reign

Jesus warns the Church of Sardis, "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that

are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God." (chapter 3, verses 1 and 2). Just like the inhabitants of ancient Babel, Sardis had made a name for themselves. It is a Church made up of the living and those already dead. Pride comes before a fall and a haughty spirit before destruction. Is fame really worth it? Sardis' dead works were killing off those who were still alive. She is told to repent while there is still time.

The words to Church of Philadelphia seem to indicate a period of revival for of them. Jesus says, "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie--indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth." chapter 3, verses 8 to 10)

Philadelphia means "brotherly love." If you want to see the blessings of God fall in your gathering, walk in the agape love of God with one another. It will be an open door into heaven. We have seen this only once, in a revival Spirit that was poured out in the early '70's. God's love was the earmark of that revival. John the apostle of love had an open door set before him and heard a call to "come up here. . ." The church that walks in agape love has the same open door and the same call.

## **Breaking Down the Wall of Separation**

There were those there who were of "the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not." Paul described a true Jew in the eyes of God when he wrote:

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God. (Romans 2:28,29, NKJV).

Please understand that we believe God has not cast off His people of the Old Covenant. Quite the contrary, He stands all day long with His arms wide open, waiting for them to repent and "look upon Him whom they have pierced." The goal of the

gospel is to tear down the wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles, making one new man in Christ.

Therefore remember, that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands--remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. (Ephesians 2:11-16, NASB)

I cannot blame the Jews for rejecting what they see of Christianity as a pagan religion. Much of it is just that, with its traditional roots in pagan Rome of the fourth century. We don't ask Jews to become church Christians, nor Christians to become Jews. Both must repent and find what the meaning of ". . .that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace. . ."

With God, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28, NKJV). Today, there is a push among Gentile Christians to become Jews and follow Jewish customs and laws. Some of these converts to Judaism no longer recognize that Jesus tore down the wall of separation between Jew and Gentile in the sacrifice of His own body that we might be one. Our hearts should not be on sectarianism of any kind, nor on nationalism for His kingdom is not of this world. Jesus summed it up in His prayer before the Father.

I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. (John 17:15-23, NKJV).

## **The First Church of the Lukewarm**

Finally, we come to the "First Church of the Lukewarm," the Church of Laodicea. To this church Jesus says, "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' --and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked--I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me." (Revelation 3:15-20, NKJV). We see a decaying church from the first chapter of Revelation to the last. Many of today's church teachers tell you that the church is not mentioned after chapter three. This is a false teaching they have adopted to cover the nakedness revealed in the following chapters. Just as there has been a steady degradation in the world since Adam and Eve were banished from the garden, so goes the church. The church started out as the Spirit-led light of the world that was accused of turning the world upside down, but by the second century it had been infiltrated with false prophets, false teachers, and Judaizers of the synagogue of Satan, and was becoming lukewarm while thinking that it was doing quite well. Laodicea was a church that would not open the door to Jesus. She thinks she is doing just fine in all her gold and opulence. The deceitfulness of riches has taken her captive. She is totally deceived and blind to her fallen state and spiritually naked, lukewarm toward God. Jesus spoke of these unrighteous religious folks:

Then He will also say to those on the left hand, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me." Then they also will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?" (Matthew 25:41-44, NKJV).

It is interesting that both the sheep and the goats, those on God's right hand and those on the left, call Him "Lord." As Jesus warned the disciples,

Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?"

And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Matthew 7:21-23, NKJV).

God knew the corruptible nature of man. Mankind, saved or not, is subject to entropy just like the rest of creation. God knew that the only hope was the personal cross that deals with the old nature's constant downward pull into the things of the world. He also knew that Satan would try to corrupt the church just like he corrupted mankind in the beginning of creation.

Today the church is a composite of all these seven Churches of the second and third chapters of the Revelation. It is so sad that like the church in Laodicea, today's church thinks she is doing pretty darn good. She is rich. The church has never been wealthier than today, yet poorer when it comes to having the golden righteousness of God. We cloth ourselves in the finest of garments to the point that going to a Sunday service in some churches is like going to a fashion show, yet we have never been more naked in the eyes of the world as we wear "the king's new clothes." Seven churches, seven women trying to hide their nakedness.

For seven women will take hold of one man in that day, saying, "We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothes, only let us be called by your name; take away our reproach!" (Isaiah 4:1, NASB).



We say, "We see," yet we are so blind. We have thousands of seminaries and Bible schools world wide, yet are "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth." With our false assessments of ourselves, we have shut the door on Jesus and the Holy Spirit in our services. The Holy Spirit, the voice of God, can't get a word in edgewise in our well choreographed Sunday meetings. We go to these meetings to get "serviced." They preach a personal Savior, yet there is as much personal attention given the saints as your car gets in an automated car wash. Each service is kept on schedule so the next one can come through on time.

Pastors go to church growth seminars and are warned not to load up their churches with high maintenance, low income people. Growth now is measured in the number of people who tithe, not the spiritual growth of the individual saints into the fullness of Christ. In the eyes of God, most of us are "lukewarm, wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked." Thinking ourselves wise, we have become the enemy's fools.

God has always had a remnant of the faithful, but as we read further in John's book we find that He is separating His people out from all that is false. The Bride is being called out and caught up unto Him. There is also a continuous solidification of illicit power in an organized counterfeit to the Bride.

## **A Prophetic Preview**

In Zechariah chapter five there is a glimpse of an embryonic woman who is found in her fullness in the final chapters of the Revelation. Zechariah wrote:

[this is for the indented scriptures and this hold the reference](#)

Insert the quote here.

What a strange vision! In the Hebrew culture, the ephah was a basket used for measuring and holding grain. It was for holding wheat, not tares. And it especially was not made to hold a woman. The woman called "Wickedness" is cast down into the basket and a lead seal is put on the opening. Lead is used to contain caustics, acids and deadly radiation. It is not used around food because it is poisonous. There are two other women with wings like those of a stork. The stork is considered an unclean bird in the Bible and is often found in a barren place that has come under the judgment of God. These are not God's holy angels.

Finally, these two stork-winged women take the woman in the ephah "to build a temple for her in the land of Shinar; and when it is prepared, she will be set there on her own pedestal." Shinar is the land of two rivers, also known as Babylon. As we read the final chapters of the Revelation, we also see a woman who sits as a queen and her throne or resting place is the Beast. The difference in the visions of John and Zechariah is time. In his vision, Zechariah sees the same woman in an embryonic form that John sees full grown. Her temple is not yet built, neither is her foundation (pedestal). The Beast has not come into its fullness, nor has the Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots. God has sealed her up and restrained her. Paul spoke of the restraining quality of God, [And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.](#)" (2 Thessalonians 2:6 and 7, NKJV)"

Notice here that she is called "Wickedness." If you do a word study on wicked and wickedness you will find that in each case the context is speaking of the religiously wicked. With all this in mind, Zechariah is seeing a vision of the wickedness of a religious system before it reached maturity. This system will eventually exalt itself above all that is called of God, showing itself to be God and seeking to lord over all of God's true saints. What John sees is the final state of this woman called Wickedness.

## **The Woman and the Dragon**

Earlier in the book of Revelation we see Jesus trying one last time to get this woman to repent. "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me." (Revelation 3:18-20).

At the mid point of the book, chapter twelve, we see the same woman, but not yet in her final state. She is giving birth to a "man child," literally a mature child or son who is "caught up unto God." She seems helpless and is giving birth to this mature man child right into the mouth of the great red dragon (verse 4). You might call this a preemptive strike on the part of the devil, for it is the destiny of those caught up unto God to rule with Jesus, "the First born of many brethren. (See Revelation 12:5, 5:10 and 20:6).

Satan wants that position. He wants to rule over all of God's creation through corrupted man. God wants to rule through glorified sons.

Today a new convert is born into a maze of doctrines, many of which are false and keep him from maturity in Christ. God's way is narrow and obscured with many obstacles. Even when good seed is planted, the enemy is right there to pluck it up. This is how we see the dragon before the woman, waiting for her to give birth to a mature child. The only hope for the child of God's is to be so caught up unto the Lord that he will follow only His voice. Jesus went before us that He might call us unto Himself.

When he puts forth all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. And a stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers. (John 10:4,5, NASB).

Before you can be caught up to rule and reign with the Son, you must be caught up unto the Son in your heart. Remember that Revelation is written in types and symbols, "He signified it by His angel to His servant John." (Revelation 1:1). The natural depicts and foretells the spiritual. Some will be caught up unto Satan and his wishes through the weakness of their flesh. Others fight the good fight and resist the downward pull of their flesh and demonic forces. These make Jesus their all in all and allow the Spirit to conform them into sons unto God. Praise God that we are not fighting this battle alone!

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. (Revelation 12:7-11)

Jesus, the holy angels, and the Spirit of God are all working to make sure that we overcome the wicked one, but we must have a testimony spoken by our very lives that Jesus is alive. We must not seek to save our lives neither by letting the enticements of this world seduce us, nor by caving in and fighting to save our own lives. We must put

our whole trust in the Father and know no man has any power over us unless the Father allows it.

Satan knows that if he can get us to take the sword in self defense, he has us. Jesus warned a sword-wielding Peter, "He who lives by the sword shall die by the sword."

Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause."

So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" (Job 2:3-5, NKJV).

The solution to this trap is to yield our spirits to the Lord and trust totally in Him. Job was adamant on this point even after he had lost everything and was sitting on an ash heap covered with boils.

Why do I take my flesh in my teeth, And put my life in my hands? Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him. He also shall be my salvation, For a hypocrite could not come before Him. (Job 13:14-16, NKJV).

We are called to be overcomers, not by conquering our fellow man but by conquering the old man within. God helps us through the personal cross, administered by His loving hand.

When the red dragon of Revelation chapter twelve discovers that the man child escapes him, he goes after the woman and casts a flood out of his mouth. This flood signifies all manner of lying spirits, false teachers, false apostles and false prophets who are let loose to infiltrate the church, "with all power, signs and lying wonders seeking whom he [they] may deceive." It is the earth that opens its mouth and takes it all in, not those who are caught up unto the Lord. The earth here refers to fallen, unregenerate man.

However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man,

so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption (Corinthians 15:46-50, NKJV).

In this twelfth chapter we also see the woman fleeing into the wilderness from the dragon, "into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent."

Right now God has many of His saints in a spiritual wilderness that is dealing with their flesh and nourishing their weak spirits. Most of this nourishment is subconscious, for if He were to manifest Himself in any way their flesh would also take nourishment. This is why it is called a wilderness or "the dark night of the soul." God is doing all he can to glean His saints unto Himself.

"And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Revelation 12:17)

The chapter ends on this verse. This is not a time of Sunday school picnics and church potlucks for those who are Christ's people. Those who have the testimony of Jesus Christ are marked with what we call the "bummer birthmark." They have been marked by God as one of His, and Satan sees that mark as a big red bulls eye on their chests. Satan can tell who is fore-ordained to be conformed into the image of the Son (Romans 8:29) and he hates them with a perfect hatred.

## **Babylon the Great**

Now John is shown the counterfeit woman, Satan's counterpart to the Bride of Christ, the one whom God calls "the great harlot, the mother of harlots."

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication."

So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten

horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement. (Revelation 17:1-6, NKJV).

The first corporate act of man's rebellion was laying the foundation of his first city, Babel. The fruit of that corporate rebellion is depicted by a woman, Babylon the Great, riding on the Beast. The first corporate religion was raising up "a tower into the heavens." The first corporate government was founded when Nimrod said, "let us build ourselves a city" and "make a name for ourselves." This too, was an act of rebellion. God had commanded man to "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth." He did not say, "fill the earth with cities, rule over them and make a name for yourselves." This is the inception of what is later called The Beast.

History is filled with the evils of organized religion and its persecution of the true saints and reformers sent to bring her to repentance. Every time the Church comes in league with the governments of men, the saints of God are murdered as heretics. Like Jezebel of old, the Great Whore either seduces or kills those who come asking her to repent and go back to her First Love. The kings of the earth committed fornication with this harlot. The last 1700 years is a story of murder and intrigue in the name of religion. It is appropriate that the heart of this period is known as the Dark Ages.

Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth." (Revelation 17:15-18, NKJV).

She controls, "sits on" multitudes of men and women and even "reigns over the kings of the earth," but her days are numbered. Before her final demise, she will be marked by the fullness of Satan and his demons, a perverse version of being spirit filled.

And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury." And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues." (Revelation 18:2-4, NKJV)

This unholy mixture of religion and corrupted power has intoxicated even the saints of God who have found their place in her instead of in His Son. Again God calls out to those who are His. This time it is important for them to not just open the door unto Him, but to come out of this false church system altogether. He is through with this unholy mixture of godliness and religion, of humility and pride, self denial and lust, hot and cold. As Paul warned Timothy:

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! (2 Timothy 3:1-5, NKJV).

Paul saw this unholy mixture coming. Religious men would "have a form of godliness" that would deny the very power of the abiding Christ in their lives. They would rather seek the pleasures of this world without self-control, despising those who are good, calling what is holy profane and what is unholy good. In the last twenty-five years, we have seen a spate of ministers falling for pornography, prostitution, slandering one another, attacking the righteous who try to turn them around, seeking money in practically every sermon and broadcast, loving their own carnal lives as they surround themselves with wealth. It is bad enough that these men have these sins in their own lives, but their influence has reached into the very Bride of Christ, His Church, if not by word, then by example.

For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. In the measure that she glorified herself

and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, "I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow."

Therefore her plagues will come in one day--death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her. The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning. . (Revelation 18:2-9, NKJV)

What was once seven golden lamp stands (see Revelation 1) has now become corrupted into a harlot with seven heads. (Read Revelation 17-19). Once each of these seven churches had Him as Head. Now they had taken His leadership to themselves and become the Hydra of denominationalism that rules over the church today. Each time one head is cut off, two take its place.

Her judgment is sure to come. Now is the time to leave before the plagues start falling upon her and all those she sits on.

And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth. (Revelation 18:24, NKJV).

No wonder John marveled when he saw her. How could this same woman who is guilty of the blood of all the saints and martyrs of Jesus, still contain His own chosen people, the ones she kills? That shows how seductive her riches and positions of power are, as she bleeds the saints of their life force in Christ.

## **The Finished Work of God-- His masterpiece, The Bride**

Not everyone is so easily seduced by this harlot and her daughters, and we thank the grace of God for that. There are some who have passed the test, who overcome "by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony, and love not their lives even unto death." These have washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb. In the final chapters of the Revelation, there is the other woman who comes into her perfection and fullness. She is the Lamb's wife, the bride of Christ.

These are the overcomers who have been gleaned from the ranks of the former seven churches. Jesus says,



To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God. (Revelation 2:7, NASB).

He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death." (Revelation 2:11, NASB).

To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.(Revelation 2:17, NASB).

And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations-- "He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels" --as I also have received from My Father. . .and I will give him the morning star. (Revelation 2:26-28, NKJV).

He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels. (Revelation 3:5, NASB).

He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. (Revelation 3:12, NASB).

These "have not defiled themselves with (the) woman" (Greek *gune* -a singular noun meaning woman or wife) but follow the Lamb wherever He goes. (Revelation 14:4)

These He has separated out from the others. They have become the Bride of the Lamb. They have made themselves ready and Jesus is their Bridegroom.

Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps.

Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. But at midnight there was a shout, "Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him." Then all those virgins rose, and trimmed their lamps.

And the foolish said to the prudent, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out."

But the prudent answered, saying, "No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves."

And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. And later the other virgins also came, saying, "Lord, lord, open up for us." But he answered and said, "Truly I say to you, I do not know you." Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour. (Matthew 25:1-13, NASB).

At His bidding, the wise separate themselves from the foolish and go out to meet Him. These have bought oil of Him and have eye-salve that they might see.

Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!"

And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God." (Revelation 19:5-9, NKJV).

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." (Revelation 21:9, NKJV).

Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God." (Revelation 21:2,3, NKJV)

Even so, Lord Jesus come and fully inhabit your Bride. Amen.