

## The Perfect Bride of Christ

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*Oh, that you would bear with me in a little folly—and indeed you do bear with me. 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 (2 Corinthians 11:1-2).*

**I**n **Revelation 12**, we have a picture of two women, and we can more easily see these two women in **12:13-17**. I believe the first woman is "Jehovah's wife" of the Old Testament, Israel. The Lord referred to Israel a number of times as His wife, such as in **Jeremiah 31:32**,

*... not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.*

It is with this thought in mind that He described Israel's going after other gods as "adultery" several times. The woman pictured in **Revelation 12:13** is OT Israel as it says, *"the woman who gave birth to the male Child"* (the male child represents Christ). This vision sees Satan persecuting the woman, OT Israel.

The vision then goes to the second woman and her offspring as described in **12:17**,

*And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

This second woman refers to the Lord's church (I think) and His Christians as they are persecuted and continue to be in our present time. Satan surely continues to attack the Lord's people, and he will until the end of the world when Jesus returns. This second woman is described as the "bride of Christ" a number of times in the New Testament in various ways, including Jesus' words and several of the writers of the NT Scriptures, such as the apostle Paul as noted in the beginning of this article.

In the Lord's eyes, the bride (the church) is in the perfect condition to be His betrothed. Because we live and see in the flesh, we see our own lives and our brothers and sisters with all our flaws and warts. The Lord sees us as His perfect wife to be. We can see this perfection in several places, as pictured in **Revelation chapters 19, 20, and 21**.

However, if we consider it closely, we can see perfection in the body today here on earth. The church is the perfect spiritual organization to do exactly what it was ordained and planned to do, even *"before the foundation of the world,"* as noted in **Ephesians 1:4**. It provides glory to the Lord, its Creator, and its Savior. The church provides a perfect dwelling place for the household of God, as taught in **Ephesians 2:19-22**. Its foundation is perfect, not only in its chief cornerstone (Jesus) as its savior and provider but also in the form of the writings of the apostles and prophets in which we find the church's only doctrines and teachings.

Through this perfect foundation, the Lord's people can be aided by every spiritual blessing *"in the heavenly places"* (**Ephesians 1:3**). We can appreciate this perfection in the assemblies of the body and what we do while in these assemblies. The Lord ordained singing, teaching, praying, remembering, and giving to be done among the brothers and sisters when they meet in His name. I am convinced these activities are the perfect way for us to gain these blessings. For this reason, among others, we do only these things approved by the Lord.

The problem comes when men and women think they need other things to help us serve the Lord, such as religious holidays and foreign things (activities and devotions not found in this foundation) that the New Testament does not authorize in their writings. If something does not come from the Lord, it only glorifies those who invented it, and, in reality, it tells the Lord His ways are not enough. However, the Scriptures clearly say the Lord has given us *"all things that pertain to life and godliness,"* as noted in **2 Peter 1:2-4**. He gives us all things!

The Lord created the church to accomplish His perfect will. This includes all things pertaining to it -- including its assemblies and edifying practices -- to give His people everything they need to glorify and walk with Him and ultimately be saved for eternity. It is indeed the perfect organization to accomplish its ends!

When men and women attempt to introduce new things to the faith -- such as organizations and practices -- or even to exclude the things the Lord has authorized, the congregations and individuals who make them up are no longer the Lord's possession. We can see this clearly in five of the seven letters to the churches in **Revelation 2-3**.

What a beautiful "pearl of great price" we have found! What a glorious path to the Lord and His righteousness we can follow! What a magnificent bride we can be part of!

I know these modern times may seem dark to some. But the bride of Christ will continue to follow the path our Lord has chosen. Will you come along?

*And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely (Revelation 22:17).*