

Who is Christ's Bride?  
Fred Bischoff  
www.ScriptureFirst.net  
www.FredBischoff.com

Marriage is a picture of oneness (unity) in plurality (more than one individual being). And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. (Gen. 2:21-24).

The word "flesh" occurs four times in this passage. Though both the man and the woman were derived from "one flesh," it appears this oneness speaks of the broader unity they were to experience, as they both, together, comprised "the image of God." This was the "likeness" of God.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. (Gen. 1:26, 27)

Further evidence for this is the use of the same word "one" to describe God in His personal name.

The LORD our God is one LORD. (Deut. 6:4).

The "us" and "our" of God is "one"--the original oneness in plurality. We can illustrate this unity in plurality in the following way for the Godhead:

Father	Son	Spirit	One = unity in plurality; oneness of character, not of person <sup>1</sup>
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It thus appears that marriage was created in Genesis 1 to reflect the oneness of the Godhead. But marriage also became a way to describe the unity of the relationship between Christ and His people. (This relationship is also described as that of a king and his kingdom.) In this overarching sense, there was oneness and unity between God and humanity in Genesis 1 and 2. In Genesis 3 this unity was broken, as Adam and Eve chose another "lover."<sup>2</sup> The rest of the Bible records God's attempt to win back the human race to oneness with Him--to restore His image in them, to be married to them again. This reunion is pictured as a marriage to a corporate bride, with the beings that make up the body pictured as individual guests. This can be seen in the fact that this re-marriage involves individual choices but results in a corporate reality. *These two dimensions are the key to understanding the varying metaphors of what we need to see.* Thus in Revelation there are two corporate pictures--not one woman, but two women, one comprising the body of individuals won back to unity with God, and one representing the group of

<sup>1</sup> "The unity that exists between Christ and His disciples does not destroy the personality of either. They are one in purpose, in mind, in character, but not in person. It is thus that God and Christ are one." {8T 269.4}

<sup>2</sup> Using the perspective of "kingdom," they abdicated in one very real sense their position of "dominion" given them under God in Gen. 1:26, 28, and their choice made the being present in the serpent "the prince of this world"; see Luke 4:5, 6; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Eph. 2:2.

individuals who refuse to be thus restored. The bride of Christ is the corporate picture of those won back to Him. This could be illustrated in the following way:

Father	Son	Bride	Guests
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Based on this picture, let us examine the uses of *gamos* (Strong's #1062) in the New Testament that are related to Jesus and human race (italicized below). Note that the individual choices of those who reject His love are noted under "Guests" but should be understood that they refused the invitation to come. Also the corporate picture of such rejecters is not shown in the standardized table, other than a brief reference in the Rev. 18 section to Babylon, the corporate name for that class of individuals.

Father	Son	Bride	Guests	Reference
"a certain king" 22:2	"his son" 22:2	[not identified]	"them that were bidden to the <i>wedding</i> " 22:3; "come unto the <i>marriage</i> " 22:4; "bid to the <i>marriage</i> " 22:9	Matt. 22:2-12
	" <i>marriage</i> for his son" 22:2; "prepared my dinner"--"all things are ready" 22:4; "the <i>wedding</i> is ready" 22:8 [see below for uses of adjective and verb "ready" / "prepared"]			
			"the <i>wedding</i> was furnished with guests" 22:10	"they which were bidden were not worthy" 22:8; "a man which had not on a <i>wedding</i> garment" 22:11, 12
[not mentioned]	"bridegroom" 25:1; "tarried" 25:5	[not identified]	"ten virgins" 25:1; "all slumbered and slept" 25:5; "at midnight ... a cry" 25:6; "arose and trimmed their lamps" 25:7	Matt. 25:1-13
	"cometh" 25:6; "came" 25:10		"five were wise" 25:2; "oil in their vessels" 25:4; "they that were ready went in with him to the <i>marriage</i> " 25:10	"five were foolish" 25:2; "no oil" 25:3; "I know you not" 25:12
"Father" 12:32	"their lord" 12:36	"the kingdom" 12:32 <sup>3</sup>	"little flock" 12:32	Luke 12:32-40

<sup>3</sup> Compare Dan. 7:13, 14, 18, 22, 27: the kingdom is given both to "one like the Son of man" and to "the saints of the most High." The kingdom is thus a corporate picture.

	"return from the <i>wedding</i> ", "cometh and knocketh" <sup>4</sup> 12:36; "serve them" 12:37		"loins be girded about", "lights burning" 12:35; "wait" 12:36; "watching" 12:37		
"Lord God omnipotent" 19:6	"the <i>marriage</i> of the Lamb is come" 12:7	"his wife hath made herself ready" 12:7; "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white" 12:8	"the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" 12:8; "blessed are they which are called unto the <i>marriage</i> supper" 12:9		Rev. 19:6-9

Compare this picture from Luke 19, which doesn't have the marriage term, but by other connection, especially regarding the "kingdom," is clearly describing the same process.

Father	Son	Bride	Guests		Reference
[not mentioned]	"A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return" 19:12	"a kingdom" 19:12	"ten servants", "occupy till I come" 19:13; "his citizens" 12:14		Luke 19:12-27
	"returned, having received the kingdom" 19:15		"good servant" 19:17	"hated him" 12:14; "wicked servant" 19:22; "mine enemies" 19:27	

<sup>4</sup> This wedding verb "knock" occurs in Rev. 3:20, which along with Song 5:2 (distinct parallel in Septuagint), shows the Laodicean picture to be that of a Bridegroom knocking at the door of His bride.

Other occurrences of "bridegroom" and "bride" not included above, but which speak of the same picture.

Father	Son	Bride	Guests		Reference
[not mentioned]	"the bridegroom" 9:15		"children of the bride-chamber" 9:15	"all men come to him" 3:26; [special messenger =] "friend of the bridegroom ... rejoiceth greatly" 3:29 [see footnote on "prepare"]	Matt. 9:15; Mark 2:19, 20; Luke 5:34, 35
[not mentioned]	"the Christ" [Messiah] 3:28; "the bridegroom", "the bridegroom's voice" 3:29	"the bride" 3:29			John 3:26-29
[not mentioned]	"the voice of the bridegroom"	"of the bride"		"heard no more at all in thee" [Babylon]	Rev. 18:23
"God himself", "their God" 21:3	"her husband" 21:2	"the holy city, the new Jerusalem, prepared as a bride adorned" 21:2; "tabernacle" 21:3	"men", "his people" 21:3		Rev. 21:2, 3
	"the Lamb"	"the bride, the Lamb's wife" 21:9; "that great city, the holy Jerusalem" 21:10			Rev. 21:9, 10
	"I Jesus" 22:16	"the bride" [and "the Spirit"] 22:17	"come", "whosoever will" [the wedding invitation to all human beings]		Rev. 22:16, 17

Consider these passages that picture this relationship between the Son and His bride, that do not use the specific term of "bride," but incorporate the "one flesh" concept from Genesis, with the amazing implications of the incarnation of the Son in the process of winning His creatures back. Further exploration of the individual picture of "members" in relation to the corporate picture of "body" [which, after all, the word "corporate" means] could be done in other passages.

Father	Son	Bride	Guests		Reference
	"the head over all things to" 1:22>>	"the church"			Eph. 1:22, 23
		"which is his body" 1:23			
[not mentioned]	"Christ is the head of" 5:23>>	"the church"			Eph. 5:23-33
	"the saviour of" 5:23>>	"the body"			
	"Christ also loved" 5:25>>	"the church"			
	"gave himself for" 5:25>>	"it"			
	"present it to himself" [wedding] 5:27>>	"a glorious church"			
	"the Lord" "nourisheth and cherisheth" 5:29>>	"the church"			
		"his body", "his flesh," "his bones"	"we are members of" <<5:30		
	"Christ" 5:32	"the church"			
	"He is the head of" 1:18>>	"the body, the church"			Col. 1:15-24
		"his body's sake, which is the church" 1:24			

In the light of the above, consider now two Ellen White statements that appear contradictory on the surface, but, making proper application of the individual and corporate perspectives, are in complete harmony with each other, and especially with Scripture.

God calls the church His body. The church is the bride, the Lamb's wife. God is the Father of the family, the Shepherd of the flock. But a mere outward connection with any church will not save a man. It is personal faith in a personal Saviour which brings the soul into spiritual union with Christ. This truth Christ plainly teaches in the sixth chapter of John.-- Ms 121, 1899, p. 17. {16MR 277.1}

There are four metaphors in this passage, shown in the first four lines of this table:

Father	Son	Bride	Guests	Reference
"God"		"the church His body"	"a man"	16MR 277.1
"God"	"the Lamb"	"the church", "the Lamb's wife"		
"the father"		"the family"		
"the shepherd"		"the flock"		
		"church"	"mere outward connection with any church will not save"	
	"personal Saviour"	"spiritual union" [become part of His body]	"personal faith"	

In the summer and autumn of 1844 the proclamation, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh," was given. The two classes represented by the wise and foolish virgins were then developed--one class who looked with joy to the Lord's appearing, and who had been diligently preparing to meet Him; another class that, influenced by fear and acting from impulse, had been satisfied with a theory of the truth, but were destitute of the grace of God. In the parable, when the bridegroom came, "they that were ready went in with him to the marriage." The coming of the bridegroom, here brought to view, takes place before the marriage. The marriage represents the reception by Christ of His kingdom. The Holy City, the New Jerusalem, which is the capital and representative of the kingdom, is called "the bride, the Lamb's wife." Said the angel to John: "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." "He carried me away in the spirit," says the prophet, "and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." Revelation 21:9, 10. Clearly, then, the bride represents the Holy City, and the virgins that go out to meet the bridegroom are a symbol of the church. In the Revelation the people of God are said to be the guests at the marriage supper. Revelation 19:9. If guests, they cannot be represented also as the bride. Christ, as stated by the prophet Daniel, will receive from the Ancient of Days in heaven, "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom;" He will receive the New Jerusalem, the

capital of His kingdom, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Daniel 7:14; Revelation 21:2. Having received the kingdom, He will come in His glory, as King of kings and Lord of lords, for the redemption of His people, who are to "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob," at His table in His kingdom (Matthew 8:11; Luke 22:30), to partake of the marriage supper of the Lamb. {GC 426.2}

This significant paragraph connects the imagery we saw above from Matt. 25 to that of Rev. 19 & 21. Observe carefully how the terms are used for the individual and for the corporate.

Father	Son	Bride	Guests		Reference
[not mentioned]	"proclamation ... the bridegroom cometh"		"wise", "looked with joy to the Lord's appearing", "diligently preparing to meet Him"	"foolish", "influenced by fear and acting from impulse", "satisfied with a theory of the truth", "destitute of the grace of God"	GC 426.2
	"coming of the bridegroom ... before the marriage"		"went in with him"		
	"the marriage" =				
	"reception of Christ of">>	"His kingdom"			
		"The Holy City, the New Jerusalem", "the capital and representative of the kingdom", "the bride, the Lamb's wife"	"the virgins", "the church"		
			"the people of God", "the guests"		
	"the marriage supper"				

			"If guests, they cannot be represented also as the bride"		
		[corporate picture]	[individual picture]		
Sequence:					
	"receive from the Ancient of Days in heaven">>	"dominion, and glory, and a kingdom", "the New Jerusalem, the capital of His kingdom"			
	"Having received the kingdom, He will come in His glory"		"the redemption of His people"		
	"His table in His kingdom", "the marriage supper of the Lamb"				

Summary of EGW:

Reference	Corporate [Bride]	Individual [Guests]
16MR 277.1	church, body, wife, family, flock	a man
GC 426.2	kingdom, city, bride	wise/foolish, virgins, church, people, guests

Consider finally the words used for "ready" as mentioned in the table on page 2. These are both an adjective and a verb. The adjective "ready" is *hetoimos* (Strong's 2092), and the verb "make ready" or "prepare" is *hetoimazo* (Strong's 2090). The following table shows the uses of these words that occur for our marriage theme:<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Notice the significance of all other uses of the verb, *prepare*:

- (1) Jesus' first coming: Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 1:76; 3:4;
- (2) positions in kingdom: Matt. 20:23; Mark 10:40
- (3) everlasting fire for devil and his angels: Matt. 25:41;
- (4) last Passover with disciples: Matt. 26:17, 19; Mark 14:12, 15, 16; Luke 22:8, 9, 12, 13; (5) God's salvation in the incarnate Jesus: Luke 2:31;
- (6) accommodations for Jesus in Samaritan village: Luke 9:52;
- (7) the bigger barns the rich fool built: Luke 12:20;
- (8) supper by a servant for his master: Luke 17:8;



<i>Texts using "ready" concepts--</i>	<i>Reflections on this "ready" condition--</i>
Mt 22:4* Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have <b>prepared</b> my dinner: my oxen and <i>my</i> fatlings <i>are</i> killed, and all things <i>are</i> <b>ready</b> : come unto the marriage. [Compare Luke 14:17 for the "great supper" parable.]	At some point in the prophetic parable, the wedding dinner <i>is prepared</i> and everything on God's part is <i>ready</i> . But are the others ready?
Mt 22:8* Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is <b>ready</b> , but they which were bidden were not worthy.	Refusing to make first priority the King's invitation to the marriage He is <i>ready for</i> means one is unworthy and unprepared for the future of the human race.
Mt 24:44 Therefore be ye also <b>ready</b> : for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. [Compare Luke 12:40.]	To be <i>ready</i> for the reunion of God and man at the coming of Jesus involves watching, being faithful and wise, and knowing what food is appropriate for the time of preparation (verses 42, 45).
Mt 25:10* And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were <b>ready</b> went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut	The wise virgins, with vessels full of the oil (verse 4) of the Spirit picture those <i>ready</i> as individuals to enter the marriage event when it begins.
Mt 25:34* Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom <b>prepared</b> for you from the foundation of the world:	At the end, the righteous by faith inherit the kingdom <i>prepared</i> from the beginning of the world, an allusion back to the dominion granted in Gen. 1:26, 28.
Lu 12:47* And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and <b>prepared</b> not <i>himself</i> , neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many <i>stripes</i> .	The evil servant failed to <i>prepare</i> himself for His lord's coming.
John 14:2* In my Father's house are many mansions: if <i>it were not so</i> , I would have told you. I go to <b>prepare</b> a place for you. John 14:3* And if I go and <b>prepare</b> a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, <i>there</i> ye may be also.	Jesus speaks as a son <i>preparing</i> a dwelling place in his father's house for the bride that he will go and get, to bring to the new accommodations.

(9) the spices and ointments for Jesus' dead body: Luke 23:56; 24:1;

(10) two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to transport Paul safely: Acts 23:23;

(11) a person as a vessel cleansed of iniquity, carrying instead good works: 2 Tim. 2:21;

(12) a lodging for Paul by Philemon: Philemon 22

(13) various symbols in Revelation: seven angels with trumpets to sound: Rev. 8:6; locusts for battle: 9:7; four angels to slay: 9:15; a place for the persecuted woman to be feed: 12:6; the way of the kings of the east: 16:12 (second coming of Jesus).

<p>1Co 2:9* But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath <b>prepared</b> for them that love him.</p>	<p>The love of God produces a love response in all who will, and these will experience things God <i>has prepared</i> for those in this intimate fellowship with Him that exceed any previous experience of eyes, ears, or heart.</p>
<p>Heb 11:16* But now they desire a better <i>country</i>, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath <b>prepared</b> for them a city.</p>	<p>Those who live by the divine dynamic of faith don't fit into this world (see verse 38), having rejected being wedded to its principles and systems, thus remaining strangers and pilgrims here (verse 13), looking instead for a city built by God (verse 10) on the Rock, not on sand--and God <i>has prepared</i> such a city for them.</p>
<p>Re 19:7* Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath <b>made</b> herself <b>ready</b>.</p>	<p>The wife of the Lamb will at the end <i>make</i> herself <i>ready</i> for the marriage.</p>
<p>Re 21:2* And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, <b>prepared</b> as a bride adorned for her husband.</p>	<p>The capitol of the everlasting kingdom is seen moving to the new earth as a bride <i>prepared</i> by being adorned for her husband. This adorning is described as "precious stones" in the foundation (21:19), and as "fine linen" which is the "righteousness" (righteous deeds, done by faith) of a body of individuals (19:8).</p>

Thank God that the good news of the gospel enables us to prepare, to accept the invitation to come, and to share that invitation with others! May the marriage be hastened!